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PRESS RELEASE

Group Commits to Scheme to Improve Access for Disabled People

Leah Batchelor, a cinema goer and fan of the Frozen movies, has settled a case alleging disability discrimination against IMC Cinemas with a positive outcome which will benefit many disabled people using its cinemas across Northern Ireland.

Ms Batchelor, who enjoys watching films at IMC Cinema Newtownards, was assisted by the Equality Commission for Northern Ireland.

Leah is a wheelchair user and requires the support of another person to help with her needs, when in social settings. Leah uses a CEA Card to purchase tickets for the cinema; this UK wide card scheme provides her with a complimentary ticket for her supporting person when she buys a full price ticket for herself.

In November 2019 Leah's father tried to purchase tickets for Frozen 2 on her behalf using her CEA card. He was advised the CEA card could not be used for the first two weeks of a new film release. He challenged this, providing an email from CEA which confirmed there were no restrictions on when the card could be used. Leah's father was advised that until the regional manager responded all they could offer were two of their cheapest priced tickets.

In settling the case, IMC Cinemas agreed to implement the CEA scheme across all of their cinemas in Northern Ireland within 6 weeks of each cinema opening. The group currently have five cinema complexes across Northern Ireland.

Leah said: "I love going to the cinema and the IMC in Newtownards has really good facilities for disabled people, I look forward to it. Like most other people I want to see films when they are released and not two or three weeks later when I already know what the plot of the film is.

"My CEA card is invaluable to me. It allows me to attend the cinema just like everyone else by providing with a complimentary ticket for my supporting person as I'm unable to go alone due to my disability. I'm delighted my case has been settled. I couldn't have wished for a better outcome, now everyone with a disability who has a CEA card will be able to use it to watch all the new films as they are released."

Mary Kitson, Equality Commission for Northern Ireland, said: "Leah's experience highlights the proactive duty within the Disability Discrimination Act which requires service providers to consider what adjustments they can make to their services to ensure that people with a disability can access them.

“For businesses who need support or guidance in making these decisions, the Commission’s ‘Every Customer Counts’ initiative provides resources which can help them make their service or business more accessible to people with a disability.”

The case was settled for £1500.

Every Customer Counts resources are available online from www.equalityni.org/EveryCustomerCounts

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