

Historical Sexual Abuse in Scouting:

A Learning Review

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Acknowledgements

Any review process that does not have a statutory basis, is largely dependent upon the goodwill and support of the subject being reviewed. This was the case here where the members, staff, and those that had been hurt through being involved with scouting, contributed immensely to this process. Their willingness to speak to the reviewer and to make such documentation as was within their possession, available to be reviewed, was critical. The information being considered did not reflect well on scouting. It is to their credit that they chose to report what they believed happened for the purposes of learning from past mistakes.

Almost all of those that agreed to be interviewed were individuals who had given many years of service to a movement that they believed in. Many were distressed at what had been revealed about the organisations that they had been part of. Some expressed anger and frustration at their lack of knowledge and their unwillingness to confront and challenge. Despite this, their willingness to contribute to this Review was immensely helpful and is greatly appreciated.

It also must be said that in the opinion of the reviewer, some of those that contributed provided only a limited amount of information, and had more to tell, but did not see fit to do so within this process. Whether that is a result of memory loss or some other factor, cannot be determined. In some cases, the time periods involved stretch over decades.

Dubheasa Kelly, Manager for Information and Communications for Scouting Ireland, made an immense contribution to the Learning Review, and without her valuable input, the task could not have been completed. She maintained her independence from her colleagues whilst facilitating the Review process. Scouting Ireland owes her a great debt of gratitude for her involvement in this task.

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Executive Summary

This report was commissioned by Scouting Ireland to examine the incidence of sexual abuse that is believed to have happened within scouting. The intention is not to allocate blame to specific individuals, but to fully acknowledge the mistakes that have been made previously, with a view to drawing learning from them. Young people who are involved in scouting should have confidence in the fact that their safety and wellbeing, will always be prioritized by those who are responsible for them, when involved in scouting activities. It is sadly the case that this was not always what happened, particularly through the eighties and nineties.

For this exercise, several people were interviewed and asked to examine their memories regarding their actions and the actions of others involved in scouting or incidents that are believed to have happened. Where documentation exists, this was read and assessed. What emerged is a very different history to that which was previously believed to be the case by supporters and long-term volunteers. Abuse did happen and was not responded to in a way that protected the young person or sought to hold the offender to account. There was cover up and there was a failure to report. The full extent of this cannot be determined exactly as records have been lost and destroyed. There appears to have been an almost complete absence of any concern for the young people that were abused. Where attempts were made to support them, this is poorly recorded.

A characteristic of the poor governance that existed in scouting was the existence of a culture driven by self-interest, with little attention paid to the young people involved. Small cliques emerged and played too great a part in how the scouting bodies operated. Individuals who had a sexual interest in young people, rose to positions of power and influence on occasions and controlled any fledgling accountability processes, preventing known offenders from being removed from scouting.

Cronyism thrived and remained a significant problem in scouting up to and including the reviewer's involvement with Scouting Ireland. Poor governance structures contributed greatly to the failure of scouting to consistently and comprehensively address abuse. Individuals who behaved badly, were not held to account through robust, and timely disciplinary processes. The introduction of an accountability framework was resisted.

Ironically, the popularity of scouting increased during the time when sexual abuse appears to have been most prevalent. Individuals, who were suspected or known to be sex offenders, gained positions of power and became largely impregnable.

The Learning Review cites the existence of this negative culture driven by self-interest, along with poor governance structures as being the main cause of the continuation of sexual abuse in scouting. Independent monitoring of practice and strict adherence to robust, accountability processes, are crucial to ensuring that the progress that Scouting Ireland has made, continues. It must be recognized and accepted by all that there is no greater priority for scouting today than the safeguarding of the young people that are involved with it, and the removal of anyone from scouting who places them at risk.

History of Engagement with Scouting Ireland

For purposes of clarification, I have included a summary of my involvement with Scouting Ireland which stretches over a period of more than two years, ending with the appointment of the safeguarding manager in early 2019. Throughout that time, I talked to many people and gained an understanding of how the organisation functions. This knowledge has been invaluable in assessing the practice associated with the incidents of historical sexual abuse referred to in this Learning Review.

- Engaged to undertake a safeguarding review of the policies and procedures in place in Scouting Ireland in July 2017.
- As this work progressed, the Chief Executive Officer for Scouting Ireland requested a review of a critical case which had caused much discussion at the highest level in the organisation.
- In November 2017, completed and submitted a critical review of this case, which was not considered by the then Board until January 2018. This was highly contentious and led to extensive discussion amongst the directors lasting for eight hours, spread over two separate meetings. The critical case examined was then referred to an independent lawyer for a further review, prior to it being acted upon
- Completed in January 2018, an interim review of the policy framework was prepared and submitted this for consideration by the Board. It contained several criticisms and identified gaps that existed in resourcing. This paper, *A New Approach to Safeguarding in Scouting* recommending a new approach. (Appendix 1) These reports were considered by the Board which led to the interim review of the policy framework being accepted, and a commitment made to address the changes needed.
- The management of the critical case contributed to the suspension of Scouting Ireland funding April 2018 which is still under review pending this report.
- A further critical development was the fact that confidential information was given to the media which made working with the Board extremely difficult. The Board were written to outlining the difficulties that these breaches of confidentiality created (Appendix 2 and 3). This led to contact with the Board being limited, up until October 2018, by the fact that leaks regularly continued, and no one knew who was responsible for it.
- During this time the safeguarding team had no specific management cover. I was requested to provide this on an interim cover basis. It was accepted that I could only give limited time to them but would support them in the recruitment of a full-time safeguarding manager.
- The following months were full of incident, some of which was stressful and challenging. Attempts were made to discredit my work as a way of deflecting attention away from my recommendation that senior volunteers should be held accountable for their actions.
- Worked with staff to provide guidance and supervision for cases, encouraging their development, to embed improved safeguarding practices leading to a restructuring of the safeguarding department.
- Developed the Safeguarding Implementation Action Plan in July 2018 which guided the development of safeguarding in Scouting Ireland until March 2019.
- Restructuring of the organisation took place from October 2018 onwards to meet good governance.
- October 2018 briefed the new board of my engagement and the developing suspicion of under-reporting, a lack of records and a lack of knowledge of historical abuse in SI. The briefings were initially greeted with shock but served, in the end, to galvanize the new Board to take control. Prior to taking office, they had not been briefed on the suspected past abuse within scouting.

- Worked with SI to publicly address abuse via Joint Oireachtas Committee for Children and Youth Affairs November 2018.
- Opened and managed the Scouting Ireland Helpline November 2018.
- Catalogued documents, records and files held by Safeguarding Team in SI November 2018 – February 2019.
- Oversaw the development and meetings of the interagency team between Scouting Ireland, Tusla and An Garda Síochana December 2018.
- Guided Scouting Ireland in the development of its Victims Support Policy January 2019.
- Updated the Board on the suspected extent of abuse and how it had been mismanaged in the past. (The concern over the security of confidential briefings remained a matter for consideration throughout. (Appendix 4))
- Supported in the recruitment of a safeguarding manager who was recruited in March 2019, and the new Board started to get to grips with the situation.
- Continued in a consultation role until May 2019 to aid the appointment and embedding of the new safeguarding manager.
- May 2019, consultation diminished, having stayed for almost two years and feeling that positive change was happening.
- Post-May 2019 requested to provide a Learning Review so that the hard lessons that needed to be examined from the mismanagement of abuse cases previously, could be looked at by Scouting Ireland. The terms of reference for this Learning Review were drawn up and agreed between the Chair of the Board of Scouting Ireland and the reviewer. A copy of the document is set out in the following section.

