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## PRESS RELEASE

### Woman made to retire at 63 settles age discrimination case

A woman who alleged that she was discriminated against on grounds of her age when her employment as a security manager was terminated, has settled a case against her employer, Dunnes Stores (Bangor) Ltd, which she took with the support of the Equality Commission for Northern Ireland.

The company, in settling the case for £40,000, did not accept that it acted in breach of equality legislation. It reaffirmed its commitment to the principles of equality.

Gloria Dunbar had worked as a security manager for Dunnes Stores on a full-time permanent basis since 2005. She had 23 years' experience working in security roles in various stores. At the time her employment was terminated she was aged 63 and was working in Dunnes' Annadale Embankment store.

When Ms. Dunbar passed age 60 she was placed on a series of fixed term renewable contracts until 2014, when her contract was terminated.

"I felt very hurt and let down by the decision to terminate my contract in 2014, even though I had always indicated my wish to stay in work until 2016 when I would be 65," Gloria Dunbar said. "I was always a loyal and hardworking member of staff, yet for the three years before I was dismissed I was placed on fixed term yearly contracts, unlike the other security managers in the company, and the other managers in the store where I worked. They were all younger than me and I believe that the reason I was placed on a fixed term contract and then dismissed was because of my age."

Since 2011 there has been no automatic right for an employer to fix a retirement point based on age. The law provides that if an employer wishes to have an age-based retirement policy it must be justified.

"This case raised issues regarding the treatment of older workers as they approach or pass what was regarded as retirement age," said Dr Evelyn Collins CBE, Chief Executive of the Equality Commission. "Staff who are able and willing to work beyond previously accepted retirement ages must have their wishes fairly considered and, when decisions are being made regarding their contracts, performance standards, and continued employment, they are entitled

to the same consideration as workers of other ages.

“Everyone has the right to fair treatment in the job market and in the workplace on the basis of individual merits, experience and potential,” Dr Collins said. “Employers can contact us for one to one advice and/or visit our website to find out how to stay the right side of the law in managing older workers and retirement. All our advice is free and confidential.”

In settling the case, Dunnes Stores (Bangor) Ltd. has agreed to liaise with the Equality Commission in relation to the development of its policies, practices, training and procedures on equality of opportunity and, in particular, on age discrimination.

YouTube video: <https://youtu.be/SpXCV44DcEw>