

Witness Name: Paul S. Gillies  
Statement No.: 2  
Exhibits:  
Dated: 19 February 2020

## THE INDEPENDENT INQUIRY INTO CHILD SEXUAL ABUSE

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### Witness Statement of Paul Stuart Gillies

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I, **Paul Stuart Gillies**, make the following statement on behalf of the Christian Congregation of Jehovah's Witnesses of Britain (CCJW), which is in addition to my statement, dated 2 December 2019. I will say as follows:

1. The Inquiry has asked for CCJW's views on the current arrangements in respect of the regulation of child protection within religious organisations and settings; whether a common set of training materials and model policies might be useful; our views on current statutory guidance and on the system of vetting and barring; our views on mandatory reporting; and whether there should be a voluntary code of conduct for out of school settings.

2. As noted at paragraph 30 of my 2 December 2019 witness statement, Jehovah's Witnesses as a religion do not make any arrangements that separate children from their parents such as crèches, playgroups, Sunday Schools, youth groups or clubs. We do not run schools, orphanages, home care, or any other activity where we assume responsibility for the care of children. Nor do we provide or sponsor any extra-curricular activity, such as choirs, camps, outings, sports, outdoor walks, parties, and similar activities for youths or adolescents.

3. In 2018, Jehovah's Witnesses published a worldwide child safeguarding policy document, entitled *Jehovah's Witnesses' Scripturally Based Position on Child Protection* ("*Scripturally Based Position*"), which incorporated earlier direction and guidance that had been provided in our religious publications. That worldwide policy is explained and expanded on in *The Watchtower* of May 2019, Study Articles 18 to 20, which was considered by all congregations of Jehovah's Witnesses worldwide in July 2019. Direction for elders on

applying that worldwide policy is provided in the elder's handbook *Shepherd*, published in January 2019. Additional guidance on that policy for elders in the Service Department who handle child safeguarding questions is provided in *Child Sexual Abuse—Guidelines for Branch Service Desks*, revised in January 2019 ("*Guidelines for Branch Service Desks*").

4. As stated in the May 2019 issue of *The Watchtower*, p. 9, para. 9, Jehovah's Witnesses continue to review how child sexual abuse allegations are handled "so that our way of handling the matter is in harmony with the law of the Christ," namely, that it imitates the love and compassion that Jesus Christ showed for victims, coupled with his hatred of wickedness.

5. The child protection policy of Jehovah's Witnesses is tailored to our religious beliefs and practices and takes into account the fact that, unlike most other religions, we do not provide services that separate children from their parents. Nonetheless, we believe that our worldwide policy is comprehensive and sufficiently flexible to adapt to child protection laws that vary from country to country.

6. We do not consider that a "common qualification for all faith leaders" related to "child protection within a religious organisation," would be necessary for elders in our organisation, given that congregations do not provide any activities that separate children from their parents. It is a core of our religious beliefs that congregation elders must meet the ecclesiastical qualifications set out in the Bible at 1 Timothy 3:1-7 and Titus 1:5-9. In addition, we consider that sufficient training is provided to elders in our child safeguarding policy commensurate with their congregation role. However, we would carefully consider any common set of training materials, model policies, or questions and answer sheets that the Inquiry may recommend.

7. In respect of vetting and barring, we consider the current definition of "regulated activity" in the Safeguarding and Vulnerable Groups Act 2006 (as amended) is sufficiently clear. We already have a system of internal checks in place to ensure that a person known to have abused a child is not appointed as an elder (for details, see paras 75 to 79 of my 2 December 2019 witness statement). Even a single allegation against a person who is being considered for appointment as an elder would be identified by an internal check. We consider that this internal system is sufficiently robust and proportionate to the risk of an elder abusing a child in the course of his religious duties. Additionally, as noted above, Jehovah's Witnesses do not provide services that separate children from their parents. For

this reason, we do not consider that any extension of vetting checks would be necessary in relation to Jehovah's Witnesses.

8. We do not provide services that separate children from their parents and are, therefore, unable to comment meaningfully on the following issues which are relevant to religions that provide such services: (a) the current statutory arrangements for the regulation of child protection within religious organisations, including the guidance in *Working Together to Safeguard Children, 2018*; (b) mandatory minimum standards, practices, and policies; (c) compulsory training for volunteers providing such services; and (d) a voluntary code of conduct for out of school settings where such services are provided.

