

STATEMENT OF: DENNIS WATKINS

1. I am retired, having previously occupied the post of Assistant Director of the Children's Division of Nottinghamshire County Council Social Services Department.
2. In this capacity I was responsible for the children's provision and for the Amberdale Community Home. This Community Home includes the provision of a secure unit is a regional resource. It has a particularly high profile within the child care provision because of that regional responsibility, and the relationship which the Authority must then have with other Local Authorities, the Home Office and Department of Health.
3. I was responsible for the appointment of NO-F158 to the post of Senior Position of Amberdale.
4. Previously, there had been a long period during which the Community Home had been viewed as difficult to manage, and which had required considerable amounts of the time of senior staff within the Department to sort out various managerial and operational difficulties. When the post of Senior Position became vacant **Irrelevant**, it was seen as an opportunity to appoint someone with strength and the ability to get a grip on the establishment.
5. I regarded the appointment as highly sensitive, and requiring a high degree of professionalism, knowledge of child care practices, and the ability to develop and carry staff on to a

high degree of professional standard of care. The priority in such an establishment is to ensure that the balance between control, care and development of damaged young people is exercised appropriately in an institution which should be a 'flag ship' of the Authority, and be regarded nationally as affording to the Local Authority a reputation for good quality care.

6. [NO-F158] was appointed on the basis of recommendations which I received. The post was not advertised.

7. I have now been made aware that prior to his appointment with Nottinghamshire County Council, [NO-F158] was subject to a formal inquiry, and a finding of unprofessional conduct based on his inappropriate relationship with a boy who was resident at the Community Home of Education at which he worked. I was completely unaware of that background, and there was no record of this within the records held by the Social Services Department. I would have regarded this as crucially important in my assessment of [NO-F158] as suitable for the task of managing this establishment.

8. Furthermore, I would expect any candidate for such a post to recognise the need for the Authority's managers to have an accurate base of information concerning the background of those appointed to such a sensitive position. In other appointments which I have made, I do have experience of individuals recognising this and drawing to my attention circumstances in their background which they have felt I should be aware of before

making an appointment. I regard this as proper professional practice in this highly sensitive area, in which damaged children are exposed to the care of adults in a closed environment.

9. The holder of a post such as Senior Position of Amberdale, will be responsible for the conduct and approach of other staff, and the appointment of those staff. It is important therefore to know the attitude and experience of an appointee to such a post as this will be reflected in the standards adopted throughout the establishment.

DENNIS WATKINS