# Family awarded £75,000 after pub falsely accused them of dine and dash



A family from County Tyrone, Northern Ireland, has been awarded £75,000 in damages after being wrongly accused of dining and dashing from a restaurant in Tideswell. The Horse and Jockey pub initially condemned Peter and Ann McGirr and their two children for leaving without paying their £150 bill, making the allegations public in a Facebook post that led to significant media coverage and damage to the family’s reputation.

The McGirr family dined at the establishment, enjoying two ribeye steaks priced at £27 each, two Derbyshire gammon steaks costing £15.25 each, and a selection of ales and lagers. However, it came to light that the family had indeed settled their bill; a staff member failed to process the payment correctly on the till.

During proceedings at Belfast Crown Court, it was highlighted that the accusations against the family were unfounded, leading to their distress and public embarrassment. Peter Girvan, counsel for the McGirr family, noted, "These articles contained serious and defamatory accusations that the plaintiffs had engaged in dishonest and criminal conduct by deliberately absconding without settling a bill of approximately £150." He asserted that the family did not partake in any dishonest behaviour and that the statements made against them lacked factual support.

The pub’s management later acknowledged the mix-up, attributing it to an error by an inexperienced staff member who had taken payment via card but failed to record it in the till. In a statement issued last July, the pub expressed its regret: "We want to sincerely apologise to the people involved because we have now learnt that they did in fact pay for their meal. There was no dishonesty involved from our staff, it was an honest mistake but we have dismissed the member of staff responsible for the error."

As part of the settlement, the Horse and Jockey pub agreed to cover the legal costs of the family and accepted there was “no basis whatsoever” for the allegations made against them. Solicitor Darragh Carney, representing the McGirr family, stated that they felt "vindicated" by the outcome, adding that they were "very satisfied with the settlement" received for the defamation of their character. This case highlights the potential consequences of hasty public accusations in the hospitality industry and the significant impact they can have on individuals' reputations.

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

## Bibliography

1. <https://metro.co.uk/2024/07/04/pub-apologises-customers-falsely-shamed-dine-and-dashers-21159275/> - This article reports on the Horse and Jockey pub in Tideswell, Derbyshire, which falsely accused a group of diners of not paying their £150 meal, leading to public shaming and an apology after the error was discovered.
2. <https://www.newsletter.co.uk/news/crime/irish-travellers-settle-race-discrimination-case-against-co-tyrone-restaurant-for-ps24k-4639095> - This piece details a case where six Irish Travellers settled a race discrimination case against the Ryandale Inn in County Tyrone for £24,000, highlighting issues of racial discrimination in Northern Ireland's hospitality sector.
3. <https://www.belfasttelegraph.co.uk/news/northern-ireland/irish-travellers-settle-discrimination-case-against-ni-venue-for-24000/a1052700414.html> - This article discusses the settlement of a £24,000 race discrimination case against the Ryandale Inn in County Tyrone, involving six Irish Travellers who were refused service and asked to leave.
4. <https://www.irishlegal.com/articles/travellers-settle-race-discrimination-case-against-co-tyrone-inn-for-ps24k> - This report covers the settlement of a £24,000 race discrimination case against the Ryandale Inn in County Tyrone, supported by the Equality Commission for Northern Ireland.
5. <https://www.equalityni.org/Footer-Links/News/Individuals/Race-discrimination-case-settled-against-the-Ryand> - This official statement from the Equality Commission for Northern Ireland details the settlement of a £24,000 race discrimination case against the Ryandale Inn, involving six Irish Travellers.
6. <https://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/uk_news/northern_ireland/1182766.stm> - This BBC News article reports on a compensation case settled at Belfast High Court, where a man was awarded compensation after being traumatised by an RUC raid in a County Armagh pub.
7. <https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-14678733/family-accused-leaving-restaurant-without-paying-win-damages.html?ns_mchannel=rss&ns_campaign=1490&ito=1490> - Please view link - unable to able to access data