

15/08/2011

PRESS RELEASE

Legal Settlement for Disabled Taxi Passenger

A Belfast woman who claimed she was charged more than a non-disabled person for using an accessible taxi has agreed an out of court settlement in a disability discrimination case taken against Value Cabs.

Nicola Nesbitt, from South Belfast, whose case was supported by the Equality Commission, alleged that the firm charged her an £8 call out fee in addition to a fare and half.

In settling the case Value Cabs have paid Mrs. Nesbitt £2,000 without admission of liability. They have also agreed to liaise with the Equality Commission to review their policies and procedures, which they believe to be compliant with the law, and to implement such reasonable recommendations as the Commission may make as far as practicably possible.



Mrs. Nesbitt, who has cerebral palsy and has been a wheelchair user since birth, said she was delighted by the outcome.

“I was outraged, as I felt that I was being treated differently because I am disabled. I think it is important that all disabled people are aware that it is not fair to charge a disabled person more than an able bodied person for the same journey in the same vehicle, and that is why I decided to take this to court.

Mrs. Nesbitt, who usually travels by bus, needed to use taxis to travel to hospital appointments during her pregnancy. She alleges that, because it was a wheelchair

accessible vehicle, she was charged an £8 call-out charge on top of the fare and a half, bringing her fare to around £14.00 for the short, one-way trip.

Anne McKernan, Director of Legal Services with the Equality Commission, explained, “The Disability Transport Regulations require transport providers to make reasonable adjustments so that disabled people can have access to a service as close as it is reasonably possible to get to the standard normally offered to the general public.”

“The law does not allow a transport provider to charge its disabled customers a higher price for the same journey in the same vehicle. The fare for the larger vehicle should be the same for everyone. The costs of making reasonable adjustments are part of a transport provider’s general expenses, just the same as complying with any other legislation.”

“In this case the company has agreed to look at its policies with the Commission and implement our reasonable recommendations. Importantly, it has also agreed to communicate its policies and procedures to its staff at all grades by means of a training programme as recommended by the Commission. It is, of course, the attitudes and understanding of front-line staff which have the most direct impact on disabled people using taxi services, and it is essential for all transport providers to make sure their staff are fully informed and operating their policies.”

ENDS