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PRESS RELEASE

£9k settlement for mother made redundant on maternity leave

A woman made redundant during her maternity leave has settled her sex discrimination case, before it went to tribunal hearing, against her employers SALIIS Ltd for £9,000.

Áine Magorrian from Castlewellan, with the help of the Equality Commission, took a case against the company alleging sex discrimination, unlawful discrimination on grounds of pregnancy and unfair dismissal. She joined SALIIS in early 2013. Her employment as Operations and Maintenance Manager was terminated in October 2016.

Mrs. Magorrian was troubled when, following the birth of her first daughter, her role was changed in her absence. She claimed that on being assured by her employer that her new role was more secure, she did not at that time pursue a complaint.

When she became pregnant again she alleged that two new workers were recruited, during sickness absence related to her pregnancy, to carry out work she had been doing. On her return she was moved to other duties. Later, during her maternity leave, Mrs Magorrian was informed that she was being made redundant.

She challenged the reasons given – that it was because of a loss of contracts and a downturn in work in the renewables business. She believed she was selected for redundancy because of her pregnancy and maternity leave. She appealed the decision, but the company confirmed the redundancy.

Áine Magorrian says: “I had always worked hard for the company and believe I made a very positive contribution to its work. Finding out that I was to be made redundant five months into my maternity leave was devastating for me and my family.”

In settling the case, Saliis Limited expressed their regret for any upset to Mrs. Magorrian. It affirmed its commitment to the principles of equality of opportunity and to ensuring that its policies, practices and procedures conform in all aspects with the sex discrimination legislation. It has also undertaken to meet with the Equality Commission to review its redundancy, maternity and equal opportunities policies and to consider the

Commission's recommendations for any amendments and the training of staff.

"I have moved on to another job, and am glad this episode is over," Áine Magorrian said. "I hope that, by telling people about this case, other women can avoid finding themselves in the same situation."

"Issues around pregnancy and maternity in the workplace are the most common reason for complaints of sex discrimination made to the Commission," Mary Kitson, Senior Legal Officer, Equality Commission for Northern Ireland, said. "The laws protecting women from this kind of discrimination were introduced so that they can remain in the workforce and not be disadvantaged because of pregnancy or family responsibilities. Despite the law this is still a major issue - half of the women who responded to our investigation last year into the treatment of pregnant workers and mothers at work said that they felt their career opportunities had been damaged by their pregnancy or maternity leave."

It is also important for all employers to ensure that, when they are considering redundancies, they have clear, fair policies dealing with that situation and that they are fairly applied, with sensible notice and consultation with employees.

"The Equality Commission will be liaising with SALIIS under the terms of this settlement and we would encourage any employer with concerns about the issue to contact the Commission or check our website for advice and information on how to make sure that any employee who is pregnant, or returning to work after pregnancy, is treated properly, within the law."

Notes to editors

Complaints of sex discrimination are consistently the second most reported to the Commission every year (around 27% of all complaints recorded every year).

Of those sex discrimination complaints, around 20% every year are to do with discrimination because of pregnancy and maternity.

Further information

- Pregnancy and maternity at work: guide for employers in NI - [online version](#) / [pdf](#)
- [Employer training programme - pregnancy and maternity at work](#)