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## PRESS RELEASE

### **Sex discrimination case settled for £20,000**

A graduate management trainee who complained about sex and age discrimination after a job offer made to her was withdrawn, has settled her case. The case, against Edmundson Electrical Ltd. and the manager of their Coleraine branch at the time, Mr. John Bailie, was supported by the Equality Commission and settled for a total of £20,000, without admission of liability by either party.

Lauren McGee, who is the mother of a 2-year-old boy, graduated in Criminology in 2012 and was successful in gaining a graduate management trainee position with Edmundson Electrical in Coleraine. She was due to start work in June 2012.



She visited the company a few days before she was due to start work and alleges that the manager told her that she would struggle because she was a young woman, that women of child-bearing age were a hassle, that mothers do not make managers, and that she would have to work much harder to compensate for her looks and the fact that she was a woman. The manager denied this and said that any remarks he made were taken out of context.

She reported the exchange to the company handling the recruitment process and Ms McGee says that, at that stage, the offer of the post was withdrawn. She appealed this decision but complained that, at the appeal hearing, she was made to feel that she herself was to blame for reporting the matter.

Ms McGee considered that she had been discriminated against because of her sex and then victimised because she had complained about it.

She says, “You can imagine how distressed I was about this. I thought I had obtained a secure job in my own locality with all the security that meant for me and my child, and this was taken from me. I did not have the money to fund the case myself and, rather than give up, I turned to the Equality Commission. I cannot speak highly enough of the support I got from the Commission. It’s thanks to them that I was able to pursue the case and eventually obtained a settlement, which I accepted.

“I am one of many women who are discriminated against every day because of their sex. When I tell this story to others, it astounds me how many women have had to deal with discrimination much worse than what happened to me, but just did not have the means to fight their cases.”

Anne McKernan, Director, Legal Services, Equality Commission, said, “Consistently, sex discrimination complaints are our second largest area of complaint – last year 27% of the 3000+ complaints we dealt with were about sex discrimination, most of them about workplace discrimination. Our recent ‘Getting a Fair Share’ initiative raises some of the issues about the barriers to women’s economic independence and Lauren’s story shows all too clearly that women’s full and equal participation in the workforce and the economy is still some way off.

“We want to ensure that everyone, people who suffer discrimination and those who advise them, knows that it doesn’t have to be endured. The Commission is here to help with free and confidential advice, information, guidance and support.”

The settlement, made without admission of liability by both respondents, was made up of £17,500 from Edmundson Electrical Ltd. and £2,500 from manager John Bailie. Both respondents said that they regretted any injury to feelings, upset and distress suffered by Ms. McGee. The company agreed to meet with the Equality Commission to review policies, practices and procedures to ensure they are effective and conform with all the requirements of equality legislation and the relevant Codes of Practice.