

Synagogue bans convicted paedophile

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By Alex Ali

A CONVICTED paedophile has been banned indefinitely from returning to a Stanmore synagogue and the synagogue plans to exclude all such offenders in future.

Andrew Josephs, 29, of Parklands Court, Edgware Way, Edgware, was found guilty at Wood Green Crown Court on February 27, 2006, of four charges of indecent assault and two counts of sexual activity with boys.

He was jailed for two years for four indecent assaults on one boy, and a further nine months for two incidents of sexual activity on a second child.

The conviction followed a detailed investigation by Barnet police's child abuse investigation team but Josephs is due for release in July.

Since he was put behind bars Josephs, a former primary school teacher at Michael Sobell Sinai School, Kenton has requested to return to the Stanmore synagogue's congregation. But he has been told he will not be permitted to pray at the Stanmore and Canon's Park Synagogue, London Road where he is a member, because of parental fears about child safety.

A special committee appointed to decide his case recommended last week that Josephs should be banned along with all those "charged or convicted of similar offences".

Shimon Cohen, a spokesman for United Synagogue, explained that the board of management at the synagogue had taken advice from Harrow Council, police, child protection agencies and had consulted widely with the community at the synagogue.

He said: "As a result of this process the synagogue took notice of this and decided to ban Mr Josephs from the synagogue.

"There are plenty of places where he can go and pray, just not in our synagogue."

Mr Cohen added that the synagogue was a community and that it was a "common sense decision" to put the welfare of the children at the synagogue first.

He said: "The bigger question for us is the preservation of community life and our children.

"We have a code of forgiveness in Judaism but it is up to the victims to forgive this person."

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