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‘He Should Have Got Life’: Family Outraged as Child Abuser Jailed for 12 Years

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A paedophile and drug dealer from Southend who sexually assaulted a young girl has been jailed for 17 years, but her family says the punishment doesn't go far enough.

The Southend Crown Court sentenced John Paterson to 12 years in custody, with an extended five years on licence, South Essex-based *The Echo* reports. But the victim's family did not welcome this development.

The child's uncle, speaking after the verdict, said, "He should have got life. That's honestly what I've waited two-and-a-half years for. It's horrid. You just want justice and for him to be plastered all over."

Paterson, 31, carried out a prolonged half-hour assault on the child. As a result, he faced six separate sex offences. The girl was left with long-term psychological damage as a result of the attack.

The court heard how Paterson, known locally as "Jack", told the victim she was "very sexy" and called her "my princess" during the ordeal.

Paterson, of Bridgewater Drive in Westcliff, was arrested the day after the attack in 2021. The girl disclosed what had happened to her mother immediately, resulting in the swift arrest of the suspect.

Justice delayed

Paterson initially denied any wrongdoing and was not remanded in custody, despite 'strong' DNA evidence, including saliva found at the scene.

He remained on bail for two years while awaiting trial, something the family says added further trauma, as they had to watch him walk free in the community while facing serious charges.

"We have had two-and-a-half years of people saying she is a liar. We have had to see the guy walking around for two years like nothing's happened," the girl's uncle told *The Echo*. "She's got to live with it for the rest of her life. I'm glad he got the sentence he got. I feel like he should have got life, but it is what it is."

During that time, Paterson went on to commit further crimes.

He was convicted of inflicting grievous bodily harm on a man in Rayleigh in an unrelated incident involving a drug debt. For that offence, he received an additional 19-month sentence, to be served consecutively.

In delivering her remarks, Judge Cohen described Paterson as an "opportunistic" paedophile and said the child was a particularly vulnerable victim. The court heard that during the attack, the victim experienced significant pain and at times struggled to breathe.

“She is no longer the carefree child her mother once knew,” said Crown prosecutor Matthew Bagnall. “The scars will be carried with them for the rest of their lives.”

Paterson was also found to be a continuing danger by probation services. The judge confirmed he would be subject to lifelong monitoring and a Sexual Harm Prevention Order (SHPO), which will be formalised in a separate hearing.

He must serve a minimum of eight years before becoming eligible for parole. Even if released, he will remain on licence until 2042.