

Alarms ring as gay Christian scoops £47k discrimination award

A gay man has been awarded £47,000 as the result of a successful discrimination claim on the grounds of sexual orientation.

John Reaney, a 42-year-old from North Wales, was awarded the vast sum after an employment tribunal ruled his appointment to the role of youth worker was blocked by the Bishop of Hereford, the Rt Rev Anthony Priddis, on the grounds of sexuality.

Jonathan l'Anson, a partner at law firm Brabners Chaffe Street LLP, that runs discriminationonline.com, said the ruling re-iterates that employers must be aware that recruiting on the basis of sexual orientation is unlawful.

l'Anson said: "The Employment Equality (Sexual Orientation) Regulations 2003 made discrimination in the workplace on the basis of sexual orientation unlawful. This protection is also afforded to candidates at the recruitment stage."

Employers must not select or discard candidates on the grounds of their sexual orientation or perceived sexual orientation, warned l'Anson.

"The situation where the employment is for the purposes of an organised religion remains more complex. In certain circumstances it may be possible for recruitment to be linked to sexual orientation, to take into account the doctrines of a religion. However, such circumstances are likely to be highly limited. This is obviously a fairly contentious issue as a particular sexual orientation may be at odds with the beliefs of some religions and religious organisations," he said.

The case is the latest to highlight the conflict between religious organisations and equality laws.

Meanwhile, three gay men from Wales are suing *Pizza Hut* for sexual discrimination, after they were refused service at a restaurant in Blackpool.

The men were among nine gay men and transsexuals who visited the restaurant. The group, some of whom were in women's clothes, were told to go elsewhere as the venue had run out of pizzas.

Ronnie Fox of Fox Solicitors said: "The purpose of the law prohibiting discrimination on the ground of sexual orientation is to bring about cultural change, to alter the way people think and behave. That will take time to achieve. Employers can help by adopting clear policies prohibiting unlawful discrimination and by training staff to apply those policies."