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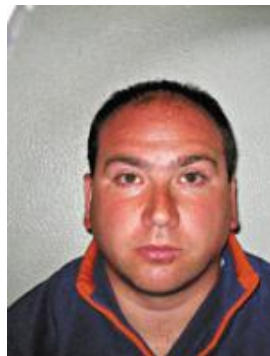
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## 'How many more did he abuse?'

20/12/2007

By Rachel Fletcher



A paedophile who used his role as a football coach to prey on young boys may have abused other victims beyond the nine referred to in court, police said this week.

Daniel Gersh, 36, was jailed after admitting 60 counts of assault and related charges, including molesting nine boys, aged seven to 11, and filming several of them.

When officers raided his home in Ilford, Essex, they found 55,307 indecent images of children on his computer.

Police also found 3,152 indecent films, some including scenes of sado-masochism and bestiality. Gersh also had more than 1,195 hard copies of indecent images.

There was also a document detailing 29 methods of abuse. It read: "This child is an eight-year-old boy who I'm going to sexually abuse. I will molest him at the flat. It will be filmed on digital camera for use on trader P2P."

After the hearing, Detective Inspector Keith Braithwaite said: "I do believe there are more children out there that he's abused.

"He did not co-operate with police. If you know or have any concerns regarding the activities of Gersh and feel it may be relevant or find it helpful to talk to someone, the police and social services have set up dedicated telephone lines for people to ring." The numbers are 020 8217 6415 for the police, and 020 8708 3014/3565 for Redbridge social services.

Patrick Power, managing director of Redbridge Children's Trust, said: "I think it's the best sentence that could have been achieved in the circumstances. The judge acknowledged it is very difficult to consider he would ever be safe with children."

Gersh, a former FA-registered coach, was checked and cleared by police when he volunteered to take part in football nights at Jewish community centre Sinclair House in Redbridge, Essex, in 1995. He also coached at Jewish summer camp Na-Sho-Pah in New York 15 years ago.

He sat with his head bowed throughout the two-day hearing at Blackfriars Crown Court. Judge David Martineau told him that he had a "persistent and premeditated" approach to grooming boys.

He added: "Your behaviour in my view was seriously aggravated by the fact that you often filmed what you were doing, thus keeping a permanent record of it to be viewed for your own purposes as often as you liked.

"I am quite satisfied you have a deeply ingrained propensity towards this behaviour involving boys aged six to 11, and this propensity is very likely to be incurable."

Gersh, who had been in custody since his arrest, was told that he was being given an indeterminate jail sentence. He will be able to apply for parole in less than five years but Judge Martineau warned him the chances of release were "slim".

He received "significant credit" for his guilty plea, because he had saved court time and prevented the victims having to testify.

His lawyer Allan Goh said that Gersh had not abused for financial gain, that he had made "efforts to rehabilitate himself" and that his admission "touched on what happened to him himself when he was young". He had also written a letter to the victims' families, which was not read out in court.

Referring to some of the video footage, Mr Goh accepted there had been "slapping" of children but said that any violence used "was at the very lowest end of the scale".

Gersh was arrested in October 2006 when a mother contacted police after her nine-year-old son spoke out. Officers from the Child Abuse Investigation Team studied the material seized from his home and went on to identify a further eight victims.

The court heard how Gersh told them: "My life is over. I have been trying to hide this since I was 13 years old."

He also told them: "I never penetrated any, apart from digitally. My life's a mess for the past 20 years. You guys must be disgusted. It's going to be a nightmare. You hear about all these things."

He then asked whether a particular victim, known only as Child 8, had reported him. When the police confirmed it, he said: "What I did to him was wrong.

"I'm only good at one thing. I have an affinity with kids. I'm good at music. I write songs."

A statement from the mother of one victim read in court said: "Although we have done nothing wrong, we feel we let our son down."

Gersh is banned from working with children, having unsupervised access to them or owning equipment capable of downloading images from the internet. He is also on the sex offenders' register.

Earlier this year, Gersh's father Paul, a former chairman of South West Essex Reform Synagogue, attacked the *JC*'s "total lack of compassion" after it ran a front-page story detailing his offences.

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