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Too old to deliver pizza?

Strabane woman Janice Walsh has settled her case of age and sex discrimination against DP Strabane t/a Domino's Pizza and its owner at the time, Justin Quirk. She was supported by the Equality Commission for Northern Ireland.

Mr Quirk paid Ms Walsh £4,250, apologised to her for what happened and regretted the injury to her feelings.

Janice had applied for a post as a team member/delivery driver with Domino's Pizza in Strabane. At her interview, Janice says the first question was how old she was, and that the interviewer wrote down the answer, drew a circle round it and responded 'you don't look it!' Janice later checked the company's Facebook page to see if she had been successful and it stated that if candidates hadn't heard otherwise their applications had been unsuccessful.

Janice says: "I immediately thought back to the interview and the question about my age. I believe my age was an issue and it had affected the decision made by the interview panel. I sent a private message via their Facebook page saying that I felt I had been discriminated against because of my age due to the first question I was asked at interview."

A short time after sending that message she received a telephone call from an interview panel member who apologised and said they did not know that it was inappropriate to ask someone their age directly when interviewing for a post.

Janice subsequently spoke to another person from Domino's Pizza who said that the nature of the work tended to suit younger people between 18 and 30 years old.

Janice also believes that she may have suffered sex discrimination. She says: "I've only ever seen men working as drivers and I think I was overlooked for a driver position because I am a woman. Domino's continued to advertise for drivers after the interviews had taken place."

Mary Kitson, Senior Legal Officer, Equality Commission, says: "The Employment Equality (Age) Regulations came into effect in 2006 – 16 years ago. It's important that employers of any size and for any job are aware of the basics of equality legislation and how it protects job applicants, as well as current employees, from age discrimination at work."

"People involved in recruitment and selection should be familiar with how people are protected by the legislation in order to keep the employer on the right side of the law. It's really important not to allow stereotypical views of who can do particular jobs to influence decisions."

The last word goes to Janice Walsh herself. “I was surprised to be asked about my age, and I believe that that is why I turned down for the job. However, my reason for taking the case to the Equality Commission was about trying to make sure that more employers and HR people know about the law, and that people will know that you can challenge age and sex discrimination if you run into them – and you can move on after it. I now have a busy and rewarding job that I love.”