To sum all of this up, I was initially recruited by Scouting Ireland to undertake a “desk top” safeguarding review, but ended up working with them for two years supporting the positive development of a safeguarding structure within a new governance framework, within the organisation, during a time of crisis that threatened its very existence. My work was supported by some and bitterly opposed by others. This remains the case.

It should be noted that Scouting Ireland agreed that they would not have any editorial control over the content of this Learning Review. This was a specific requirement of the reviewer in the expectation that there would be criticisms that needed to be made so that they could be addressed.

The commitment to transparency and openness had to be total and without qualification. It should be noted that Scouting Ireland agreed that they would not have any editorial control over the content of the Learning Review.

Please find below a copy of the terms of reference prepared by the reviewer and consequently agreed by Mr Adrian Tennant, Scouting Ireland's Chair of the Board of Directors. This Learning Review has been prepared in accordance with the contents of this agreement.

Terms of Reference for the Learning Review of Historical Sexual Abuse in Scouting

Scouting Ireland seeks to commission the completion of a Learning Review looking at the Historical Abuse that has been reported to it. The purpose of this review is to draw learning for the organisation from past mistakes, so that nothing of a similar nature can again occur.

Scouting Ireland has asked Mr Ian Elliott, Independent Safeguarding Consultant, to undertake this work. A completion date of the end of February 2020 has been agreed for the furnishing of the report.

Scouting Ireland has already publicly stated that it intends to publish the Learning Review when it receives it. It remains committed to doing so as it recognises that it has suffered considerable reputational damage because of the reports of sexual abuse received from victims. There is a need for complete transparency regarding what knowledge it held of past abuse and what actions were or were not taken, consequently.

The methodology to be employed in the Learning Review will be proposed by the reviewer. The intention is not to itemize every incident of sexual abuse that is alleged to have taken place but to draw learning from what is known.

The reviewer will be afforded what access is required for the completion of the task. This will involve access to case files, and related documentation that is required. Historical information on the structure and processes of the legacy scouting bodies, will also be made available to the reviewer. Every effort will be made to ensure that the reviewer has full and easy access to the documentation.

It is important to emphasize that Scouting Ireland accepts that it has no editorial input into the creation of the review report. It may be asked to undertake a factual accuracy check prior to the issue of the report, but this will be at the discretion of the reviewer.

The costs of the Learning Review will be met entirely through Scouting Ireland funds. It is understood that the reviewer intends to select a representative sample of case material to use as a basis for providing direction on learning. The choice of cases to be included will be entirely the decision of the reviewer.

Scouting Ireland, in commissioning this work, is giving a commitment that it will do everything within its power to support the review process, to ensure the consultant delivers the report by the agreed date.

In identifying the learning from past mistakes, the consultant will provide direction to Scouting Ireland as to what needs to change and to be done differently. Scouting Ireland, when it receives the Learning Review, will outline publicly how it will ensure that these changes are adopted.

The consultant will provide the Learning Review to Scouting Ireland who will share it with the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs. The consultant will be available to the Minister to speak about the content of the review should that be required.

The Learning Review will be redacted and will seek to avoid the identification of individuals. Attention will be paid by the reviewer to the fact that some cases in Scouting Ireland are currently the subject of an active investigation by An Garda Síochana. Every effort will be made to ensure that nothing is included in the Learning Review that would compromise those investigations in any way.

Agreed:



Adrian Tennant

Chair of the Board of Scouting Ireland



Ian Elliott

Independent Safeguarding Consultant

Methodology

This Review was commissioned by Scouting Ireland who gave a commitment to provide access to all documentation that they had within their possession, that was relevant to the subject. The fieldwork for the Review involved reading and assessing the content of that documentation, along with planned interviews of staff, volunteers, and victims

Multiple sources of information were consulted and reflected upon to inform this Learning Review:

1. Two years of access to members, staff and the organisation, permitted observational access over that time which has greatly informed this review
2. Victims and survivors accounts of child sexual abuse in scouting
3. Desktop Review:
 - a. Helpline records and report
 - b. Cases and records held by SI
 - c. Surrendered records
4. Interviews:
 - a. Senior volunteers and staff members of scouting organisations

All interviews took place outside of scout property and notes were taken with the agreement of the interviewee. All interviewees were asked if they would participate in the Review, but no compulsion could be placed on anyone to contribute. They were told that a report would be published at the end of the process, but that the content would be redacted. They would not be quoted directly in the report.

It is important to note that much of what was reported in interview has never been assessed by any Court process. The alleged offenders are deceased and unable to provide any defence against the accusations made about them. However, many of those allegations, are repeated independently by others, and are regarded by the reviewer as credible.

The records available to the Review consisted of hundreds of paper files dating from the 1950's through to today. Consequently, they reflect the chaotic approach to file creation that existed in both legacy scouting bodies. When Scouting Ireland was formed, it inherited several past abuse cases which had been documented. However, it is not clear how many files were passed over during the creation of Scouting Ireland as no count was made of them. Those received by Scouting Ireland, remained in secure filing cabinets and were largely untouched until a review was undertaken in 2012. That process represented the first coherent attempt made by Scouting Ireland to consider what any of these cases involved.

The purpose of that review was limited. It was to establish if there was anyone, who had been brought to the attention of scouting and was present in the records created at that time, who may be considered a risk to young people. The reviewer understands that the process involved a straight reading of the file alone. A view was then taken as to whether risk existed, and this was acted upon if confirmed. Emphasis was placed on ensuring that a report had been made to the appropriate statutory authority, of whatever allegation had been made.

A further cataloguing of documents, records and files was conducted from November 2018 through to February 2019, where all documents within the Safeguarding team were counted, reviewed, and catalogued. This was to permit the quantifying of the recorded incidence of abuse held by Scouting

Ireland's Safeguarding team as of February 2019. This process led to a greater understanding of the extent of recorded abuse in scouting.

Limitations of the Review

As with a review such as this, it will be subject to significant limitations. To that effect the following sets out those that apply to this review.

Several of the subjects whose actions were scrutinized by this process, are deceased, and cannot provide any defence or explanation as to what happened.

Currently, the Gardaí are involved in active investigations of alleged abuse involving present or past members of scouting. Consequently, and to ensure that this Review does not interfere with those investigations in any way, care was taken to exclude all case histories of incidents of abuse where the alleged offender is still alive and may be subject to that investigation.

The practice of holding documentation within the homes of senior volunteers was widespread in both scouting bodies. This led to a build-up of important documents being stored inappropriately in garages, attics, and sheds, across the country. To facilitate this Review, repeated requests were issued to have any of this documentation that still existed returned to Scouting Ireland and as a result, some was handed back. However, it must be noted that there are other documents that have been reported as existing but are not in the possession of Scouting Ireland. It is thought that these have been destroyed but that is not a known fact.

