Uber refuses to pick up blind businessman with guide dog on more than 100 occasions

Monday 11 May, 2020

Uber is being prosecuted under disability discrimination legislation following ongoing pick up refusals for blind social entrepreneur Dan Williams, 28, and his four-year-old guide dog Zodiac

Cardiff based social entrepreneur Dan Williams, with support from the Equality and Human Rights Commission, is bringing a case against the multinational ride-hailing company Uber as a result of over 100 refusals to pick him and his guide dog up.

Dan, who is gradually losing his sight due to a condition called retinitis pigmentosa, regularly uses public transport across the UK to carry out visual impairment awareness training for organisations and workplace assessments for employees with sight loss through his social business, Visualise Training and Consultancy.

Over the past 2 years, he has regularly been refused pickups which has caused him to miss or be late for appointments and negatively impacted his business reputation as well as creating huge anxiety and additional mental health challenges.

Dan explains: “A regular scenario is that I book an Uber ride and on arrival, the driver either spots me and Zodiac and drives off or pulls up and refuses to allow us into their car. I always remain calm and professional and explain that it is illegal under UK law as a guide dog is classed as a mobility aid, just like a wheelchair. I then started to message drivers to inform them that I have a guide dog which resulted in cancellations and would often message 2 or 3 drivers before one would actually accept the job.”

Dan goes on to Say: “Having Zodiac has transformed my life over the past two years and he’s become my best friend, but at times like these I really start to wonder if I should hand him back to Guide Dogs and revert to using a white cane to avoid all the anxiety and inconvenience caused by Uber drivers.”

In this short clip, Dan voices his frustrations “I’ve been keeping track of Uber refusals over a two week period and out of 10 orders, I’ve had 6 access refusals which leaves me feeling mentally drained, exhausted, angry, frustrated and feeling like a second class citizen. This is unacceptable in the 21st Century, discriminatory and needs to stop.”

“Some people ask me why I keep using Uber, but this is a systemic issue that includes private hire taxi firms too as documented widely on social media and if something isn’t fair, I’ll do my very best to bring about changes. Uber is actually a very useful service for people with visual impairments as it avoids the need for cash and struggling to read meters, offers good value through fixed pricing, is UK wide and journeys can be tracked easily on smartphones.”

As a result, Dan has decided to act as he knows this happens to other blind and partially sighted people regularly and wants to make changes on their behalf to eradicate this discrimination.

Specialist disability discrimination lawyer Chris Fry of Fry Law who is handling Dan’s case states: “I’m pleased that Dan has decided to pursue this case as I know of many people who are treated in the same way and just put up with it. I’m very hopeful that together, we can make a positive impact on the taxi sector as a whole that will benefit the 2 million people living with sight loss in the UK. We think that Uber hanging its drivers out to dry shows an abrogation of responsibility. They are the Service Provider and are therefore responsible for providing an Equality Act compliant service.”

In a recent case brought by guide dog owner Colin Perreira, 24, a driver was ordered to pay more than £1,700 in costs and banned from offering rides on Uber.

Uber has issued the following statement: “It is totally unacceptable for drivers to refuse to take a guide dog and we investigate every report. Licensed private hire drivers must carry service animals in their vehicle. We highlight this obligation to all drivers before they start using the Uber app and often send reminders. Any driver who is found to have refused to take a service animal will permanently lose access to the app.”

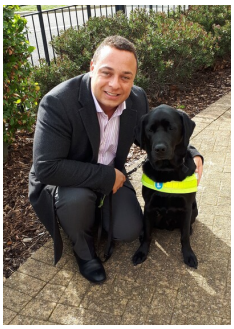
Dan has been interviewed for BBC Radio 4’s In Touch programme which will air at 8.40pm on Tuesday 12th May. If you don’t catch it, it will be available shortly after broadcast via this

Media:









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He'll also be discussing the issue on Radio 4's consumer affairs programme You and Yours at 12.20pm on Wednesday 13th May which you can access at https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/m000j2rw

Company Contact:

Visualise Training and Consultancy

T. 07472305268
E. daniel@visualisetrainingandconsultanc...
W. https://www.visualisetrainingandconsu...

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Additional Assets:
28 sec video clip of Dan Williams voicing his frustrations about the discrimination shown by many Uber drivers

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