



6 November 2014

Commission to proceed with bakery case

The Commission confirms that it has written to the solicitors acting for Ashers Bakery Company Ltd responding to the points made in their earlier letter on behalf of the company and its directors; and setting out the grounds on which unlawful discrimination is alleged.

In its letter the Commission stated that they would prefer not to have to litigate these issues and sought an acknowledgement that there has been an unlawful breach of the equality laws and an assurance that this will not be repeated. It made clear that the claimant will be seeking only modest damages for the upset and inconvenience caused and that, failing this, a civil bill will be issued.

The Commission has now received a response from the Company's solicitors stating that their view remains unchanged that their clients have not acted unlawfully, confirming they have no further proposals to make on their clients behalf and that they will accept service of a civil bill in regard to this matter.

The Equality Commission has an important role in ensuring effective application of Northern Ireland's equality laws and supports cases so that people are aware of, and can avail of, the protection these laws afford against all forms of unlawful discrimination.

This case raises issues of public importance regarding the extent to which suppliers of goods and services can refuse service on grounds of sexual orientation, religious belief and political opinion.

The Commission has issued a civil bill in this case and a decision as to whether or not discrimination has occurred will be a matter for the court. The Commission will not be making further comment on the facts or issues in the case before a court hearing.