

## Charity worker in child abuse claim

JOANNA VALLELY

A CHILDREN'S home in Albania has been shut down after the Edinburgh aid worker who runs it was accused of sex abuse.

David Brown, 55, director of the His Children home in Tirana, has been charged with sexual acts against children.

The evangelical Christian lived in Edinburgh for more than ten years before opening the orphanage about five years ago.

Albanian police are also believed to be hunting for two British colleagues of the orphanage director who are wanted on similar charges.

Today friends in Edinburgh, where Mr Brown lives when he returns from Albania, expressed their disbelief at the allegations.

Mr Brown opened the home in the Albanian capital after seeing the desperate situation of street children there in 1999.

Friends denied newspaper reports that the 40 to 50 children at the orphanage slept up to eight in a bed in squalid conditions.

An Albanian newspaper reported yesterday that the home had been closed and the children distributed amongst other orphanages. It claimed Mr Brown was also accused of exhibiting children on the internet in order to attract people who arrived in Albania posing as tourists.

A fellow Edinburgh evangelist said he flew back from a visit to the home a week ago, the day Mr Brown was arrested.

He said:

"Each child has a bed, but they are Roma children, who are very poor and sometimes they push the beds together. It's certainly not squalid."

The evangelist said if convicted, Mr Brown was likely to get a long sentence as the Albanian authorities would want to make an example of him. He said Mr Brown was a committed Christian, so beloved of the orphans that when he was arrested they stuck signs on the gate saying "We love Davide. He's the best dad in the world. Give us back Davide."

Mike Taylor, of the Scottish Children's Mission and chaplain of Mannafields Christian School on Easter Road, said the charges against Mr Brown were "unbelievable". He said: "He has done a lot of work for children and is a fatherly type of guy."



"I've known him for about ten years and if you talk to anyone that knows him they will tell you that it's unbelievable. I'm convinced there's another perspective to this."

No-one from His Children was available for comment, but the organisation posted a statement on its website.

It said: "For those that haven't yet heard, David Brown was arrested on the evening of Tuesday May 16, and following a preliminary hearing on Friday, is being held until a second hearing on May 29. Nachi, one of the workers from the home, is also in custody at the moment, and again we are waiting for confirmation on what grounds.

"The Albanian authorities have been treating the case in an appropriate manner on the information they have available."

The Charities Commission said His Children was not registered as a charity with the commission.

A spokeswoman for the Foreign and Commonwealth Office said: "I can confirm we are aware a British national was arrested in Tirana on May 16 and appeared in court on May 19.

"He was charged with sexual acts with children. We are providing consular support." [jvallely@edinburghnews.com](mailto:jvallely@edinburghnews.com)

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