



# WATCH TOWER

BIBLE AND TRACT SOCIETY OF BRITAIN

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SH June 1, 2001

## ALL BODIES OF ELDERS

Dear Brothers:

In our letter To All Bodies of Elders dated SH January 1, 2001, we gave instructions relating to disfellowshipping and disassociation records, and files relating to child molestation. We thank you for all your hard work in complying with this necessary and important direction so that the government's deadlines as incorporated in the Data Protection Act 1998 can be met.

Part of the direction given concerned creating a list entitled "Child Protection—Psalm 127:3." In connection with this List we have had a number of enquiries as to who should appear on it. Also, as you will appreciate, Caesar's law does not stand still and this at times necessitates adjustments. We are pleased to provide clarification as to the use of the List and how records can be kept to enable our children to be properly protected in the congregation.—Isaiah 32:1, 2.

Those who have **confessed to child molestation**, or who have been found guilty of child molestation by the congregation **on the basis of two or more credible witnesses**, should appear on the Child Protection List. (For a definition of child molestation see paragraph 3 of our letter To All Bodies of Elders dated April 15, 1997.) Also, those who have been **convicted by a court** of crimes that constitute child abuse should be included on the List. If necessary, additional information may be kept in a sealed envelope in the congregation's confidential file as described below. If such an individual moves to another congregation, the procedure found in paragraph 3 on page 2 of the April 15, 1997, letter should be followed.

There is one exception to the above direction: The elders may have written to the branch office and given full details about a former child abuser who is currently serving as an elder or ministerial servant. In such a case, if the branch office has decided that he can be appointed or continue serving in a position of trust because the sin occurred many years ago and because he has lived an exemplary life since then, his name should not appear on the List, nor is it necessary to pass on information about the brother's past sin if he moves to another congregation unless contrary instructions have been given by the branch. If therefore, such an appointed man moves to another congregation a letter confirming the move should be sent, addressed to the Society's Legal Department.

There are, however, many other situations that are connected with the abuse of a child. For example, there may be just one eyewitness, and the brother denies the allegation. (Deuteronomy 19:15; John 8:17) Or, he may be under active investigation by the secular authorities for alleged child abuse though the matter has not yet been established. Then again, a young child might be abused by someone who himself is a minor, perhaps in his pre- or

early-teens. In these and similar cases no entry will be made on the Child Protection List. Rather, information should be kept in a sealed envelope in the congregation's confidential file as described below. When such individuals move, the Congregation Service Committee should write a letter addressed to the Society's Legal Department seeking advice as to whether to communicate the details to the new congregation.

**Keeping information relating to child abuse in a sealed envelope in the congregation's confidential file:** Only a brief note should be kept. This would show the name of the molester or alleged molester. If known, the following information should also be recorded: The name(s) of the victim(s) or alleged victim(s), the relationship of the offender to the victim(s), and how the matter was brought to the attention of the elders. The date the matter came to light, and the names of all the elders who were involved in some way or another would be noted. Facts such as when the alleged offence(s) took place, the period of time involved, and the ages of the alleged molester and victim(s) at the time of the incidents can be recorded. Make a simple statement of whether the allegation(s) amounted to uncleanness, loose conduct, or *porneia* as defined in *Pay Attention to Yourselves and to All the Flock*, pages 92-4. Do not record details other than those mentioned in this paragraph. Alternatively, if a written allegation is made by the victim, then this should be kept in the confidential file and, depending on the contents of the letter, there may be no need for the elders to write anything further. The only information that should appear on the outside of the envelope is the person's name, the date the matter came to light, and the names of the elders involved.

Elders do their utmost to fulfil the serious responsibility of protecting children from harm. The cleanness of Jehovah's organization needs to be preserved while, at the same time, we conform to Caesar's laws respecting the handling of sensitive information. As well as providing guidance for your existing records, the instructions in this letter will also apply to situations that arise in the future and that are connected with child molestation.

We send you our warm Christian greetings.

Your brothers,

*Watch Tower B. & J. Society*  
OF BRITAIN

PS to Presiding overseer: As soon as possible arrange to have this letter read out to the body of elders. Following this the Congregation Service Committee should meet to review the Child Protection List to make sure it complies with the direction found in this letter. If it is found necessary to remove a person's name from the Child Protection List rather than attempting to obliterate the name, please make a new List, destroying the old one.