

## Pictons help Surrey child abuse victims to pursue grievances through courts

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Pictons are to help two victims of a man jailed two weeks ago for sexually abusing boys in his charge at a Surrey school to pursue their grievances through the civil courts.

Keith Hammerton (69) of Battersea was jailed for six years on 1<sup>st</sup> November for sexual offences he committed against boys while he was employed as a house master at Kinton approved school in Woking in the 1970s.

Now two of his victims, who wish to remain anonymous for the time being, are to bring civil actions against Surrey county council who ran the school.

Their lawyer is Tracey Emmott, one of Pictons' specialist child abuse lawyers and a panel member of the Association of Child Abuse Lawyers. She has been instructed by two former pupils of Kinton school to bring an action on behalf of the men for the trauma and distress they suffered during their sexual abuse at the hands of Hammerton for about three years, and which has had long term consequences for them.

"My clients were preyed upon by someone whose job it was to care for vulnerable boys" Tracey Emmott explains. "He took advantage of his position of authority over them, subjecting them to regular and sustained sexual abuse.

"While many of the boys were scared to report what was going on, some complaints were made but appear not to have been properly investigated and even ignored. My clients allege that most staff chose to turn a blind eye to activities going on in the home, which they should have questioned.

"Even when members of the staff brought their concerns about sex abuse to the attention of the headmaster they seem to have been treated lightly, since Hammerton was first suspended but was later reinstated.

"It seems that those in charge of the home and the investigating authorities failed in their duty to protect vulnerable young people in their care despite warning signs and numerous complaints by both staff and boys. As a result of their suffering the lives of these men have been damaged, leaving them with lifelong emotional scars.

"These offences occurred a long time ago and we are assured that since then systems of accountability and monitoring, which allowed such abuse to take place, have changed radically. We must hope so, to ensure that children today and in the future are adequately protected from having to face similar terrible ordeals".

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