It is not possible to determine what documents have been lost through not being returned to the scouting authorities. There is evidence through the reports made through interviews, that significant amounts of papers did exist and may have been lost in this way.

One senior volunteer stands out. It was reported that he stored information in his home which, it was thought, related to several abuse allegations. He is also the subject of credible allegations of abuse stretching over an extended period. He is now deceased, but he occupied a senior role in scouting.

The Learning Review cannot consider the content of documents that have not been made available to it, nor can it attempt to draw learning from incidents of abuse that were not recorded. However, the exercise is still considered worthwhile and valid recommendations can be made regarding the practices that should be avoided by any youth organisation that provides services to children and young people in Ireland today.

The Review is not a comprehensive and detailed analysis of all the alleged incidents of sexual abuse of young people within scouting. The provision of such a study, if it was considered possible to undertake it, would consume far more resources and a much greater period than was available for this task. It would also be a matter for debate as to whether such a project would not suffer from the same limitations that this Learning Review has also had to face. It cannot review documentation that it does not have access to, nor cannot it interview people who are not available to it.

It should be noted that where individuals have previously reported abuse to a volunteer member of scouting it cannot be assumed that this report is held in the safeguarding files of Scouting Ireland. This would have come about for several reasons such as reports not being acted upon; thus, no

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record would have been made. Further, it may have been recorded but may have been kept by senior volunteers outside of the professional records or finally, it may have been removed from the records during the 1980's through to 1990's. There is evidence to suggest that all of these incidents would have occurred.

Undertaking a Learning Review

When organisations face major unanticipated safeguarding challenges, it is important that they draw learning from what they experience for the purposes of ensuring that they manage their affairs in a way which optimizes the chances of them avoiding something similar occurring in the future. This report has been commissioned by Scouting Ireland with that clear intention in mind. By undertaking an independent review of the alleged abuse that took place in scouting bodies in Ireland, it is hoped that greater safety can be achieved for the thousands of young people involved in scouting today.

No organisation has perfect knowledge all the time, regarding their practices. They aspire to achieve this but as they become larger and more complex, the chances of them reaching this objective, becomes more problematic. When they fall short of acceptable standards, then they must attempt to draw learning from their mistakes and apply that to their present and future operation.

The commitment required to do this is significant as it is always tempting to not look beneath the stone and search the darker corners of the organisation. Protecting reputation and public profile is a strong pressure to resist. However, it is very much to the credit of Scouting Ireland that they commissioned this report and facilitated it with access to all documentation that they held that was relevant to the purpose of the Learning Review.

It is important to state that the emphasis in this process is on learning from past mistakes so that they can be avoided in the future. It is not about itemizing every incident of sexual abuse that was perpetrated by an adult volunteer in scouting. It is not possible to do that given the reporting timescales involved in this task. It has already been stated by Scouting Ireland that the scale of the abuse was shocking and, in all respects, totally unacceptable for which they feel shame. Apologies have been offered to victims and survivors who have come forward and where possible support has been offered.

However, what is needed is an assurance that Scouting Ireland today has learned from the mistakes that were previously made ensuring they acknowledge them, and aim to understand why they occurred, so that they can do all that is within their power to ensure that a similar occurrence does not happen again. This commitment on the part of Scouting Ireland sets them apart from other institutions in Irish society who have not been transparent in the same way, and who may not have learned the hard lessons of the past.

It takes courage on the part of an organisation that accepts that it has behaved badly in the past, to commission a report of this nature and provide the reviewer with complete and unfettered access to the organization's records. I can confirm that this has happened, and that I have not been denied the opportunity to assess past practice from existing documentation.

I have also to record the fact that during the time that I have spent working with Scouting Ireland, such good cooperation was not always the case. During my involvement over a period of two years the security of the reports that I produced was sometimes not

respected, leading to speculation in the media and elsewhere as to what was the reality. This made the task of providing a safeguarding consultancy to the organisation very difficult.

The lack of respect for holding confidential sensitive information at the level of the Board, caused major difficulties in providing briefings on these matters. This led the reviewer to taking the extreme step of writing formally to the Board stating that I could not engage in open communication with them but would have to redact and restrict communication with the full Board.

In this report, I welcome the opportunity to provide my professional opinion on how the mistakes that were made previously, should be learnt from for the benefit of the many thousands of young people today in Ireland, who gain enjoyment and grow through being part of Scouting.

It is also important to state that a reading of the case material that is held within Scouting, would not in itself be enough to provide a good understanding of what, I believe, took place in the past. What must be added to those records, are the reports received from victims since November 2018, and others who have shared their stories as to what happened and what they witnessed. It is only when all this information is pooled and assessed together, that a truer sense of what was taking place could be understood.

This Learning Review has been possible because of the willingness of people who have a story to tell, to share that information. In some cases, the individuals involved have never spoken of what happened to them to anyone else, including their close family or partners. The fact that they had the courage to come forward and share their story, is what made this review possible.

This willingness to share their experiences requires trust in the process. They chose to speak now because they believed that scouting today was making a sincere attempt to learn from the past to make sure it was as safe as it can possibly be for the young people that it serves today. They wanted that to happen and they were prepared to do all that they could to achieve it. What this Learning Review could do was to provide them with the opportunity to be heard.

In my professional career, I have worked with closed organisations that are handicapped by an unwillingness to acknowledge their mistakes and learn from them. On occasions, this has led to calls for a public inquiry to be held into what was happening within those bodies. If an organisation is closed and unwilling to undergo a process such as this Learning Review, then the case for the state to intervene is strengthened. This has not been my experience here and I hope that this Learning Review for Scouting Ireland, reflects adequately the commitment to transparency from the organisation and also the incredible support that victims have offered to it, by sharing their stories and being willing to place their trust in Scouting Ireland today. Without the help of these courageous victims, this report would not have been possible.

It is also important to acknowledge that there are many senior volunteers with many years of involvement in scouting, who are distressed by what has come to light. They were willing

to speak to the reviewer, some of whom freely acknowledged their failures which they now are aware of.

What is aimed for in this process is the capture and assessment of mistakes made, so that they can be learned from. Within this report, there will be no attempt made to identify the full extent of the sexual abuse that took place. I would speculate that the true extent of this may never be known. However, there is enough evidence available to provide direction for the organisation going forward. No individual will be identified as the intention is not to allocate individual blame, but to identify why mistakes were made and how they will be avoided in the future.

The content of any report of this nature will be disturbing and upsetting to many who have given many years of their lives to serving scouting. This cannot be avoided as there are hard lessons that have to be learned. This is a task that lies before scouting today and any attempt to consign all the bad practices and inappropriate attitudes and behaviours to the past, must be resisted. There is a need for continued vigilance and a robust approach to confronting and challenging any actions that reflect the underlying problems of the past. Those that are believed to have behaved badly should be held to account quickly and in a transparent way. Those volunteers, who are not suitable to be in scouting, should be expelled. The emphasis must always be on the needs and safety of the young people involved. Being a volunteer in scouting is a privilege. It is not a right.

Information Sources

The sexual abuse of a child is an appalling event and it gives rise to very strong negative emotions when it is encountered. This fact has, in my view, contributed to the way in which information has been collected and stored within scouting historically. Until the early 2000's it appears scouting had no clear directions for volunteers to follow regarding what should be recorded, by whom and when, if the abuse of a child was suspected.

