

Synagogue bars sex offender from saying Kaddish

By Daniella Pelled

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A convicted sex offender has been barred from saying Kaddish for his mother at Newcastle's United Hebrew Congregation.

Jonathan Warrents, 61, served half of a 12-month prison term in 2000 for gross indecency with an 11-year-old boy. He also told the JC that he had a previous sex offence conviction dating back 25 years.

Divorced with three sons with whom he has no contact, Mr Warrents said that after his mother's death, he had hoped to recite Kaddish at the shul's morning minyan. "I feel I've served the sentence. I'm on the [sex offenders'] register, but it's about going forward."

UHC president Victor Gallant said the synagogue had banned Mr Warrents "because we don't want him to feel he's welcome within the community. We still believe that was the appropriate action."

Unlike the Church of England, which has extensive guidelines on dealing with both victims and offenders, the United Synagogue lacks any formal protocol.

Borehamwood and Elstree's Rabbi Alan Plancey said he would allow an offender into the synagogue in the morning when only adults would be present.

Mill Hill's Rabbi Yitzchak Schochet argued that "ultimately, a human being has the right to integrate back into society. And a Jew has the right to fulfil his Jewish obligations."