



## **Examples of Law Centre Cases**

### **Discrimination on the grounds of Sexual Orientation**

Ms A, a Lesbian woman who took a part-time administrative job in the office of a security company was subjected to harassment from her immediate manager. The harassment started just a few weeks after she had started the job. The manager made no secret of his homophobia and openly stated that he regarded gay people as 'sick'. Ms A put in an official complaint, but after just a couple of months she was suddenly dismissed as 'unsuitable' for the job. Her written grievance was ignored, so **Southwark Law Centre** commenced Employment Tribunal proceedings on her behalf. The case was settled to the client's satisfaction before reaching Tribunal.

Mr B was a dancer and barman in a cowboy themed bar. His co-workers perceived him to be gay. He was harassed by colleagues who made remarks and inappropriate 'jokes' about his sexuality. He was also given the worst jobs to do. He complained, but was then sacked and barred. **Newcastle Law Centre** assisted Mr B to take formal action against the owners of the bar. The case was settled for a substantial sum.

### **Discrimination on the grounds of Religion or Belief**

Mr C is a Rastafarian man who worked as a transport driver. He was criticised for wearing dreadlocks, which are part of his belief. He was overlooked for promotion and was told to cut his dreadlocks. After he started a grievance, he was signed off sick with stress and was then dismissed by the employer. Mr C went to see a solicitor for advice but was told that as Legal Aid would only pay a small fixed fee the solicitor could not take on such a complicated case. Mr C took the matter to the Employment Tribunal and represented himself, but was unsuccessful. **Kirklees Law Centre** is now assisting Mr C with an appeal to the Employment Appeal Tribunal. His experience demonstrates the importance of access to specialist advisers with experience in new areas of employment discrimination work, and the inadequacy of Legal Aid in ensuring access to justice in employment discrimination matters.

Ms D, a Muslim woman, worked at an accountancy firm when she had an arranged marriage in Pakistan. In an appraisal her manager questioned her about unfounded fears that Ms S would be forced to give up work by her new husband. Her manager then reneged on a promise that the firm would pay for her professional training and later made her redundant. She was the only person in a department made up of 120 people to be made redundant. The **London Discrimination Unit at Lambeth Law Centre** was involved in this case, which was among the first to be brought under the religion or belief legislation. Her claim of unfair dismissal and discrimination on the grounds of race and religion was settled shortly before Tribunal for a substantial sum.



**Law Centres Federation**

Legal action for the community

## **Discrimination on the grounds of Age**

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Ms E worked as an Early Day Worker with a nursery school. She is 20 years old and worked with children aged 2-3 years. She was supervising some children playing on a climbing frame and made up a song to give them confidence. The song included the phrase, “give me some skin and turn around jumping”. A parent who heard the song immediately withdrew her child from the nursery. Ms E was then called to the office by her line manager and dismissed. Ms E is claiming that she was dismissed on the grounds of her age contrary to the Employment Equality (Age) Regulations 2006 and/ or on grounds of her race, contrary to the Race Relations Act 1976. She states that the phrase ‘give me some skin’ is used by young black people and one that she used frequently while growing up. She believes that her manager, who is a lot older than her, dismissed her without understanding the meaning of the phrase. She assumed that it was offensive, without considering Ms E’s cultural identity, race and age. **Islington Law Centre** has assisted Ms E in lodging a claim with the Employment Tribunal.

## **Disability Discrimination**

Ms F is a disabled person who works for a local housing association. In early 2006, she faced losing her job after her employer had decided to relocate to different offices. Because of her disability Ms F was unable to continue carrying out her job duties at the new offices. After explaining this to her employer, she was left to wait for a long period. Although able and willing to work, she was unable to do her work because of the new location. With help from **Hammersmith and Fulham Community Law Centre** Ms F brought a disability discrimination claim against her employer in which she argued that they had failed to make reasonable adjustments to her working arrangements. The Law Centre represented her in the employment tribunal proceedings. Ms F’s case was settled shortly before the substantive hearing. Her employer finally agreed to redeploy her into a suitable position at a different and more appropriate location, which Ms F was very pleased to accept. The employer also offered her £12,700 in settlement of her financial loss.



## Race discrimination

**Carlisle Community Law Centre** recently handled a race discrimination case for nearly forty East European migrant workers, who worked in the food processing industry. Their employer had given the migrant workers worse employment terms and conditions than their English colleagues, including no holiday pay and no overtime. The migrant workers were not able to get help from a private solicitor as many would not qualify for Legal Aid. However, the Law Centre was able to take on their case and represent them. The case was settled for in excess of £250,000, with the workers getting the backdated pay and significant compensation for race discrimination. As a result, the employer has improved their employment practices and now gives all workers the same terms and conditions.

## Sex discrimination

Ms G worked as a personnel officer for a security firm when she became pregnant. After being told that Ms G was pregnant, the owner of the security firm told Ms G that she should terminate the pregnancy as she would be of no use to him as an employee after she had the baby. He knew that the baby had been diagnosed with cystic fibrosis and he repeatedly told Ms G that she would not be able to cope when the baby was born. Ms G was subjected to continuous discrimination and harassment. Her desk was allocated to another worker and the employer told her colleagues that she should not be given a chair to sit on. Her work was criticised and she was blamed for mistakes that she had not made. Ms G's hours of work were changed, so she asked to come in early so that she could get a lift with her partner who worked at the same firm as a security guard. Her employer, however, would not give her a key to the office and she was often left waiting outside for hours until someone let her in. After Ms G and her partner were forced to leave their jobs **Carlisle Community Law Centre** helped her to take the case to the Employment Tribunal. The employer made numerous threats to Ms G, her partner and the Law Centre solicitor in the lead up to the Tribunal, and a security guard had to be present during hearings. Ms G was awarded £30,000 in compensation and £10,000 in costs.