In the legacy scouting bodies in Ireland, the creation of case files does not appear to have been managed on a uniform basis. This is reflected through an examination of the files that were created. Consequently, there are disparities between the case file and its content, the reports from victims, and the statements made by past volunteers and others. They do not match up. For that reason, the reviewer has sought to supplement the content of files with information that can be gleaned from victims and others who have a knowledge of what they report as happening.

A minute of a senior management meeting held in June 2002, was presented to the reviewer. The minute referenced a decision that case files should be created, which adhere to a consistent format to record what is known about allegations of abuse. In fact, files were created before this date and some stretch back decades earlier, but what the minute reflects is the chaotic state of the filing system that existed at that time.

It is a mistake to think that all case files created were stored centrally in the legacy scouting bodies. This was not the case and material was often stored in the homes of key volunteers. Although, repeated requests have been made over the past two years for any of this material that may still exist, to be passed to the national headquarters of Scouting Ireland today, very little additional documentation has been surrendered.

A haphazard approach to file creation appeared to be in place. With each new election came a new approach to the creation of documentation, if any, by national officers.

When the senior volunteer left, retired, or died, the papers that they held would not always be returned to scouting premises. There is evidence that additional case material existed, but this is not available to the reviewer. Documentation was found that listed several people who were asked to resign from one of the scouting bodies but there are no case files available to confirm why this was happening. Information has come from victims who have named some of these people as alleged offenders. Therefore, it is reasonable to speculate that the reasons that led to their leaving, was their involvement with the abuse of children. However, we cannot confirm this as no case material is available to us to do so.

At the time of the creation of Scouting Ireland, insufficient attention was given to ensuring that all the existing case material relating to known incidents of abuse, was placed in secure storage at the National Headquarters of Scouting Ireland. There have been incidents of important case material being found within the homes of previous senior officers within scouting and being passed to Tusla during the past two years. As to how many of these papers are still available, one can only speculate.

Importantly, a reading of case material alone will not provide a comprehensive understanding of what alleged abuse is reported as having taken place. To gain that knowledge, you need to examine all the available sources of information. This includes the personal memory of those involved as well as documentation that was outside of the case files held in Larch Hill.

To illustrate this point, a request for help was received by a victim some months ago, who was struggling with extreme life difficulties that they saw as coming from the fact that they had been sexually abused as a young child. This had involved three alleged offenders one of whom, was a senior volunteer in scouting. (In fact, this person had reached national level in scouting.)

A case file did exist within the records, but when this was reviewed, it contained no mention of this scout leader being a sexual risk to children and young people. He was described as argumentative and bad tempered but there was no reference to any sexual interest in children.

The story reported by the victim was credible and a specific reference was made to the use of alcohol to make the young people he had chosen to abuse, compliant prior to being assaulted. Details were offered that were verifiable in terms of location and dates for the alleged abuse.

Eventually, other victims came forward independently and made similar statements to the safeguarding team in Scouting Ireland. As well as this, contact was made with long term volunteers within scouting, who were asked if they remembered any concerns being expressed about the behaviour of this alleged offender around young people. It was confirmed that there were concerns and that he was a risk.

None of this information was contained within the written record held on this individual. However, when you examine all the information available along with the credible statements made by victims, the reviewer would see this person as a prolific and vicious sex offender who used alcohol to subdue his victims before subjecting them to violent sexual assaults.

Simply just reading the case file would not in itself have been enough to provide a full picture of what this person's behaviour was understood as being. The offender that is referred to here is deceased and resigned his commission in scouting. He left in good standing. There is no clear evidence to suggest that he was ever reported by any of his victims or by those involved in scouting until recently.

As previously stated, the abuse of a child gives rise to strong negative emotions and not everyone can deal with these. It is my view that this fact played a part in providing a context within scouting whereby knowledge of abuse was not adequately recorded or shared generally. What was lacking is any degree of focus on the protection of the vulnerable child. It is my view that a greater awareness was held about child sexual abuse in scouting than is apparent from the files. Those who held that knowledge did not feel empowered to intervene to protect the child and consequently offenders prospered.

For this information to be shared with the reviewer, trust had to be created that those who were willing to report would be believed, supported, and protected. The extended involvement that the reviewer has had with Scouting Ireland over two years has helped to convince many to come forward and speak about what happened to them, many for the first time.

It is only through the courage of victims to come forward and share their stories, that a fuller understanding could be reached of what sexual abuse took place within scouting. Elsewhere in this report, the root causes of the barriers to confronting and challenging abuse, will be examined within the context of Scouting Ireland today.

Record Creation and Retention in Scouting

Record keeping was poor until recently when a substantial improvement has taken place. The creation of files on abuse allegations were discussed and agreed at a senior management meeting which took place in June 2002. Prior to that, records appear to be haphazard in terms of creation and storage. There is evidence of abuse cases which were known about, and resulted in prosecutions, but for which there is no centrally held file. It was also reported to the reviewer that information of this nature, would have been collected and retained for the purposes of exerting pressure on individuals in the organisation, to get them to accept or support a favoured development or action. In other words, the information, for some in power, had a value in manipulating people, rather than being focused on protecting young people.

The storage of the files was chaotic. There is evidence that papers were stored in people's homes and access to them was tightly controlled. One senior volunteer against whom there are several serious allegations of abuse, stored abuse files in his home and it was reported to the reviewer that he used the content for his own purposes, either to prevent the alleged offender being investigated or to manipulate people.

It is apparent some national officers had professional staff manage filing on their behalf, others chose what should be stored centrally while others retained them off-site resulting in them leaving the organisation without a continuity of records. Past national officers complained that when they took up post there were no files passed to them, and they had to create their own.

Not all these files have been made available to Scouting Ireland. They have effectively been lost and it is a matter of speculation as to how many there were, or what the content was. In my view, Scouting Ireland has not been sufficiently attentive to securing this documentation and have through their negligence, contributed to this loss. When Scouting Ireland was formed, no attention was paid to identifying what information was held by the legacy organisations on abuse. Although documentation was passed to Scouting Ireland, no one either read it or even numbered the files at that time.

As a consequence, this review has had to rely upon the limited documentation that exists within the Scouting Ireland archives along with the testimony of those individuals who provided evidence to the review, to form a perception of what the situation was that existed in the legacy organisations.

Given this fact, it is difficult to regard the files that are stored as being anything other than a partial record of what took place. In the opinion of the reviewer, the full extent of the abuse that took place, cannot be precisely defined because of the consistent and systematic failure of scouting to create and retain proper records of the allegations that were made or the actions taken to address them.

When sex offenders rose to the top level of the legacy organisations, the structure allowed them to control the decisions taken in scouting. There is evidence to suggest that they protected and supported each other, preventing any attempts to hold an alleged offender accountable for their actions, if they were part of their group. This is illustrated by the oral evidence from volunteers who were involved at the time, that when they tried to report abuse, and some did, they were told to forget it and leave it alone. They met with anger and were placed under pressure to stay quiet.

