

'No mercy' as abuser jailed

By REBECCA SHERDLEY

CARE home worker John Dent, who abused children in his charge more than two decades ago, was today jailed for seven years.

In December, Dent was found guilty of 11 sex offences involving four youngsters at two Nottingham children's homes in the 1970s.

The jury had heard he raped one boy and indecently assaulted three girls when he worked at Enderleigh Children's Home in Woodborough Road, Mapperley Park, and Hillcrest in Watcombe Circus, Carrington.

Dent, 52, of Woodhall Spa, Lincolnshire, continues to profess his innocence.

At Nottingham Crown Court, Judge John Hopkin told Dent he had betrayed the children's trust, adding: "It's an appalling case of a man who used his position to satisfy his own lust. You exerted an evil influence."

He said he could offer Dent no mercy since he had pleaded not guilty to the charges, forcing his victims relive their experiences in court.

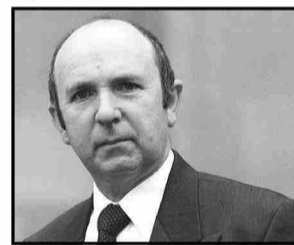
The court heard how Dent would creep through the corridors of the homes at night to abuse his victims. In one case he had placed a pillow in a girl's bed to make it appear as if she was there if night staff checked.

Some of the children were taken to Dent's room to be abused.

And Dent would crawl through a tunnel in the roof to get to the boy, who was 15 when the abuse began.

Another victim had tearfully recalled in court how Dent would lock her in a "punishment room", which had bars on the windows and a mattress.

He had put her there on one occasion because she refused to skip during exercise, saying Dent had been watching her breasts. She was taken inside and forced to scrub the floors she was locked in the room.



JAILED: John Dent

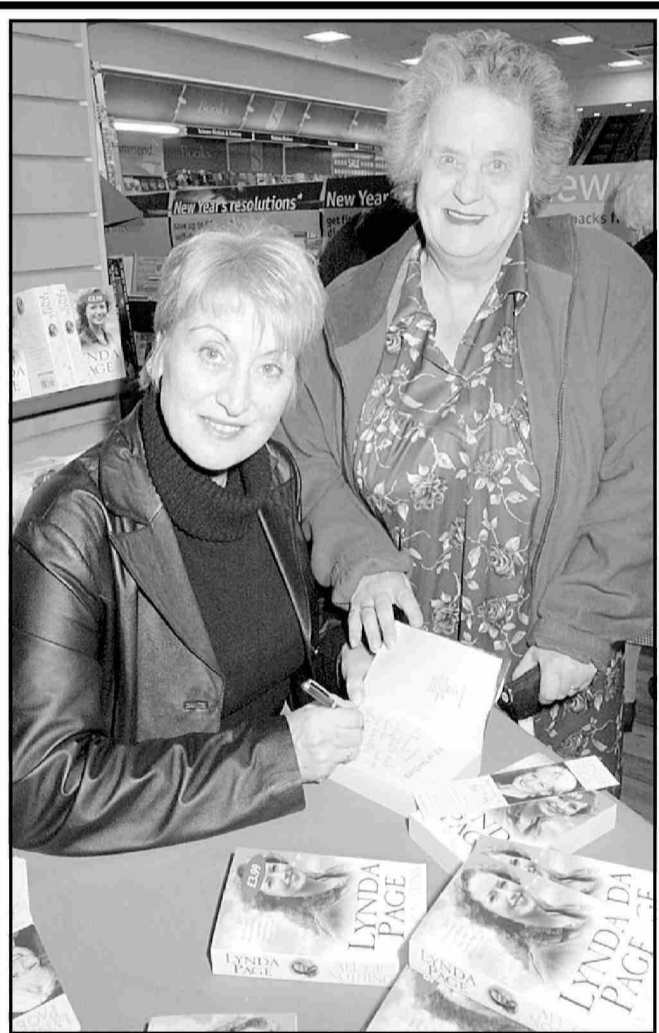
Stuart Rafferty, prosecuting, said: "He then began his charm offensive. He is nice to her for some time after that. He gave her sweets and cigarettes."

Dent went on to sexually assault her.

Dent, who is married with a stepdaughter, looked straight ahead as Judge Hopkin read out the sentence on each charge.

Stephen Lowne, defending, said Dent had been a caring person since the allegations arose. He added "Clearly there has been no problems with any youngsters since then. He has led a full industrious life. Any prison sentence will have a considerable impact on his psychological state of mind."

Judge Hopkin placed Dent on the Sex Offenders' Register indefinitely, saying: "It is perfectly clear only a custodial prison sentence is suitable in your case to punish you and show to the public courts will not tolerate matters of this nature."



PAGE-TURNER: Writer Lynda Page was at WH Smith in the Victoria Centre, Nottingham, to sign copies of her new book *All or Nothing*. It is her 11th book to be published. She has already written her 12th book and is now working on her 13th. With her is Margaret Mehew, of Gedling, who has read all of Lynda's books so far

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