

Petitioner submission of 15 October 2023

PE1905/I: Public Inquiry into the response of religious organisations to allegations of child sexual abuse since 1950

I have read the response from Deputy First Minister Shona Robinson in full and I am happy that the Scottish Government recognises abuse is unacceptable. My worry is that the Jehovah's Witnesses will not engage with services like "Stop It Now" or any advisory groups or committees. I have no problem in meeting with the charity Stop It Now! however I don't know how this will help as I suspect that my former religion will not engage with such groups due to them having a problem with "worldy" institutions that are not Jehovah's Witnesses. They insist that anyone who is not a Jehovah's Witness are part of Satan's world.

Paragraph 18

<https://www.jw.org/en/library/books/True-Peace-and-Security-How-Can-You-Find-It/Survivors-Must-Be-No-Part-of-the-World/>

My experience has already been iterated to government officials through the committee with extensive documentation on how my former religion works. No one can truly stop or prevent abuse happening however what we can do is respond to it effectively so that the child is believed, heard and reparations being put in place for them. As I have said previously, we do not want Jehovah's Witnesses to be shut down, banned or anything of that nature. All we want is for them to call in the authorities when they become aware of abuse through the confessional arrangements they have.

These confessional arrangements are made up of 3 men, Elders within the congregation. In my experience, they held a meeting with me and I told them about the abuse I had been suffering at the hands of my father. Their response was to call upon him to confess within the confines of a kangaroo court with me present. There was no mention of them contacting the police to hand over an alleged criminal. We went home that night and suffice to say, I was scared about what my father would do because he is abusive.

A Jehovah's Witnesses parent company have previously highlighted that prevention of abuse is a parental responsibility. I take issue with that

because it was my parent that was carrying out the abuse. In my view therefore, the leadership in my religious community should have informed the police on my behalf, because at that point - they had an alleged criminal in front of them. Instead, they kept quiet, urged me to keep quiet to spare the congregation of this dirty shame. When they did that, that gave my father the liberation to continue. They may have thought that he was repentant, however, he continued his crimes perpetuated on children by then harming another member of my family and another young girl within the congregation. The congregation are like family in my experience, called "Brothers and Sisters" within it and therefore, close connections are established.

The betrayal and hurt I experienced within the organisation are part of the childhood trauma I endured and continue to endure - which is why I must reiterate that it has to be law that the leadership within religious communities become mandated reporters. This will enable my former leaders to have to comply with the law and report any allegations of abuse to the authorities.

The Jehovah's Witnesses parent company, have said that they will comply with secular laws. Currently, it is not written within Scottish Law that they must inform the authorities when an allegation of abuse, rape, or any criminality towards children becomes apparent. When that criminal is the parent of a child, it is easy for that criminal to evade justice. Children are taught within the organisation to be "No part of the world" which helps abusers specifically as teachers within schools do not become aware of abuse because children are taught to distrust them and only trust the education being provided by Jehovah's Witnesses.

Paragraph 16

<https://www.jw.org/en/library/magazines/watchtower-study-may-2019/love-justice-face-of-wickedness/>