

Witness statement of: Maria Kowal

Number of witness statement: 1

Exhibits: MK1-6

Date: 17 August 2018

CLAIM NO.

**IN THE WARWICK COUNTY COURT
BETWEEN**

MS MARIA KOWAL

Claimant

-and-

MS JESSICA BALL

Defendant

WITNESS STATEMENT OF MARIA KOWAL

I, Maria Kowal, of 23 Queens Road, Warwick CV23 3EZ say as follows:

1. I came to the UK in May 2011 from Poland. I have a Polish passport. When I came to the UK, I came to work at Warwick Council as a secretary. I made sure that I had all the right visas to live and work in the UK. (Copy of my visa attached at MK 1)
2. From May 2011, I lived with a friend of my family, Lena Nowak, at 10 Swallow Road, Warwick CV24 2PD as a lodger in her house.
3. In or around April 2018, my friends from work told me they were looking for a house near our work and asked me if I wanted to also live with them. My landlord had also mentioned that she would like her son to move back into her house from May, so I agreed to move in with my friends - Rachel Smith and Sonia Gordon - if we could find somewhere I could afford.
4. On 4 May 2018, I saw an advert for a property at 5 Hunter Close, Warwick CV17 6DG ('the property'). The property was a three bedroom house for rent at £1,500 per month. I asked the estate agent for more details. He told me that the house was owned by Jessica Ball, who did not live at the property and had rented it out for a number of years. The property would be available from 12 May 2018 and Ms Ball was handling enquiries and viewings herself. I took Ms Ball's contact details and phoned her that day. She seemed very nice and said I could view the house with my friends the next day.

5. My friends and I arrived at the property the next morning and met Jessica Ball. We were very excited when we looked around because it was a good size and had a little garden. It was much nicer than the other houses we had viewed and was very close to our work. We told Ms Ball that we wanted to rent the house. She said we could move in on 12 May 2018 but because she had other viewings arranged, we would have to pay £500 each as a non-refundable holding deposit if we wanted her to cancel the other viewings. As we were very keen to move in, we went to a cash machine immediately and returned to pay £500 each. We arranged to return on 10 May 2018 to sign the tenancy agreement and bring our passports and references for routine checks.
6. That night, I told my landlord Ms Nowak that I would be moving out on 12 May 2018. This date also suited her because her son would be back on that day.
7. I was very happy about the move and glad to move in with friends. I began packing up my belongings and arranged a local company to help me move on 12 May 2018.
8. On 10 May 2018, my friends and I went back to 5 Hunter Close to meet Jessica Ball. We checked over the tenancy agreement and gave Jessica Ball our passports and references. As soon as Jessica Ball saw my passport was Polish, she said "Oh no, this is a bit of a problem. If you don't have a British passport, I will have to do checks on you to make sure you are allowed to rent in Britain. I've had problems with other tenants." I showed her my visas that showed I was legally allowed to live and work in the UK. I also told her I worked for the local Council. She said she was sorry, but that it would make her life difficult and delay the move. As she had to fill the house and did not have time to do the checks because she was going on holiday. She said she could still rent the house to my friends because they had a British passport, but they would either need to find another housemate or cover the full rent themselves.
9. I asked for my deposit back but Jessica Ball said "I can't return your deposit because it's non-refundable. If your friends don't move in either, I will have to also take their deposits. It will cover any costs if I have to find other tenants."
10. My friends were not happy but still wanted to take the house especially as they did not want to lose their deposits. Sonia said her sister was interested in moving in. I told them to go ahead because I did not want them to lose out. I was extremely humiliated by Jessica Ball's actions. She made me feel like I was a second class citizen and not welcome in this country. I was also very worried because I did not know what I was going to do as I had to move out of my room in a couple of days. I went home very upset and immediately had to start looking for places to live on the internet.
11. I could not find anywhere to live by 12 May 2018 and had to move my things into storage at a cost of £20 per day. (Storage receipts attached at MK 2) I used the removal company to help me move my things. (Delivery receipt email at MK 3) My landlady Ms Nowak was very sorry that she could not let me stay any longer. I had to

stay on the sofa of a friend of mine in Coventry. I could not go to work as I had to look for a new place to live and go to viewings. My friend could only let me stay for a few days because she had family visiting.

12. From 15 May 2018, I had to live in the Travelodge in Warwick at a cost of £72 per night. (Receipts attached at MK 4) That day, I had found a room to rent in a shared house but it was not available until 25 May. I was so relieved to find new accommodation because I had looked at 15 places which were not suitable. Because I no longer had to go to more viewings, I was able to return to work. I had taken three days unpaid leave trying to find accommodation (Emails from work attached at MK 5). To pay for the deposit of the new place, I had to borrow money from my family because I have Jessica Ball did not give my my £500 back.
13. On 5 July 2018, I wrote to Jessica Ball to say that she had discriminated against me and asked her to return my money. She did not respond (Copy of letter attached at MK6).
14. I have been very distressed by this experience and it has made me worried about how people will treat me as a Polish person.

Statement of truth

I believe that the facts stated in this witness statement are true.

Signed.....*M.Kowal*

MARIA KOWAL

Dated.....17 August 2018

To the Court Manager and to the Defendant

