

Hello **Guest** [[Log in](#)]

JOBS

MOTORS

PROPERTY

[Back to Home](#)

[News](#)

[Headlines](#)

[Post Comment](#)

[Columnists](#)

[Consumer Affairs](#)

[Crime](#)

[Education](#)

[Environment](#)

[Health](#)

[Politics](#)

[Bygones](#)

[Letters and Poems](#)

[Motoring News](#)

[National News](#)

[Weather](#)

[Sport](#)

[Entertainment](#)

[Business](#)

[Campaigns](#)

[Awards](#)

[Nottingham Forest](#)

[Notts County](#)

[Mansfield Town](#)

[Six Nations 2007](#)

[Have Your Say](#)

[Competitions](#)

[Evening Post](#)

[Local Information](#)

[Contact Us](#)

Search this site

Our Partners

[Holidays](#)

[Flights and Hotels](#)

[Teletext Games](#)

[Cut Your Bills](#)

[Dating](#)

You are here: [News](#)

[Next Story](#) | [Previous Story](#) | [Back to list](#)

[comment on this story](#)

[print this story](#)

COTGRAVE TRIBUNAL WOMAN'S FIGHT FOR JUSTICE

[Be the first reader to comment on this story](#)

11:00 - 26 February 2007



On Saturday the Evening Post reported a landmark ruling by a Nottingham employment tribunal which found that a manager at Enterprise Rent-A-Car was sacked because she planned to adopt. Today, Anna Coulombeau tells JAMES SMITH about the effect the actions of her former employers have had on her life

From an early age, Anna Coulombeau knew she wanted a family.

But, following a series of operations to tackle a serious medical condition, she was told it was unlikely she would be able to have children without medical help.

Not long after she turned 20, Anna started the first of two courses of IVF treatment at a cost of nearly £10,000. Yet there were other costs too.

"The courses were very traumatic and emotional," she said. "After the second one, I decided I couldn't do it again."

Anna, from Cotgrave, turned her attention instead to adoption. A number of family members had adopted children, so she was well-informed. By the time she was ready to start attending pre-adoption courses, she was working at Enterprise Rent-A-Car, based at Meadow Lane, Nottingham.

She joined the firm in 2004 as a graduate management trainee and within less than 18 months had won two promotions.

Anna's appraisals described her as "fantastic", "dedicated" and "passionate" about her job, she regularly topped the company's ratings for assistant branch managers and featured in the in-house magazine for her exceptional customer service.

An e-mail in which she was praised by a boss was circulated around the company to act as an example to others.

In September 2005 she began a course that all potential adopters must complete before being placed on the adoption register.

Related stories:

- [Women treated less favourably](#)

[Email this story to a friend](#)

Friend's email address

Your Name

Your email address

Add a message to the email

[email story](#)

Have your say

[Write a letter to the editor](#)

[Vote on our opinion polls](#)

Interact

[Sign up for daily emails](#)

[Sign up for newflashes](#)

[Order a copy of the newspaper](#)

presenting this week
EVENING POST
HOTJOBS

[Science Teacher](#)

[Finance and Office Manager](#)

[Accounts Office Manager/Managers](#)

[Key & Junior Account Managers + Researchers](#)

[Service Manager - Information and Advice and Policy](#)




[Project Engineer](#)

[Customer Services Opportunities](#)

[Field Based Engineer](#)

[Sales Executive: Careers Software & Resources](#)

[Part II Architect/Technologist](#)

-  Find me a job ▶
-  Find me a car ▶
-  Find me a house ▶

This entailed attending occasional day-long sessions with social workers - some on Saturdays, others during the week.

Where necessary she used her annual leave with the full support of her branch manager.

Multimedia

[RSS](#)




[Video Bulletins](#)

[Podcasts](#)

[Photo Slideshows](#)

[Live traffic & Travel](#)

[True-life stories](#)

-  Read the classifieds ▶
-  Family Announcements ▶
-  Book an ad ▶

Soon afterwards, Anna was signed off sick with a chest infection.

When she returned to work in October, she was approached by her area manager, Kate Wigglesworth, and was told she had been suspended.