One volunteer reported their experiences of trying to report a senior volunteer who was a known offender, and they were told that this person was too important a volunteer to be challenged. They persisted and eventually managed to get the offender to leave scouting. They report that it emerged in the process that the sex offender had asked to be allowed to resign from scouting on occasions previously, as they had been unable to control their sexual urges towards young people.

Listening to the oral evidence in this case from the volunteer involved, it is hard to avoid the conclusion that the scouting body involved, was a seriously dysfunctional organisation with sex offenders dominating the leadership, for decades. Even those national officers against whom we have no allegations, we do have evidence that some of them failed to protect children and young people in the face of clear risk. Indeed, in some instances they actively suppressed the reporting of concerns so as not to cause disturbance to the system.

The close link that CBSI had with the Catholic Church led to some noted clerical offenders, being involved in scouting. They found an acceptance of their practices, particularly during the eighties and nineties. One case illustrated this when a scout leader attended a camp only to find that a person whom he knew had been put out of scouting as a result of an allegation of sex offending, was present on the site along with a priest who was also known as a sex offender, and they were in the middle of a group of young people. He objected to their presence at the camp and got them removed. However, the question remains as to how they got access to that site where there were young scouts. The reviewer is aware of other instances of clerical offenders being involved inappropriately in scouting activities

These incidents raise serious concerns about the way in which suspected or known sex offenders were managed in scouting. It is not known how the volunteer that had been put out of scouting, had managed to be brought back in, and how the link with the clerical sex offender was established. This is not known. It is deeply concerning that so little attention appears to have been paid to creating and maintaining a safe environment for young people when away from their homes at the time.

Case Studies

The rationale for selecting this small number of case examples is to illustrate certain practices that existed within scouting that need to be highlighted and learned from. They are shocking and deeply disturbing. However, they need to be reviewed so that practice of this nature can never occur again. This is not a summary of all the case studies that were alarming or that contained bad practice. Quite simply, to do this would involve more time and more resources than are available.

It is important to remember that interspersed with these cases, there would be other examples where an effort was made by committed volunteers, to act responsibly and to protect vulnerable children. It was reported in interview by senior volunteers that when faced with abuse, they acted to address it without any expectation that they would receive support in doing so. They were prepared to be unpopular to ensure that they did what their consciences dictated. They appear to be the exception rather than the rule. The Learning Review is not able to offer comment as to how widespread this approach was in scouting. However, the existence of the problem of cronyism has been noted and would have added extra pressure to anyone who was prepared to confront and challenge allegations against anyone who was part of the inner group.

Historic Abuse Case 1:

Subject A was a member of a scouting organisation and seemingly held in high regard. He rose to be a senior volunteer within that organisation before he left of his own accord and in good standing. There are many serious and credible allegations of sexual abuse which named him as an active abuser. The members of scouting that he socialised with were mainly individuals against whom several other credible allegations of abuse are also on record.

To illustrate the issues that existed within scouting regarding challenging child sexual abuse, the history of the recorded management of one of these allegations will be discussed. The information was reported to the reviewer in interview by the volunteer who was directly involved in the response to the allegation.

A phone call was received at the national office of the scouting organisation requesting to speak to someone involved in child protection. This call was received in 1995. It was passed to a volunteer who reported directly to the reviewer the actions that they took at that time. They also provided a written note of what took place.

The call was from a person who said that they had been sexually abused by Subject A over a three-year period from the time that he was ten years old. He said that he could recall at least eight sexual assaults committed by Subject A in different locations. The abuse had taken place twenty years before the victim had made the telephone call in 1995 and had been prompted by the fact that the victim had seen Subject A in full scout uniform attending a scout event.

Significant information was provided by the victim who stated that he was aware of other incidents of sexual abuse being committed by other adults, who were friendly with Subject A. He stated that

not all these people had been part of scouting. Some were leaders in the scouts in the United Kingdom. Others were local friends that Subject A knew.

The information recorded by the volunteer was credible and deeply disturbing. On receiving it, it would be expected that robust action would be taken immediately to protect vulnerable young people and that Subject A would be removed ensuring no further access to young people at that time. This did not happen which caused great frustration to the volunteer involved.

The allegation was discussed with named people who held senior positions in the scouting body, all of whom are reported as having ignored it, or having tried to pass it on to someone else to deal with. One person is noted as having expressed anger at being told about the allegation by the volunteer. They did not want to hear about it. (They later called the volunteer and apologized for their response to them.)

The picture that was presented as a result of that report, was of someone who was an active sex offender within scouting, and who was using scouting as being his means of accessing sexual partners who were children. From the date at which the alleged abuse had taken place to the receipt of the allegation, was stated as being twenty years. Other victims were named by the survivor who spoke to the volunteer, and other alleged offenders, but no efforts were made, to the knowledge of the volunteer involved, to contact these individuals.

Senior people in the scouting body took no immediate action against the alleged offender. The volunteer persisted and some weeks later succeeded in having the issue brought to hearing. Subject A did not deny any of the allegations against him and is noted as appearing relieved that something was being done about his "problem". Subject A stated that it was known that he was not able to control his sexual impulses when amongst young people. He also stated that he had spoken of this previously and had asked to be allowed to resign his commission. This had been refused. The hearing resulted in an agreement that he should resign which he did. No report was made to Gardai until recently.

Any review of this case must reach the conclusion that the practice involved was horrific and totally without any concern for the situation of the young people involved. It displayed a total disregard to their suffering and for the need to protect young people from sexual predators whilst in the care of scouting.

Subject A is deceased, and we may never know how many incidences of sexual abuse he may have been involved in. It is reasonable to assume that this is a very much larger number than the allegations that we are currently aware of. It is also likely that the abuse perpetrated against vulnerable young children, may well have given rise to serious life difficulties for them, in the form of self-harming, alcohol abuse, substance abuse, and relationship difficulties. It is also reasonable to speculate that there are many other individuals alive today, who are struggling with the trauma that they suffered as a result of encountering Subject A.

What is also apparent is that Subject A was supported in his abuse by others in scouting who failed to take any action against him, to remove him from the youth organization. (It is now known that a number of these other adults have credible allegations of abuse against them as well.)

The report made to the reviewer by the volunteer, details the lack of an appropriate response to the allegations by those who held senior positions in that scouting body at that time. It must be recognized that the numerous allegations against Subject A have never been tested in a Court of Law. This also applies to many of the other alleged offenders within scouting. However, in my

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assessment, these allegations should be regarded as credible, particularly as Subject A was a self-confessed, prolific sex offender.

Historic Abuse Case 2:

A request for help was received at the headquarters of Scouting Ireland during 2018. It came from a person who said that he was a survivor of sexual abuse that he suffered when he was a young person involved in scouting. The abuse that he described was shocking and involved the use of force and was associated with alcohol. He described how he was given alcohol when attending camps before being raped by his scout leader Subject B, who was named to us. This person was a senior volunteer in scouting and rose to be a member of the Board of Directors in one of the legacy scouting bodies.

A records search was undertaken on Subject B, and an old file was located. It contained no reference to this person being a known or suspected abuser. He was described as a difficult person. However, there was no mention of him being a risk to children and young people.