9. We are aware that the Inquiry has heard from experts on whether mandatory reporting should be adopted and, if so, whether it should include a duty to report any allegation (including non-recent allegations), or whether it should only require reporting allegations which appear to indicate that a child might currently be in need of protection. We defer to the Inquiry's expertise on this question and will, of course, comply with any mandatory reporting law, as we do in the Republic of Ireland.

10. We have read with concern the decision of Mrs Justice Lieven in *Lancashire County Council v. E & F & Ors* [2020] EWHC 182, and offer the following comments. At the outset, it is important for the Inquiry to be aware that the relevance of the safeguarding policies of Jehovah's Witnesses was first raised by Mrs Justice Lieven in the context of an application to set aside witness summonses issued against two elders. Therefore, there was no evidence before her Ladyship from CCJW explaining the child protection policy of Jehovah's Witnesses at the hearing. Further and importantly, at that stage of the proceedings, the court had not heard any testimony from the elders concerning all the facts of the case.

11. Mrs Justice Lieven had before her the 2018 policy document entitled *Jehovah's Witnesses' Scripturally Based Position on Child Protection*. Due to the fact that the relevance of the safeguarding policies of Jehovah's Witnesses was first raised during the oral hearing and without notice to the lawyer representing the elders, Mrs Justice Lieven did not have three subsequent documents produced by Jehovah's Witnesses in 2019 which explained and expanded on that policy, namely: (a) the May 2019 issue of *The Watchtower*, Study Articles 18 to 20, which was considered by all congregations of Jehovah's Witnesses worldwide in July 2019; (b) the January 2019 edition of the elder's handbook *Shepherd*, and Chapter 14 of that handbook, which provides specific direction to congregation elders on

responding to allegations of child sexual abuse; and (c) the January 2019 *Child Sexual Abuse—Guidelines for Branch Service Desks*. When taken together, these four core documents significantly strengthen the child protection policy of Jehovah's Witnesses as compared to the earlier 2013 policy (a copy of which is attached as **Exhibit PG11** to my 2 December 2019 witness statement).

12. The 2018 policy document, *Jehovah's Witnesses' Scripturally Based Position on Child Protection*, states at para 5: "Even if the elders have no legal duty to report an accusation [of child abuse], the branch office of Jehovah's Witnesses will instruct the elders to report the matter [to the secular authorities] if a minor is still in danger of abuse." This is expanded upon at para. 8 of the 2019 *Child Sexual Abuse—Guidelines for Branch Service Desks*, which provides a non-exhaustive list of conditions that could indicate that elders will be instructed to report an allegation of sexual abuse to the authorities because there is "a reason to believe that the alleged victim or any other minor is in danger of abuse."

13. Thus, our worldwide child safeguarding policy has been strengthened, not weakened. Exhibits **PG51** to **PG60** of my 2 December 2019 provide ten recent examples of how that policy has been applied in practice (see in particular **Exhibit PG53**, paras 6-7; **Exhibit PG51**, para 4; **Exhibit PG52**, para 3; and **Exhibit PG54**, paras 3-4).

14. With regard to the specific facts of the case before Mrs Justice Lieven, I am informed that when the matter came to the attention of the congregation elders in 2016, they were assured by the victim's mother that both she and her extended family had put in place arrangements to ensure that the victim would be protected from any further risk. The victim's mother provided the elders with specific examples of those measures that had been put in place. The elders accepted the mother's reassurance that she had taken specific protective measures to safeguard her children. In addition, the elders informed the mother of her right to report the alleged abuse to the authorities.

15. In May 2018 Jehovah's Witnesses adopted and published a worldwide child protection policy which was explained and expanded upon in three documents published in 2019 (see para 11 above). That policy has clarified that elders will be instructed to report an allegation of child sexual abuse to the authorities whenever it appears a child is in danger of abuse or for some other valid reason. This applies regardless of any assurances given by the non-offending parent. In harmony with this clarification, in 2019 the elders in the *Lancashire County Council* case reported the previous abuse to the statutory authorities. It

was that report by the elders which resulted in child protection measures being taken by the authorities in July 2019.

**Statement of Truth**

I believe that the facts stated in this witness statement are true.

**Signed:**

**DPA**

Paul Stuart Gillies

**Dated:** 19 February 2020