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PRESS RELEASE

£3,000 settlement for boy told to leave Curry's PC World Store

A boy of mixed race, a minor, who was asked to leave a Curry's PC World store in County Down has been paid £3,000 in settlement of his case alleging racial discrimination. The Equality Commission supported him in taking his case, which was settled by DSG Retail Limited, operators of Curry's PC World, without admission of liability.

The boy went into the store to buy a wireless keyboard, while his mother waited outside in the car. He says that while he was walking around the store he was approached by a member of staff and asked to leave; this happened several times. The boy explained why he was in the shop and asked why he should leave, but no reason or explanation was given. He was followed and closely observed as he selected and paid for the keyboard and left the store.

"I don't think I've ever been as embarrassed, being singled out like this," he said. "When I got back to the car I was really upset and told my mum that I was never going into a shop again."

At the time the boy's mother challenged the people in the store and later complained on the phone to a man who said he was the local manager, but says she did not get a satisfactory response. She alleges that reference was made to other "blacks" having caused trouble and damaged items in the store.

"I thought then, and I still think now, that this happened because of my race," the boy says. "Afterwards I was very anxious and was afraid to go out, particularly into shops or into the town. I even stopped going out to activities which I really loved. Now that this has been resolved, I hope that my challenging it will help other people who are treated unfairly because of their race – you don't have to put up with it and there is support available."

"For any thirteen year old child it would be troubling and upsetting to be told to leave a store, followed and observed closely as he made his purchase," Dr Michael Wardlow, Chief Commissioner of the Equality Commission, said. "To feel, as this young boy did, that he was singled out and treated unfairly because of his race, while out shopping in his home town, made this particularly traumatic."

"Racial prejudice sometimes involves discrimination in the workplace and even outright violence against people and their homes," Dr Wardlow said. "It can also, however, present itself in lower level, daily interactions. Assumptions made about

people, based on stereotypes, simply because of the colour of their skin, can result in unfair and hurtful treatment which can make a damaging impact on a person's self-esteem and self-confidence. There is no place for this in our society."

In addition to paying £3,000 the company has undertaken to liaise with the Equality Commission to review their equal opportunity policies, practices and procedures and to implement any reasonable recommendations the Commission makes, including race awareness training for their staff.