

## Women allege 'rights abuse' at gay pub

**Christina McDonald and Dearbhail McDonald**

THREE women evicted from a men-only night in a gay pub in Dublin claim their equality rights have been violated.

The women were "stunned" when management at Out on the Liffey — a popular haunt for the city's gay and lesbian community — asked them to leave the bar because they were female.

An early house favoured by the capital's clubbing fraternity — both gay and straight — the pub has run the men-only event on Saturday nights for four years, and insists its weekly event is not discriminatory.

"A little bit of space once a week isn't discrimination," said Frank Moore, owner of Out On The Liffey, which caters by day for barristers and solicitors meeting clients for lunch at the nearby Four Courts. "It is commonplace in the gay scene to have a men's night or a women's night. It is just a theme night one day a week, like a fancy dress or a drag show. Saturday just happens to be an all men's themed night.

"People like to socialise in their own environment and we are creating an environment where people can be relaxed and do that."

But the women ejected from the bar are of a different view. "I expect to be treated the same whether I'm gay or straight, male or female," said one, who is considering filing a complaint with the Equality Authority over the incident.

The three had spent the evening drinking with a group of male friends when they were asked to leave the bar, being

informed that women were barred from 9pm. Despite repeated protests, they were ordered to leave.

"Being kicked out when my male friends were allowed to stay, just because I am female, was a harassment against my gender and my sexuality," one said. "If we had been in a straight bar and the bartenders said that all of the gay people had to leave, there would have been absolute uproar."

Some members of the gay community say discrimination of any kind is wrong.

"Because our community is so small, anything you do to exclude people only gets people angry," said Charlie Atkinson, a member of the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Society at Trinity College, Dublin. "If we can't go out together, we become isolated. There is no excuse for anything that excludes anyone."

Earlier this year the Equality tribunal ruled that ladies' nights in discos and nightclubs that allow women in for free were discriminatory.

Last week Portmarnock golf club had its drinks licence suspended for a week because of a controversial rule excluding women as full members. A Waterford hotel was also fined and ordered to pay €1,000 to a gay man who claimed he was called a "queer" by an employee and asked to leave when he was drinking with members of his family.

"It will take further case law to determine if this policy is in fact discrimination," said Niall Crowley, chief executive of the Equality Authority, who conceded that the men-only nights might be permissible under Ireland's equality laws.



Out on the Liffey: popular with gay and straight clubbers

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