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PRESS RELEASE

Sexual harassment case supported by Equality Commission settled for £6,000

A Portadown woman who alleged she was subjected to unlawful sexual harassment while employed by the Wah Hep Chinese Community Association in Craigavon has settled her case for £6,000, paid without any admission of liability.

Jing-Yueh Huang-Porterfield, who took the case with the assistance of the Equality Commission, worked as a Chinese Community administration worker with the Community Association for 20 months from February 2015 until her resignation in October 2016. She alleges that, during that time, a manager made sexually offensive and suggestive comments and behaved inappropriately.

Jing-Yueh Huang-Porterfield said: "I liked my job and enjoyed being able to advise and support Chinese people. It was very upsetting when my manager began to make inappropriate sexual comments and gestures towards me. I did not ask for or encourage this behaviour, I wanted it to stop. I wanted to go to work and do my job without worrying about what the next inappropriate sexual innuendo would be.

"I did raise a grievance with my employer, but I became ill due to the stress of the situation I found myself in and I had to go on sick leave. I felt I had no option but to resign from my job. I wish none of this had happened to me, it was an awful experience. I feel I have lost a job that I enjoyed through no fault of my own, but it would have been impossible to have stayed there."

Anne McKernan, Director of Legal Services at the Equality Commission, said: "Women are entitled to dignity and respect in the workplace - as are all workers – and employers must deal effectively and promptly with any allegations of improper treatment or behaviour. It must be emphasised that there is a legal duty on employers to prevent harassment such as that alleged by Jing-Yueh from happening. All employers should know that they must have firm policies and procedures in place to deal with situations where a member of their staff feels they are being harassed and how important it is that those policies are consistently implemented."

In settling the case, the Wah Hep Chinese Community Association, in addition to paying Mrs Huang-Porterfield £6,000 without any admission of liability, stated that it sincerely regrets any upset felt by her in the course of her employment. It also affirmed its

commitment to the principle of equality of opportunity in employment and to ensuring that its policies and procedures comply with its obligations under current national and European equality law and the relevant Codes of Practice.

The Association also undertook to liaise with the Equality Commission to review its equal opportunities and sexual harassment policies and procedure, and to implement such recommendations as the Commission may make. It has agreed to communicate its amended policies and procedures to all staff and to report to the Equality Commission on the implementation of its recommendations.

Useful publications:

- [Sex discrimination - a short guide](#) (pdf, 252kb)
- [Promoting a good and harmonious workplace](#) (pdf, 444kb)
- [Harassment and Bullying in the workplace](#) (pdf, 512kb)
- Download our template [Harassment & Bullying policy](#) (word doc, 64kb)