



# INDEPENDENT INQUIRY CHILD SEXUAL ABUSE

**Strictly Private & Confidential**

Leigh House

By email to: [REDACTED]

5 February 2021

Dear Sir / Madam

## **CCJW database of potential child sexual abusers**

Thank you for your email dated 25 January 2021 and attached petition signed by over six thousand people asking the inquiry to 'demand full Child Sexual Abuse data from the Christian Congregation of Jehovah's Witnesses (CCJW)'.

The Inquiry has gained a substantial understanding of the very damaging effects that child sexual abuse can have during the course of its work. It has also gained an insight into the pain caused by perpetrators and the sense of frustration that many complainants, victims and survivors have when faced with institutions such as the CCJW which they consider to have failed them and to have acted improperly.

However, as an independent inquiry established under the Inquiries Act 2005, it would not be appropriate for IICSA to have its work influenced by a petition. There is a statutory requirement that the Inquiry conducts its work impartially, not directed or influenced to do things in a certain way, by pressure from any party. It makes its decisions informed by its work and submissions made by those designated as core participants in its proceedings in accordance with the provisions of rule 5 of the [Inquiry Rules 2006](#).

The Inquiry's investigative work has now concluded and the hearing during which it heard evidence relating to the policies and practices relating to child protection from sexual abuse of the CCJW ended in August 2020. The Child Protection in Religious Organisations (CPIROS) investigation commenced in April 2019 and was thematic in nature. It made statutory requests for information relevant to the investigation from a number of religious organisations, including the CCJW, and heard oral evidence from them and from those acting on behalf of a core participant organisation, the Ex-JW Advocates Opposing Crimes against Children, at its hearings.

Website: [www.iicsa.org.uk](http://www.iicsa.org.uk) | Address: IICSA, PO Box 76107, London, SE1P 6HJ

Email: [REDACTED]



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The CCJW received the same request as other religious organisations whose policies and procedures were examined during the investigation, i.e. for data relating to allegations of child sexual abuse it had received over the past 10 years. The reason for this time period was that the investigation was looking at contemporary practice with the aim of making recommendations for the better protection of children from sexual abuse in future, rather than examining other non-recent cases. In addition, prior to the investigation commencing, the Inquiry made a substantial request for documentation from the CCJW and brought the need to retain all relevant documentation to its attention, as a preventative measure in light of reporting that elders in that congregation had suggested relevant documentation be destroyed. The CCJW supplied documentation to the Inquiry in response to that request and confirmed its compliance with its statutory obligations during the course of the Inquiry. The Inquiry considers that it has obtained all the documentation that it requires from the CCJW to undertake its programme of work.

While it is true that the CPIROS investigation will not formally conclude until the Panel has published its investigation report, the only task remaining for it is the writing of that report. This work is well under way and it would not be appropriate, lawful or fair for the Inquiry to seek substantial additional evidence from any particular organisation in the manner sought by the petition at this stage of its process.

The Inquiry takes its task extremely seriously and in no way seeks to diminish the experience of any victim or survivor failed by an institution. There are a number of ways in which victims and survivors can continue to contribute to its work, not least the Truth Project which remains open to victims and survivors to express interest in sharing their experiences until 31 July this year. However, it is not in a position to respond positively to the petition, which seeks to influence its decision-making in a way that is inappropriate and for it to exercise its powers in a manner that would be unlawful.

Yours sincerely

Martin Smith  
**Solicitor to the Inquiry**