Subject B eventually of their own volition chose to stand down from his position and left scouting. He left in good standing and of his own accord. The allegations reported by the survivor were credible and he provided significant detail as to what had happened to him. Inquiries were then undertaken and long serving volunteers were contacted and asked if they knew anything about this alleged abuser. It emerged that although nothing was recorded in the file, it was suspected that he was an abuser but that because of his position and the culture that existed in scouting at that time, he was never confronted with these suspicions.

It was reported to the reviewer that when Subject B died, the Chief Scout at the time, asked that a guard of honour be formed for the funeral. However, when he approached people to participate none would agree. This would indicate that knowledge of Subject B's alleged abuse was more widely known than is currently admitted to.

The survivor at the time that he spoke to the reviewer, was the only victim that was known about. Since then, others have come forward independently and shared their stories. All outline the same use of alcohol and violent assaults on them by Subject B.

The records reviewed initially were those on file in Larch Hill. They contained no mention of the suspicions held about the alleged abuser and no reference to any process of accountability. Subject B is now deceased, but his victims are alive today and are still suffering the effects of the violent abuse that they were subject to.

As a result of the request to get documentation held in the homes of senior volunteers, handed back to Scouting Ireland, papers were uncovered which relate to this case. They appear to indicate that there was knowledge of the incidents that caused national officers to be involved in trying to establish what took place. They are not named as involving abuse, but it is a reasonable assumption to make. Scouting awards that were held by the alleged offender, which he had returned, were handed back by him. The alleged offender resigned and left scouting in good standing.

A senior volunteer who was involved at the time was spoken to by the reviewer and asked the question as to whether it was known that Subject B was an alleged offender at the time. He replied that it was and that he was tasked with keeping an eye on him when he attended camps! There is nothing in the official file that would indicate that this was the case. Also, the papers that were held

in the home of a deceased senior volunteer that relate to this case, are not replicated within the file in Larch Hill.

It is not possible to determine for certain as to what process of investigation, if any, was undertaken into the incidents that are generally referred to in the documents that this review uncovered. However, within those papers, Subject B was offered to have his awards returned to him. That document is dated 1987 and it was written by a national officer who is the subject of a separate allegation of sex offending.

Historic Abuse Case 3:

Subject C was a scout leader and played a part in setting up a new scout group which was based in a College. He was drawn to young boys and sought opportunities to be in their company. He was a priest and it later emerged that his interest in young boys involved a desire to have a sexual involvement with them. His sexual activities were eventually brought to the attention of his superiors one of whom wrote a detailed letter to the headquarters of a scouting organisation and included with the letter were written statements from five of Subject C's victims. They were all young teenage boys. They described his sexual assaults on them, most of which took place at scouting camps. The letter from Subject C's superior, who was also a priest, appears to have been held outside of any official filing system when it was received. There is no record of it being filed. Subject C was asked to leave scouting but there is no record of him having done so. Subject C continued to access young people and it is reasonable to assume that he continued to cause them harm as a result.

After a period of twenty years, Subject C was complained of to the Gardai and charged with several counts of alleged abuse. He was never tried for these as he took his own life, and his trial never took place.

An examination of the records held within the scouting headquarters at Larch Hill, would find no reference to the existence of the letter from the College or the written statements from the young boys who all allege that they were abused by Subject C. The letter was never placed in the official file and was kept outside of the records system, until it was uncovered by the reviewer within the home of a deceased senior scout volunteer, to whom it was sent in 1979. It is reasonable to assume that the senior volunteer suppressed it and kept it within his own files which he maintained in his home.

The continued involvement of Subject C in scouting is evidenced by a report from a scout leader whom the reviewer interviewed who recalled finding Subject C on the site of a scout camp, in the company of another alleged sex offender, who was known to the scout leader and whom he had put out of scouts, previously. The two were responsible for and surrounded by young boys who were preparing to go swimming. The scout leader immediately reported this fact to the leaders running the camp and had Subject C and the other person of concern, escorted from the camp site directly. This incident occurred six years after Subject C had been allegedly put out of scouting. It was reported that Subject C was attending the event in the role of chaplain. It is not known how the latter reported incident came about but given the fact that Subject C's abuse had been confirmed in writing, along with the personal testimonies of several of his young victims, some six years previous, it is deeply shocking that it took place at all. This case illustrates the difficulties that keeping records outside of a central, office filing system can create.

There is no way of knowing how many sexual assaults Subject C perpetrated on young boys between the sending of the letter in 1979 and his death in 1999. However, Subject C's alleged abuse was believed to be prolific and there are many people today who report that they are survivors of abuse perpetrated by him.

Historic Abuse Case 4:

Subject D became involved in scouting through his son. He offered to lend a hand as a volunteer with a thriving scout group. He proved to be a willing helper and was involved for a period of three years. He lived locally but had not been in the area for many years. His behaviour presented as concerning particularly during camps when he would spend an inordinate amount of time close to the tents of the boys. This eventually led to intervention by the group leader who challenged him and asked him to stop doing this.

Subject D joined the training team and continued to contribute well to a range of scouting activities such as helping when the boys went swimming. A parent reported a child being disturbed and distressed through his involvement in scouting. This led on to an allegation being made against this volunteer of sexual abuse. This was reported to Gardai immediately by the scout leader, and after discussion with them, it was agreed that Subject D should be asked to stand back from scouting whilst the matter was investigated.

Scouting Headquarters were informed of the allegation and the reporting to the Gardai. They were contacted via phone. In addition, they were written to, and all the details were confirmed in writing.

As the investigation by the Gardai progressed, it emerged that Subject D had been previously convicted of two charges of sexual assaults on young people. He was prosecuted for the offences he committed on the young boys in scouting. It was revealed in the Court proceedings that he had thirty-two victims, four of which were from within the scout group.

A search was made in Larch Hill for the case papers relating to this incident. None were found. Subject D, who was a confirmed sexual predator, who had been prosecuted on three separate occasions and who had been involved in scouting for three years before allegations emerged about him which had been reported in writing and verbally to scouting headquarters, no records could be found relating to the abuse he committed and was prosecuted for.

This case illustrates the difficulties associated with trying to assess the extent of known abuse within scouting. In this situation, Subject D was a confirmed abuser. The abuse that he was accused of was proven in a court of law, but it was not on record within Scouting Ireland. The same would be true of his victims who were all harmed as a result of being involved in scouting and being exposed to this sexual predator. His victims were not named to the reviewer and it is not known as to what support was offered to them by scouting beyond that of the group leader who led by example in recognizing, reporting, and acting on concerns that he was exposed to.

A Culture focused on Self Interest in Scouting

A negative culture based on self-interest developed and thrived in scouting at its highest levels. This led to the emergence of different cliques that competed for the purposes of gaining dominance in the organisation. Cronyism was in evidence. By using that term, I am specifically referring to the practice of awarding roles within scouting to people who are supporters of, or part of an inner circle of colleagues. It is a term often associated with politics when attempts are made to secure votes to support individuals in power. This is what was evidenced within scouting where roles were awarded as a result of votes cast by the membership. Rather than being truly democratic, it would appear to me that this gave rise to very poor governance where votes were cast on block or following the direction of someone in authority. Individuals secured positions in scouting because of who they undertook to support.

In these contests, it was most likely unknown to the rank and file membership that a person standing may have a sexual interest in children. However, with the support of others with a similar interest, they were appointed to become members of the Board or even be elected as a National Officer.

