

The Northern Echo

Former Jehovah Witness in Hartlepool given 'Silentlambs' award for his work highlighting potential sex abuse against children

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By Chris Webber

A FORMER Jehovah Witness has been given an international award for his work highlighting a rule in the church which he argues makes it hard to expose child sex abuse.

Steve Rose, 51, of Hartlepool, who has been "disfellowshipped" by the town's church elders, has given information to the Charity Commission about the organisation's "two-witness rule" which says church elders are not allowed to take action against wrongdoing unless it has been witnessed by at least two people.

The church has strongly defended itself and say its rules do not prevent allegations being taken seriously or issues being reported to police. And Mr Rose himself has consistently said that most people in the church are "really good people".



Mr Rose, who has given interviews to several publications on the issue including The Northern Echo, was given the award by the American Silentlambs organisation. Silentlambs was founded by second generation Jehovah Witness and long-standing church elder William Bowen who twice highlighted issues of alleged child abuse in the church before eventually resigning. A total of 300 awards have recently been made to people around the world who have; "shown courage above and beyond the call of duty in the interests of protecting children."

Mr Rose, a former Elvis impersonator, said: "I'm really proud to get this award. It came out of the blue but I'm in touch with people across the world involved in this issue."

Mr Rose was given a warning by a [Teesside](#) Crown Court judge last year for taking photographs in the court during a hearing involving a member of Hartlepool's Jehovah Witnesses.

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