

10 Years After First Age Discrimination Law We Need To Finish The Job

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“A decade after age discrimination in employment was made unlawful we are still waiting for protections against age discrimination covering the provision of goods, facilities and services”, Dr. Evelyn Collins CBE, Chief Executive of the Equality Commission for Northern Ireland, said today.

The Employment Equality (Age) Regulations (Northern Ireland) were made on 13 June 2006 and were a significant step forward for equality for Northern Ireland. The first tribunal decision under the new legislation, in 2008, held that a firm was guilty of unlawful discrimination when, in an advertisement for a timber salesman, they said they wanted someone with “youthful enthusiasm”. A 58 year old man with years of experience in the field, who was rejected for the post, received £70,000 in compensation.

“The law in Great Britain was extended to provide protection against age discrimination in the provision of goods, facilities and services in 2010”, Dr. Collins said. “ Although the Northern Ireland Executive included a commitment to introduce similar legislation for Northern Ireland in its Programme for Government 2011-2015, and a consultation on a proposal for legislation was conducted in 2015, no such law was passed in the term of the last Assembly.”

“The Executive Office is now consulting on a Framework for the next Programme for Government. While this does not make any specific reference to Age Discrimination legislation, the Equality Commission trusts that work to bring forward the necessary legislation will continue, and that the Executive will move swiftly to fill this serious gap in our equality laws. People are entitled to have protection against age discrimination when they are accessing goods, facilities or services – just as people in Great Britain have had for the past six years.”

“This is a serious deficit and we are seeking to have it addressed so that people of all ages are protected against discrimination when carrying out basic social and economic activities such as using health or financial services, purchasing goods, or accessing facilities and commercial premises,” Dr. Collins said.