"I'd come back in two days before my sick note ran out because I was dedicated to my job and had been getting hassled at home," she said.

"It was a total bolt from the blue. I asked why and she was really vague and said I'd receive a letter." Within weeks, she had been called to two disciplinary hearings, sacked for gross misconduct and had an appeal against the decision dismissed.



The grounds for her dismissal were a series of incidents Enterprise claimed were "serious", "dishonest matters" in which she failed to "own up" and "tried to implicate others".

Post Extras

[Daily cartoon](#)

[Comedy virals](#)

[Daily crossword](#)

-  Dining Out ▶
-  Days Out ▶

The allegations against her included using a fuel card belonging to another branch, raising a false charge against a corporate client for a car he never rented and double charging him for fuel, falsifying time sheets for junior employees and mis-billing rentals to boost her chances of winning an internal competition.

Miss Wigglesworth said her actions went against Enterprise ethics. Yet Anna believed they were all minor errors that had already been dealt with or were unfounded.

She also knew of male employees who had committed similar - or worse - offences who had not been dismissed.

Following a conversation with her branch manager, she believed she had found the real reason for his dismissal.

"He told me that [city manager] John Houghton had been looking through my time sheets and asking why I'd been taking so much holiday," she said. "When he told him I was planning to adopt, John Houghton said, 'Well, she'll be no bloody use to me then'."

Anna took Enterprise to an employment tribunal claiming unfair dismissal, sex discrimination and detriment on the grounds that she intended to take adoptive leave.

"I felt very let down by an organisation that is supposed to be an equal opportunities employer and family-orientated," she said.

"It was just like I'd been kicked in the teeth. I was left with an incredible feeling of self-doubt.

"My family was horrified - no one who knew me could believe I'd been called dishonest. They stood by me and said it must be a mistake."

Last week - seven months after the tribunal started - she was proven right.

The three-man tribunal agreed unanimously that her

We've got 1000s of other jobs to view

[click here for Nottingham's biggest selection](#)

this is

Vote

Will head cameras help Notts police reduce crime?

- Yes
- No

[vote X](#)

 **Today**
clear spells
Max. 8C/47F
[Full forecast >](#)

dismissal was unfair and related to her plans to adopt. It also agreed that she had suffered sex discrimination.

Enterprise's handling of her disciplinary hearings was criticised, as was the evidence given by some of their witnesses during the hearing.

The ruling said East Midlands vice president Peter De Frank, who heard Anna's appeal, gave evidence in a statement that he had interviewed John Houghton when "before us it became clear he had never done any such thing".

The tribunal did not believe Mr Houghton's assertion that he had never made the alleged comment in relation to Anna's plans to adopt and was "wholly unpersuaded" that his presence at her second disciplinary was "simply [as] a note taker".

It heard evidence from another female employee about "insensitive" comments made to her and stated: "If Mr Houghton could take that approach in relation to [that employee], it would be consistent for him to take a similarly insensitive and aggressive view about the claimant's absences and intended leave for the purposes of adoption."

In contrast, it described Anna's witnesses, Jo Adams and Glyn Ricketts as "clear", "consistent and compelling".

The tribunal concluded that none of the alleged "dishonest acts" warranted dismissal.

Despite her victory Anna, now 24 and working for a pharmaceutical company, says the case has "changed the whole course of my life".

"I won't even consider adopting until I'm at least 30," she said.

"The impact on me was very detrimental and would be enough to put anyone off.

"I'm very disappointed with the company and they still haven't apologised."

Anna has pledged to give any money she received above her legal costs to adoption charity BAAF and Save The Children.

"I want to build a successful career with a stable job. Then, in a few years, I'm sure adoption is something I'll dive straight into."

james.smith@nottinghameveningpost.co.uk

Have your say...

Use these boxes to tell us what you think **right now**. Your comment will be **instantly published** right here and possibly printed in the Evening Post as well.

[: How Story Comments works >](#)

Your Name

Your Location

Your email address (Not for publication)

Please tick this box if you do not want someone from the newspaper or website to contact you via email for further comments.

Comment(max. 4000 characters)