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PRESS RELEASE

Barrister Removed From Inquiry Receives £70,000 Settlement

A female barrister, Dolores Creen, has received £70,000 in a settlement by the PSNI, made without admission of liability, of a complaint alleging sex discrimination. The case was assisted by the Equality Commission for Northern Ireland.

Dolores Creen was briefed in 2007 to act on behalf of the PSNI in a Public Inquiry and believes that she subsequently suffered unlawful discrimination. Ms. Creen alleges that she was paid less per hour than a male barrister, that her "billing" hours were reduced, and that eventually, in November 2008, her instructions to act on behalf of the PSNI were withdrawn, while male colleagues were retained on the Inquiry.

The Chief Constable has acknowledged the upset and distress Ms. Creen experienced and reaffirmed his commitment to equality of opportunity in the workplace. The settlement sum, made without admission of liability, consists of £30,000 for claims in respect of the termination of her contract for services and/or loss of employment, including her claim for equal pay; and £40,000 for injury to feelings arising from her claims of sex discrimination and for damages for negligence, negligent misrepresentation and stigma damages for breach of contract.



Dolores Creen said: "When I was offered this brief I was told that it would require a full time commitment and I made it my absolute priority. In fact, I was extremely disappointed by the treatment afforded me during my work as part of the PSNI legal team on the Inquiry. I learned I was being paid at a lower rate than a male colleague and my hours on the case were reduced. I also believed that I was, on certain occasions, assigned routine tasks which were not requested of my male counterpart and which were not commensurate with my skills and experience. I was shocked when I was informed that my brief was being removed 6 months before the end of the Public Inquiry."

"I challenged my treatment as I believed it to be unfair. It amounted to a denigration of my position within my chosen profession and was, I believe, unjustifiable. I am pleased that the case has been resolved and I hope that other women, in any profession, who believe they are under-valued, will be encouraged to challenge such treatment."

Anne McKernan, Casework Director at the Equality Commission for Northern Ireland said: "When people believe that they are being treated unfairly at work, it can be a very difficult decision to take the professional and personal risks involved in confronting it. That can be especially true for women in higher level posts and in the professions. I would commend the stance taken by Dolores Creen to challenge attitudes and behaviour which she saw as demeaning and exclusionary because of her gender. I am pleased that, as well as acknowledging her hurt and distress, the Chief Constable's Office has committed to continue their liaison with the Commission in relation to the development of its policies, practices and procedures on equality of opportunity."