The information that has been shared by victims and by others who were involved in scouting at that time, show a situation where there were several national officers against whom there are now allegations of sexual abuse, all of which have been reported to the appropriate statutory authority. However, these people were able to avoid any accountability as they were protected by others in their group and by the power of the positions they held.

It is important to state that for most of these people what is held today are allegations of sexual abuse that have not been subjected to critical scrutiny in a court of law. The alleged offenders are deceased and therefore cannot contest what is said about them. However, in many of the cases, we are not just holding one allegation, but several. Where it is possible to speak to the victims, one can form a view as to the credibility of what they are saying took place.

In my view, credible allegations have been made against many national officers of the legacy scouting organisations that if the individuals were alive today, would have resulted in active investigations of alleged crime. However, because that has not happened, we must in fairness regard them as unproven allegations.

The result of this practice of cronyism, created a situation where those who had a sexual interest in children and young people, were sometimes protected by moving them sideways or even promoted in scouting, rather than expelled. They were protected and supported by others who had a similar interest. This made the task of confronting and challenging abusive behaviour within scouting, very difficult. There is witness testimony to support this view. Even when there was strong evidence to confirm that someone was a sex offender, they may still not be put out of scouting.

Sex abuse was known about and tolerated within scouting in some situations. Known offenders were protected, and there are examples of those individuals being replaced in those roles by others against whom we now hold allegations of sexual abuse. This may be understood as one of the results from the practice of cronyism in scouting. Individuals who held senior positions who were thought to be sex abusers, supported others who held a similar sexual interest in children. This is how scouting functioned for an extended period through the eighties, and nineties.

The practice of supporting your 'mates' was strongly in evidence and remained in place even during my involvement. This had embedded a culture of protection from perceived attack from those outside your clique, over the prioritisation of the safety and protection of young people in the organisation. Where the protection of the clique became more important than safeguarding the vulnerable young person.

Scouting Ireland today has sought to change its approach to governance. It has introduced a model that the appointment to a role is "competence based" and moved away from the "popularity contest" that national elections previously were. This development is to be welcomed but the fact remains that the structure that preceded it lent itself to manipulation by a small group of individuals, who did not have the best interests of young people at heart.

This situation was exacerbated by the failure of either of the scouting organisations, to introduce a robust, disciplinary code. Evidence of this practice remains present in Scouting Ireland right up to today when an attempt has been made to address it. It could be argued that improvements are still needed in this area, particularly regarding the speed of outcomes and conclusions.

Being a volunteer in scouting should be viewed as a privilege rather than a right. People whose behaviour does not comply with good practice should be told that change is required. Codes of conduct should be supported by robust accountability processes that do not take years to conclude.

One of the ways in which alleged sex offenders avoided being held accountable, was through ensuring that holding senior roles guaranteed protection. If you were a national officer, the possibility of any allegation that emerged against you for sexual abuse of a young person gaining attention and being responded to, were remote. There are echoes of this practice of inappropriate deference remaining in scouting up to this date which must be viewed as a major concern.

The cronyism that was rife during the eighties and nineties led to senior volunteers, against whom we now hold allegations of sexual abuse, associating with each other both inside and outside of scouting. I do not have a wealth of evidence to support speculation as to whether they shared information with each other on whom they offended against. However, it was reported in interview that a number of these senior volunteers, at national officer level, socialised with each other regularly. There is a credible statement from a victim who has shared their testimony, which speaks to this issue of shared knowledge of offending.

As well as that information, there is a report, in interview, from a current and long serving adult volunteer which is worth noting. This person spoke of his personal experience of meeting with two individuals, both of whom had been asked to leave scouting as a result of abuse concerns, and one of whom was known to him. This meeting took place when he was attending a jamboree. He was aware that this person was a risk to young people and should not be present at the event. The adult volunteer spoke to the camp leader and had the person removed. He did not realise at the time that the other person who was there, was a known sex offender that had supposedly been removed from scouting some years previously. Both individuals should not have been present, and it is also not known how they came to be in each other's company. When he approached the person whom he knew had been put out of scouting, the individual stated that he was there as a "ward" of a named national officer. This national officer, it is now believed was an active sex offender and there are several allegations of abuse against him.

In another case, a victim shared his story in which he states that he recalls as a young scout being brought to the home of a national officer, by another national officer, the young person's scout leader. He believes that it was understood that the scout leader was planning to abuse him in that house. He reports that it was also known that the national officer whose home he was in, appreciated what was going to happen to him, when he was brought to the national officer's home. He was making his home available for the purpose of facilitating the abuse of a child.

The national officers that are referred to by the victim are all deceased. Both are the subject of several allegations made by other victims. It appears to me that based on the emerging evidence, the senior volunteers that were thought to be sex offenders did share information with each other about their abuse and took steps to facilitate that abuse for each other.

Although this is horrific and deeply disturbing, it is important to recognize that there were many good, committed and caring volunteers involved in scouting, even at this time. It is perplexing to speculate as to why those who were aware of the abuse did not confront and challenge what was happening. The protection provided by like-minded individuals to those who were engaged in abuse, would have likely made it very difficult to do so. Even today, some of those who agreed to be interviewed who were involved in scouting at that time, but who were not offenders, find it deeply distressing to recall that time.

We can only assume that they were unaware of the details of the alleged abuse. Clearly, there is no record of any concerted challenge being made to confront what is alleged to have been happening. Again, this may be viewed as an outworking of the practice of cronyism which itself was spawned by the negative culture of self-interest.

At the heart of the culture of self-interest, is obtaining and retaining power. Those who have it, act to keep it at all costs. The abuse of a child becomes secondary and is accepted so that power may be retained. In one interview, it was stated that the response to reporting an allegation of sexual abuse by a senior volunteer to a national officer, was one of anger. This was not anger expressed at the abuse of a child but anger toward the individual for having brought the allegation further. The individual reporting the abuse was told to forget the

abuse reported and that the person abusing was too important to be accused of abuse. It is to their very great credit that they did not forget the abuse report and continued to ensure that the allegation was investigated.

In preparing this Learning Review, I have spoken to many volunteers in scouting, who are deeply distressed at what has emerged about the organisation that they have given most of their life to. They are shocked and horrified at what has been revealed. Many feel anger at their own lack of awareness as to what is reported as happening. They regret not doing more. There are others who had a knowledge of the abuse, and minimised or trivialised it, accepting it, because, in my view, they lacked the moral courage to intervene. Either way, what resulted was a stain not only on scouting, but on how we care for and protect our young people. These children were failed and were greatly harmed as a result. It is accepted that they were a minority of the young people involved in scouting, but their experiences are critical to scouting today. The mistakes that were made in their cases must be learnt from.

A negative culture based on self-interest, is wrong and has no place in scouting. It gives rise to decision making that is biased and can be easily manipulated. It makes confrontation and challenge, so much more difficult when bad practices develop within organisations. As has been shown within scouting, it can create a context within which the sexual abuse of children can thrive and be sustained for decades.

It is important to understand the relationship between good governance and effective safeguarding in any youth organisation. If cronyism dictates the outcome of leadership elections and determines who leads committees or who is appointed to the board of directors, effective safeguarding becomes almost an impossibility. When an allegation emerges against someone who is part of the inner group, then the response to that allegation is manipulated to control the outcome. Behaviour of this nature has existed in scouting and was not extinguished by the creation of a single scouting body. In some respects, it was made even more acute by the creation of Scouting Ireland.

