

Craigleith man admits child abuse but is spared jail

An Edinburgh man who carried out a “devastating” course of abusive behaviour against two children – including inducing one to take drugs without their knowledge – has been banned from having contact with them for life.

Paul Harthill wilfully ill-treated and neglected both children in a manner likely to cause them unnecessary suffering or injury to their health over an 18 month period.

Harthill, 47, was said to have over dispensed prescribed medication to one child and on one occasion he issued a threat to kill them during his savage course of conduct.

He also exposed the child to drug misuse, caused them to live in unsanitary living conditions and failed to provide them with adequate food.

Harthill, of the capital’s Craigleith area, also induced the child to take controlled drugs, failed to take them to school and left them unattended for long periods when he had been left looking after them.

The abuse of the child took place between April 2017 and November 2018 at two homes in Musselburgh and Prestonpans in East Lothian.

The long term drug user also carried out similar abusive behaviour towards a second child between December 2017 and November 2018.

Court papers state Harthill caused the second child unnecessary suffering or injury to their health by exposing them to drug misuse and unsanitary living conditions.

He also failed to provide adequate food for the child and left the child unattended for long periods of time.

He also carried out brutal assaults on the second victim by slapping them to the head, punching and kicking them on the body and repeatedly threatening to strike them with a belt.

Harthill, an unemployed kitchen worker, pleaded guilty to four offences when he appeared at Edinburgh Sheriff Court last month and he returned to the dock for sentencing on Thursday, February 6.

Lawyer Michael Elliot, defending, said his client was "exceedingly embarrassed and ashamed" and had been using heroin at the time of the offending but had since kicked the habit.

Mr Elliot said: "He is showing contrition and a level of insight."

Sheriff Julius Komorowski was handed victim impact statements from the victims that stated Harthill's actions had a "significant and long lasting effects on the children".

The sheriff said if Harthill had been found guilty after trial he would imposed a jail term but due to his guilty plea the matter could be dealt with by a "deliberately severe and onerous" community-based disposal.

The sheriff said: "You pled guilty to repeated assaults on [two boys]. The effects on them at the time are said to be devastating and the statements from them have confirmed this.

“Given the severity of the crime and the harm you have inflicted it [the community payback order] will be in the most severe terms permitted by the law.”

Harthill will have to wear an electronic tagging device on his ankle and stay within his home address between 7pm and 7am for the next 12 months.

He will have to carry out the maximum of 300 hours of unpaid work and was placed on a social work supervision order for 20 months.

Sheriff Komorowski also issued an £1,800 compensation order and non-harassment orders which will last for an indefinite period.

Harthill shamefully covered his face with a scarf to avoid revealing his face when he left the court building.



Paul Harthill outside Edinburgh Sheriff Court wearing a mask to hide his identity PHOTO Alexander Lawrie