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UK Jehovah's Witnesses accused of sex abuse 'cover-up'

THE Jehovah's Witnesses have been accused of "covering up" a string of sex abuse claims.

By Joe Hinton / Published 3rd January 2016





JAILED: Ian Pheasey was jailed for his offences

It comes as a member who throttled young girls for sexual gratification was jailed after his crimes were kept secret by the church for more than 25 years.

lan Pheasey first attacked a sevenyear-old girl while he was working as a volunteer librarian at the Kingdom Hall of Jehovah's Witnesses in Warwick in

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Last week Pheasey, from Warwick, was jailed for five years after pleading guilty to assaulting one girl causing her actual bodily harm and indecently assaulting two others.

"The matter was swept under the carpet by the church"

Prosecutor Nicholas Taplow

Prosecutor Nicholas Taplow told Warwick Crown Court the parents of one of his victims, a 14-year-old girl, "chose to conceal the sexual nature of the incident and told her not to say anything about it".

He added: "They continued to understate the seriousness of the assault and the matter was swept under the carpet by the church."



INQUIRY: The Manchester New Moston hall is under investigation

In a separate case, the Charity Commission is investigating two Jehovah's Witnesses' registered charities – The Watch Tower Bible And Tract Society Of Britain and Manchester New Moston Congregation Of Jehovah's Witnesses.

Manchester New Moston allegedly allowed a convicted paedophile, a former church elder, to cross-examine two of his victims at a public meeting.

Jehovah's Witnesses believe alleged sex assaults and rapes need to be observed by at least two people for them to be credible.

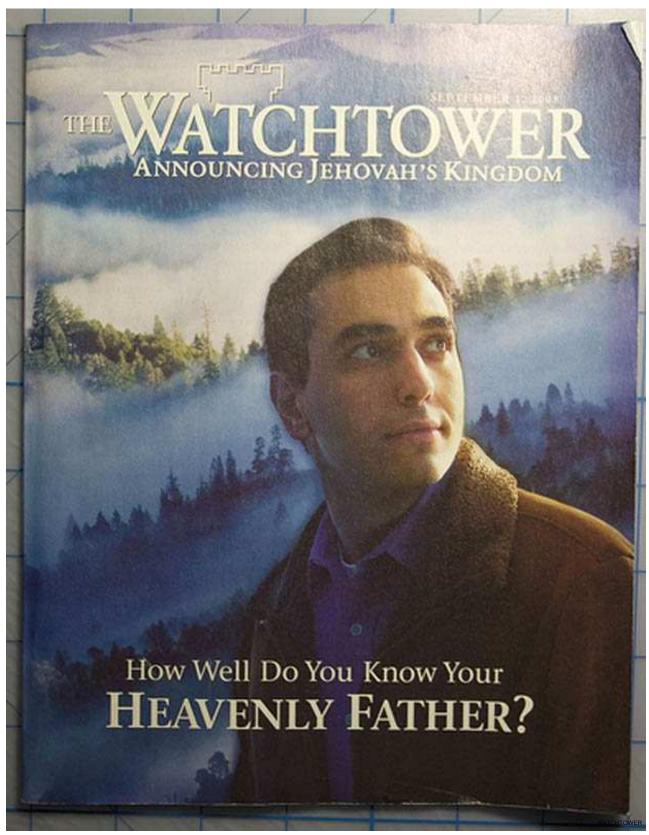
But that scenario almost never occurs in child abuse and sex attacks which usually have only a victim and attacker present.

It is claimed members are discouraged from reporting alleged sex abuse to the police.

Instead they are urged to speak to church elders so the claims can be dealt with internally without outside interference or scrutiny.

An edition of the group's Watchtower magazine urged its readers to be "shrewd" about sex abuse claims involving Jehovah's Witnesses.

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WATCHTOWER: The magazine offers some shocking advice on sexual abuse allegations

Shockingly, it stated: "Even if a report is true, it does not necessarily mean that it should be spread.

"There may be times when it would be neither right nor loving to distribute true accounts to others."

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Former Jehovah's Witness Steve Rose, 51, said the article was clearly aimed at keeping church members in the dark over sex abuse.

Steve, from Hartlepool, County Durham, said: "It is saying that even if it's true, it would be unkind to print stories. They may have a paedophile in the organisation and they say 'Don't print the story because it's unkind'.

"The public need to know about this."

The Watchtower has previously branded those who leave the church as "mentally diseased".

A Jehovah's Witnesses spokesman said The Watchtower advice was offering "helpful principles" and added:

"With so much information out there, people can quickly get caught up with information that's not verified."

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