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PRESS RELEASE

NI Discrimination Cases Digest Published

Over £1 million was paid out in the year 2007-2008 in compensation to claimants in discrimination cases supported by the Equality Commission.

The Commission has just published its 2007-2008 Decisions and Settlements Review which gives summaries of 103 cases supported by the Commission and resolved during the year.

Eileen Lavery, Head of Strategic Enforcement for the Equality Commission, said today, "We publish this Review each year to show the different types of discrimination experienced by people in Northern Ireland. The Review should help people understand the variety of circumstances in which discrimination may occur and the outcomes achieved for complainants by the Commission by way of settlement or case decision."

"Last year, we received over 3,000 legal enquiries about potential discrimination. Frequently the individual concerned is able, with our advice, to find the resolution they would like. Those who cannot resolve their case informally may then make an application for assistance to the Commission to take their case forward to a legal hearing. The outcomes for those who are aided in such a way to a legal resolution are detailed in our casebook each year."

Of the 103 cases resolved, 90 were settled before reaching a court or tribunal hearing. Compensation totalling almost £1,000,000 was paid to claimants as a result of these settlements and a further £71,000 as a result of court or tribunal decisions.

The Review outlines 13 decisions and 90 settlements. The largest number of cases (38) was on grounds of disability discrimination, followed by sex discrimination (24). Smaller

numbers of cases were on grounds of religious/political belief (9), race (5), age (3) and sexual orientation (2). Six cases were taken on more than one discrimination ground. The Review includes summaries of 13 cases determined by the tribunals or courts including four decisions of the Court of Appeal in Northern Ireland.

Ms Lavery added, "There can be a devastating impact on people who are subjected to discrimination, whether in the workplace, in education or in accessing services. Cases in the Review also show that discrimination can have a severe impact on employers and businesses, both financially and in terms of morale and reputation. The Commission continues to support people who have been subject to discrimination, to help them challenge their treatment and to secure their rights. The publication of these cases is an important tool in informing the public, employers, service providers and those involved in the law about what is acceptable and what is not."

In 2007-8 the Commission received 283 new applications for legal assistance. It considers each case individually applying strategic criteria and in this period 107 cases (38%) were granted assistance.

A copy can be obtained by contacting the Equality Commission on 028 90 500 600.

The Equality Commission offers free and confidential advice to anyone who feels they may have been discriminated against; enquirers should call 028 90 500 600.