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PRESS RELEASE

Settlement in hate crime case

The Equality Commission has confirmed that it had supported Vincent Creelan and David McCauley in their case against the Chief Constable of the PSNI, alleging unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and claiming damages for injury to feelings on the grounds of sexual orientation. The claimants who are gay were subject to regular attacks on their home and were most distressed that the PSNI did not take reasonable steps to prevent further attacks.

The case was settled and the settlement announced to Laganside County Court in Belfast on Monday 18 June 2012. The PSNI has agreed to pay each of the two claimants, without admission of liability, £5,000 damages plus costs. The Chief Constable also affirmed his commitment to equality legislation in Northern Ireland and has instituted a number of improvements in the handling of all hate incidents. In particular, he confirmed that awareness and training has been made a priority in Newtownards and that all police officers should be made aware of the need to treat these crimes seriously and to deal with persons who report hate crime, including homophobic hate crime, in a sensitive and understanding manner.

Eileen Lavery, Head of Advice and Compliance at the Equality Commission, said, "Hate crime is an issue of real concern to the Commission and we supported this case because it raised important issues about the adequacy and effectiveness of the policing service to victims of hate crime. The PSNI has acknowledged the shortfalls and has already made a substantial start on redressing the situation."