

# HEARTLESS

## Fury as landlord advertises for 'specialist in violent evictions'

AS a job attribute, it may not be right up there with 'pleasant personality' or 'ability to work within a well-motivated team'.

The average employer might look askance at an entry in the skills box that read: 'Can kick someone between the legs while throwing their infant child onto the street.'

But private landlord Mark Kennedy-Stewart, 40, would be delighted.

The boss of Caduceus Investments has advertised for a £12,500-a-year part-time manager to handle a portfolio of hundreds of properties in the Borders.

Mr Kennedy-Stewart believes that dealing with recalcitrant tenants requires less of a pleasant demeanour and more of a ruthless streak - which is what he advertised for, in no uncertain terms.

His advert stipulated that the successful candidate would be required to deal with a wide range of customers from differing social backgrounds and would have to learn the legal aspects of the job.

But it added: 'While you will have a pleasant personality to deal with sales and client relationships, the guts to kick someone between the legs as we evict them and their two-year-old child onto the street would be an advantage!' The

By **Robert Fairburn**

advertisement was posted on the website of Mr Kennedy-Stewart's Falkirk-based company. But it was condemned by Scottish Borders Council yesterday as 'very sick'.

Lesley Crozier, the council's senior officer for social justice, equality and diversity, described the advert as 'despicable'.

She added: 'The advert would appear to betray an utter contempt for tenants.'

Mrs Crozier explained that, under

### **'If this is a joke, it is a very sick one'**

new anti-social behaviour legislation, all private landlords and properties must be registered with the council, adding that the wording of the advert cast serious doubts on the firm's owner and his credentials as a 'fit and proper' private landlord.

But Mr Kennedy-Stewart, a former chartered accountant and banker, was unrepentant and accused the council of 'not having a sense of humour'.

He defended his use of words, claiming he had tried 'to inject some humour into the job advert', which he admitted has now been removed from

the company website. He said: 'I do not regret this at all. The wording was in italics, which I believe makes it clear that the reference to violent eviction was humorous - but this has been misinterpreted.'

'Anyone who knows me knows I have a sarcastic sense of humour.'

'But the fact of the matter is that there are sides to the business which can be unpleasant and we often deal with people at the lower end of the social spectrum.'

'I myself have been assaulted on three occasions by tenants.'

'The advert was designed to humorously convey that a wide range of people skills are required and that, yes, the successful candidate could be sworn at and abused - to imply otherwise could be misleading.'

Mr Kennedy-Stewart, who founded the firm in 2002, added: 'The vacancy has been filled, that is why the advert is no longer on the website.'

Speaking from their Edinburgh home, his Russian-born wife Anna said: 'The problem here is that some people in this country do not have a sense of humour.'

But Mrs Crozier said: 'If this is a joke, it is a very sick joke. Evictions, especially when children are involved, are a serious matter.'

'Part of that process involves determining if a landlord is a fit and proper person.'



Sarcastic sense of humour: Mark Kennedy-Stewart