# County Tyrone family awarded £75,000 in libel case over false dine and dash claims



A family from County Tyrone, comprising Peter and Ann McGirr and their children, Peter Jr and Carol, has been awarded £75,000 in libel damages following a wrongful accusation of "dining and dashing" from a bar in the Peak District of England. This outcome was confirmed in the High Court during a session held recently.

The McGirr family initiated legal proceedings against the Horse & Jockey Public House after they were falsely accused of leaving the establishment without paying their £150 food and drink bill. The allegations surfaced from a Facebook post made by the pub in July of the previous year, which included CCTV images of the family and labelled them as "dine and dashers". Subsequently, similar claims appeared in reports from at least four different national newspapers.

During the court proceedings, Mr Justice Colton heard that the accusations were baseless and defamatory. The family’s barrister, Peter Girvan, emphasised, "The allegations were entirely false. The plaintiffs had not engaged in any such conduct, and the statements made by the defendants had no factual basis." The court was informed that the defendants accepted their claims, agreeing to the £75,000 damages and covering the family's legal fees.

Moreover, an apology was issued, acknowledging the distress, embarrassment, and reputational harm caused by the allegations. Counsel representing Horse & Jockey (Peak District) Ltd confirmed that there was no factual basis for the allegations, stating, "The defendants unreservedly apologise to the Plaintiffs for the distress, embarrassment, and reputational harm caused by the publications."

Following the verdict, the family's solicitor, Darragh Carney of Johnsons law firm, expressed that the McGirr family felt vindicated by the ruling. He noted their satisfaction with the settlement, which aims to compensate for the defamation of their character and the costs incurred in pursuing legal action.

The case highlights the implications of defamatory statements made publicly and the recourse available to those seeking to protect their reputations.

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

## Bibliography

1. <https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-northern-ireland-67913143> - This article discusses a libel case brought by Sinn Féin MLA Gerry Kelly against journalist Malachi O'Doherty, highlighting the legal proceedings and the court's dismissal of the case as 'scandalous, frivolous, and vexatious'.
2. <https://www.rte.ie/news/ireland/2023/1214/1421973-discrimination-case/> - This report details a £20,000 award to an Irish Traveller family who were unlawfully discriminated against and asked to leave a Belfast restaurant on grounds of race, emphasizing the legal recourse available for defamation and discrimination.
3. <https://www.belfasttelegraph.co.uk/news/northern-ireland/irish-travellers-settle-discrimination-case-against-ni-venue-for-24000/a1052700414.html> - This article covers the settlement of a race discrimination case against a Tyrone bar and restaurant, where six Irish Travellers were awarded £24,000 after being refused service and asked to leave, underscoring the implications of discriminatory actions and the importance of legal remedies.
4. <https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2024/jan/08/belfast-court-dismisses-frivolous-sinn-fein-libel-case-against-journalist> - This piece reports on the dismissal of a libel case brought by Sinn Féin MLA Gerry Kelly against journalist Malachi O'Doherty, with the court describing the case as 'completely untenable' and highlighting the potential misuse of legal actions to intimidate critics.
5. <https://www.irishnews.com/news/northern-ireland/gerry-kelly-scandalous-frivolous-and-vexatious-libel-case-against-malachi-odoherty-thrown-out-SOJR4BK7SRP2TEJKDTEVEX5TDA/> - This article provides details on the High Court's decision to strike out a libel case brought by Sinn Féin MLA Gerry Kelly against journalist Malachi O'Doherty, emphasizing the court's view of the case as an abuse of process.
6. <https://www.itv.com/news/wales/2024-05-09/restaurant-owner-hit-by-dine-and-dash-couple-speaks-out-and-says-stealing-wont-be-tolerated> - This report covers a restaurant owner in Swansea speaking out after a couple defrauded the establishment out of £267, highlighting the financial and reputational impact of 'dine and dash' incidents on businesses.
7. <https://www.irishnews.com/news/northern-ireland/co-tyrone-family-wrongly-accused-of-dining-and-dashing-from-bar-without-paying-food-and-drink-bill-to-receive-75000-in-libel-damages-W5NWZCQCFRAX5BFKWLS2WAQYH4/> - Please view link - unable to able to access data