

## **Chairman of the Criminal Injuries Compensation Appeals Panel Northern Ireland**

**Oliver Loughran**

Mr Loughran was appointed Chairman of the Criminal Injuries Compensation Appeals Panel in May 2002.

### **What attracted to you to this post?**

I had a lot of experience as a personal injury lawyer and I felt that the knowledge and skills which I had gained in this particular area of work could be put to good use.

### **Did you have any previous knowledge of the role?**

I had read various publications in advance of the Criminal Injuries Compensation Scheme (the Scheme) coming into effect and I assumed that the role would not be unlike the civil role of a County Court Judge but with greater emphasis on a more user friendly format within a tribunal context.

### **What is a typical day like?**

A typical day for me starts with my arrival at 9.30 am (Gordon Street, Belfast) for hearings commencing at 10.00 am. There will usually be 4 – 5 cases listed for hearing, depending upon the type and complexity, as defined by the administrative staff.

There will be a preliminary discussion with the other panel members about the potential issues arising from the cases listed. Normally, hearings will be over at 4.30 pm however, as a panel, we prefer to deal with a case on the day rather than bringing the parties back to re-commence a part-heard case, so we can sit to 6 pm.

On the days I am not sitting, I may attend other hearings to keep myself up-to-date with the issues facing my other panel members. I may also attend meetings with interested parties such as, Victim Support and the Compensation Agency whose feedback is useful in ascertaining how the Scheme is operating.

### **How much support do you have?**

I have, of course, the support of my other two panel members who will come from a variety of different backgrounds and this has proven to be extremely useful in determining cases.

Additionally, I have the support of an extremely effective administrative team. The Team keeps me informed of any developments or issues arising when I am not in the office.

**What are the most challenging aspects of your role?**

Since 2009 I have found my role particularly challenging with the introduction of legislative change and it still amazes me how previously unconsidered issues can still arise nine years after the introduction of the Scheme! Maintaining both the Scheme's and Panel's independence is also a continuing and very challenging aspect of my role.

Experience has taught me that all panel members need to re-act quickly and 'think on their feet' when the unexpected arises.

**Is your role conducive to work/life balance?**

Yes. The role is part-time and, with the administrative team's support, I can effectively plan my time.