

Jehovah's Witnesses and Child Protection in Britain

Paul Gillies, spokesman for the Britain branch of Jehovah's Witnesses comments: "Sexual abuse of children is not just a terrible sin but also a crime that can leave lasting emotional scars on its victims. Jehovah's Witnesses everywhere abhor the sexual abuse of children and will not protect any perpetrator of such repugnant acts from the consequences of his gross sin. This is in harmony with the principle recorded at Romans 12:9."

Recognizing that religion is in the spotlight for its handling of matters relating to this complex issue, Jehovah's Witnesses have made sure the public has access to detailed information regarding their means of responding to these matters when they may arise within a congregation. Mr. Gillies explains, "It is of deep concern to us if there is a victim of abuse who says his or her case has not been handled with sensitivity or understanding in our religion."

And Mr. Gillies continues, "Elders in Britain are directed to ensure that secular laws are adhered to. When a report is received, elders contact our National Office in London for guidance to ensure that (1) the alleged victim, and other potential victims, are protected from possible abuse and (2) that counsel is given to report crime to the proper authorities and to comply with any additional legal requirements. Jehovah's Witnesses further believe that it is the absolute right of the victim, his or her family, or any others to report the matter to the authorities if they so choose. There are certainly no sanctions against any congregation member who reports an allegation of child abuse to the authorities."

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