

"My caring son is no child abuser"

JOANNA VALLELY

The father of the Edinburgh care worker held in Albania on child sex abuse charges has insisted his son is innocent.

Douglas Brown, 85, said his son David has worked with children for three decades and is incapable of hurting them.

But he said that the care home boss is now in the frame because he failed to report abuse by another worker.

David Brown was arrested on May 16 with fellow employees at the His Children home, which he ran in the Albanian capital, Tirana.

He opened the orphanage after passing through Albania on his way to Kosovo on an aid truck - seeing the plight of street children in Tirana moved him to act.

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

The 55-year-old was charged at a hearing on May 19 and at a subsequent hearing on June 5 was refused bail.

Today Douglas Brown, a former RAF bomber pilot, defended his son from his home in Port Appin, Argyll, where he lives with his 83-year-old wife Sylvia.

Mr Brown, who was awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross for his war-time service, said he and his wife were devastated by the claims against their son.

He said: "There's no truth in the allegations. I know my son very well and he's a very genuine guy who would never dream of hurting children.

"My wife is taking this very badly. She's terribly upset and worries about it non-stop. I get on with work in the garden to try not to think about it."

He said when David returned to Albania after a month's leave last summer he discovered a male staff member had been sexually abusing a three-year-old. He sacked the man but did not report the incident.

Mr Brown said: "Now someone has let it be known that sexual abuse took place at the home and they've arrested David.

"He took advice and didn't report it because he was scared they might close him down.

"That was probably a big mistake not reporting it there and then, but he was determined the home wouldn't be shut down.

"It was a calculated risk that went wrong."

He said he had spoken to David in prison several times and that after an initial 72 hours in solitary confinement he was now sharing a cell and was in good spirits.

He is allowed four phone calls a month and his Albanian lawyer brings him food parcels, containing fresh fruit, every other day, his father said.

At the time of his arrest he was trying to get planning permission to build a bigger home for the Albanian children to replace the overcrowded orphanage.

Mr Brown revealed that his eldest son had devoted his life to children since becoming "smitten" by the church in his early 20s.

"David is a remarkable person. Dr Barnardo is his hero and he always had it in his mind to do the same as him. He was on his way to doing it until all this happened."

His last employed post was as a house father in the Harmony Home in Balerno. He was also a member of the Children's Panel in Argyll and Bute, his father said.

A spokeswoman for the Foreign and Commonwealth Office said: "David Brown has appeared in court charged with sexual abuse and homosexual acts with children.

"He had an unsuccessful appeal against the May 19 hearing and is still being detained. The matter is still under investigation by the Albanian authorities and we are providing consular support."