

involved at any time in the past with child sexual abuse? Only if the person answers no to all three questions will the circuit overseer make the appointment.

78. Third, the Branch Office keeps a brief notation of each congregant who is known to have committed child sexual abuse. That notation is checked whenever the Branch Office is notified by a body of elders that they are considering the potential appointment of an elder or ministerial servant. This ensures that an individual who has committed child sexual abuse is not appointed as an elder or ministerial servant (see paragraph 76 above).

79. Fourth, necessary information concerning an individual associated with the congregation who has been accused of child sexual abuse, established or not, is retained in a sealed envelope in the congregation's secure file and marked "Do Not Destroy". That envelope is retained indefinitely and will be accessed by the elders if the person is disfellowshipped and applies for reinstatement, or if the elders learn of another similar allegation which might then constitute sufficient Scriptural evidence to form an ecclesiastical judicial committee. If applicable, the sealed envelope will include a copy of the restrictions imposed on the offender, as set out in Step 7, paragraph 53 above, along with a brief statement by the elders confirming the dates on which they warned parents of minor children about the offender. (*Shepherd*, Chapter 14, para 25, **Exhibit PG9**; *Guidelines for Branch Service Desks*, p 6, para 23, **Exhibit PG10**)

E. Complaints

80. If a congregant is concerned with how an allegation of child sexual abuse has been dealt with, he may express his concern directly to one of the elders in his congregation. If the congregant is not satisfied with the response, he may discuss the matter with the circuit overseer. In all such cases, the elders or the circuit overseer will endeavour to respond as quickly as possible, often by an in-person meeting with the congregant. The congregant may also express his concerns in writing to the Branch Office direct, which will endeavour to provide a timely response. Although this religious process is not a formal complaints procedure as some secular organisations may have, it allows congregants to raise matters of concern directly to congregation elders, the circuit overseer, or the Branch Office.

F. Institutional allegations of child sexual abuse

81. Since 2000, four civil claims have been issued against a congregation or legal entity of Jehovah's Witnesses concerning an allegation of child sexual abuse. One of those claims was decided at trial in 2015 on a question of law (damages were agreed in advance). The three other claims were settled.

82. Currently, there are 13,846 elders and 9,379 ministerial servants in England and Wales. In harmony with Steps 1 and 2, paragraph 53 above, during the past ten years (September 2009 to August 2019) the Branch Office was contacted by congregation elders who reported allegations of child sexual abuse concerning 25 elders, 32 ministerial servants,⁷ and 10 persons accused of committing child sexual abuse in an institutional context (e.g. alleged abuse at a place of worship by a congregant or a non-Witness) in England and Wales.

83. The following chart sets out how the allegations against those 67 persons were dealt with by the secular authorities and the congregation.

Year of alleged abuse ⁸	Accused	Criminally convicted	Reported to statutory authorities	Ecclesiastical judicial committee ⁹
2009-2019	67	13	37	25

84. Although there was no legal duty to report any of those 67 cases because they all occurred in England and Wales, reports were nonetheless made to the statutory authorities in 37 of those cases. In most instances, the reports were made by the complainant's family with the support of the elders. Two of the 37 cases were reported to the statutory authorities by the elders because the complainant's family was reluctant to do so or had requested the assistance of the elders in making the report. (**Exhibit PG53**, paras 6-7; see also **Exhibit PG51**, para 4; **Exhibit PG52**, para 3; and **Exhibit PG54**, paras 3-4)

⁷ Ministerial servants merely play a supportive role to the elders, as explained at paragraph 15 above. Nonetheless, in the interests of transparency, allegations relating to ministerial servants are herein included.

⁸ In addition, during the past ten years, accusations of child sexual abuse that allegedly occurred one or more decades ago (between 1953 and 2008) were made against 32 elders, 18 ministerial servants, and, in an institutional context, 2 other persons.

⁹ Of the 25 persons subject to a judicial committee, the offender was disfellowshipped in 19 cases.