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Jehovah's Witness jailed for sex attack on teen - despite his leaders refusing to help police



A Jehovah's Witness has been jailed for a sex attack on a teenage girl – despite his leaders refusing to co-operate with police.

Paul Atkin, 32, was disfellowshipped after elders at The Kingdom Hall in South Shields heard a claim had been made against him a decade ago.

But Newcastle Crown Court yesterday heard that when a police investigation was later launched, 'church' officials refused to help detectives.

Deborah Smith, prosecuting, said: "It would appear there was some form of investigation by the church.

"We know the defendant was disfellowshipped as a consequence of that investigation, but there has been no disclosure of any minutes of meetings with the defendant, and the elders have refused to provide statements to the police, despite the fact the defendant is no longer a member of their congregation, on the grounds of confidentiality."

Atkin, of East Moffat Street, South Shields, was initially accused of rape, but that charge was dropped when he admitted sexual activity with a child.

Today, he was jailed for five years and told he must sign the sex offenders' register for the rest of his life.

The court heard his victim was a schoolgirl when he had sex with her.

Miss Smith said: "She did not wish to have sexual intercourse with him.

"The crown accepts, having discussed matters with her, that the defendant may reasonably have believed that she did. She did not fight back or shout out at the time of the incident."

In a statement read out in court, the victim, now an adult, said: "This has had a major effect on me, and I cannot trust men."

The court heard the woman is still on anti-depressants and says her self-confidence has been shattered by her ordeal.

Judge Simon Hickey told Atkin: "This has had a huge effect upon this young lady."

Gavin Doig, defending, said: "This defendant made a very bad mistake a number of years ago. He has not made any further mistakes.

"He is extremely sorry he committed this offence knowing, as he did, that the complainant was under age."

After the case, Atkin's victim said she is now finally able to move on with her life after years of knowing the person who attacked her was walking the streets as a free man.

She said: "When I told someone all those years ago, they didn't want to know. I was just told it would be sorted by the fellowship.

"I was disappointed that he only got kicked out. For me, there had been no justice."




The victim said it was only when she saw Atkin on Facebook that she finally plucked up the courage to send him a message asking him why he had done what he did in a bid, she said, to get an apology.

It was at that point that the police became involved and, with the support of her family, she finally pushed ahead with making a statement to police.

She added: "It has been really hard but, when the sentence was read out, I just cried. It was just a huge relief that he was finally going to get what he deserved. "The police have been really supportive. They have been with me throughout.

"It just feels as if I can now finally move on with my life."

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