In 2017, I was commissioned to undertake a review of safeguarding practice in Scouting Ireland, with emphasis on one case that had emerged in the previous year. I provided a review that reported poor practice and recommended that the behaviour of some senior volunteers should be scrutinized with a view to holding them accountable. This led to a protracted process that has not yet concluded. During the past two years, the existence of cronyism has been in evidence and efforts have been made to frustrate the process of holding people accountable. This demonstrates the negative impact that cronyism can have on any youth organisation that does not have a good governance structure in place.

Hidden Abuse

There is evidence to assert that knowledge of credible allegations of abuse, when they emerged, may not have been shared within the scouting leadership structure. The case examples cited in this Learning Review illustrate that fact. This contributed to a situation where the extent of reported abuse was not clearly understood by many who were involved in leadership roles in scouting. Added to this is a misunderstanding of the role of confidentiality and a mistaken widespread belief that this justifies the restricting of knowledge of reported abuse to all but a very few. A comment frequently made to the reviewer was “Every scout has a right to their good name”! The latter principle is accepted and is important, but evidence would suggest that this was taken too far and people who should have known that a credible allegation existed against an individual, were not told in order to protect the alleged abuser.

From my own experience, this lack of awareness as to what the experience of abuse was, persisted within scouting until very recently. At my first meeting with the then Board of Scouting Ireland in 2017, I asked the directors what their understanding was, as to the level of safeguarding referrals that existed within the organisation currently and in the recent past. There was a general lack of awareness of what it was. Reference was made to the work of the Child Protection Management Team that was made up of senior members of the Board along with staff, but the general knowledge of the Board lacked detail. The belief was that very few referrals existed.

The view was also expressed to me that the possible abuse of a scout was something that most directors were quite content to leave to other people to deal with. It was potentially very unpleasant, and most would prefer not to have to think about it at all!

The chaotic state of the records contributed to this situation along with the practice of senior volunteers in the organisations, keeping important documents in their homes. As the case examples quoted illustrate, this led to situations where the official records sometimes failed to receive evidence of credible allegations. This also led to those leaders who occupied senior roles in scouting today, to make statements that scouting had no evidence to suggest that someone was an offender as there was no record of any alleged abuse. These statements should have been qualified to add that the official file held no record of alleged abuse involving this person. In fact, the evidence, existed elsewhere but Scouting Ireland had not been sufficiently diligent in seeking it out, and placing it in the official record. As previously noted, scouting had been supplied with the information, but it had been suppressed by the person to whom it was shared with.

It is impossible for the Reviewer to say as to how many reports of abuse were lost in this way, but what is clear is that the scouting bodies were grossly negligent to pursuing “home based records” held by scouting leaders and senior volunteers. It was reported to the reviewer that Scouting Ireland and the previous scouting organisations had been requested by some of these retired scout leaders and by the families of those that had died, to collect these records from their homes. It was also reported that the unwillingness to do this, had resulted in documents being burnt by the family of at least one senior deceased volunteer.

In preparing for this Review, requests had been made by Scouting Ireland for all “home based records” to be returned so that they could be archived in an appropriate way. This did bring forward some important papers. However, prior to this call during the summer of 2018 and as an example, a

bizarre situation where a retired senior volunteer brought papers to Larch Hill so that they could make use of the shredder there, to destroy notes of cases that he had in his home. Whilst this was happening, the shredder broke down and a member of the safeguarding team discovered what was happening. They were able to intervene and prevent important records from being destroyed. Those records were not replicated in the official files of Scouting Ireland and related to incidents involving a prolific offender.

It should be stated that the senior volunteer referred to here, believed that the papers he was shredding were already within the records held. He was deeply disturbed to find that this was not the case and as a result provided access to all the documents that he had in his home, which were then properly assessed and archived.

It is clear to the reviewer that not all the case files that should exist are within the official records in Larch Hill. Whilst reviewing papers retrieved from the home of one senior volunteer, the reviewer discovered memos that detailed the arrangements for the move of headquarters for a scouting body from Herbert Place to Grantham Street, and then to Dolphins Barn. The memos set out a process for the shredding of “confidential files that are no longer needed.” It is not clear what was contained in those files and no detail is offered as to how to select a document of this nature. It is reasonable to suspect that files could have been destroyed that should have been retained.

There is evidence to show that the attitude of many in leadership roles in scouting was to protect the organisation’s reputation. The case examples cited would support this, leading to the conclusion that some people, who were not themselves offenders, were complicit in the cover up of credible allegations of abuse, with the intention of protecting the scouting movement. Even when several allegations were made against someone who was a senior scout, attempts were made to suppress these allegations being acted upon. This was the reported experience of one volunteer who spoke to the reviewer who recalled the anger and resistance that they were met with when they attempted to progress acting against a reported, prolific offender. They were told that the offender was “too important a scout leader” to be reported.

As has already been noted, it is very much to this volunteer’s credit that they showed great courage and determination and succeeded in getting that person out of scouting. The alleged offender is now deceased but there are some within scouting today that would regard that person as a “great scout”!

When Scouting Ireland was created, the new organisation inherited case files that related to abuse that happened in the preceding scouting bodies. When it took possession of these files, no one read them or assessed their content. Indeed, they were not even counted. They were placed in filing cabinets in which they remained until an attempt was made in 2012 to review their content. The lack of attention paid to documents of this nature is staggering and totally unacceptable. There appears to have been a belief that they were all closed and had been dealt with.

The negotiations that preceded the creation of the new scouting organisation gave rise to a great deal of recorded discussion and intense conversations about such issues as to what the relationship would be for the new body to the Catholic Church, to which CBSI had been closely allied at the time. Nowhere in these records is there any mention of ensuring that risk generated from previous abuse cases would be appropriately managed. It was not considered as an issue. It is, consequently, not surprising that such little attention was paid to ensuring that all the records that existed inside and outside of the offices, should be scrutinised, properly filed, and indexed.

When abuse was discovered previously, it appears that the response that was made to it was for a national officer, usually accompanied by a senior volunteer, to meet with the alleged offender and ask them to sign a resignation letter from scouting. They would leave with their good name in place and nothing further would happen. They would not be reported to the appropriate authorities and no further attention would be paid to them. They were free to join another youth organisation if they wished to do so and there are examples of this happening, even between the two scouting bodies that existed here. Records exist in cases where this happened and the motivation is clearly stated that what mattered was protecting the reputation of the organisation, to ensure that scouting would not be harmed by negative publicity. There was no attention paid to the protection of the vulnerable child.

The CBSI held a strong alignment with the Catholic Church. The parish priest would generally be involved with the local scouts. Some of the clerics involved were alleged or known sex offenders and used their involvement with scouting as a means of accessing young people. The numbers of incidents where this resulted in abuse, is hidden by the fact that the priest, the scout unit chaplain, was generally not a registered member of CBSI and would therefore not show up in any record review of the membership. They may be subject to allegations, but this would not be recorded within the membership index held by CBSI.

Since opening the helpline there are reports where parents stated that they complained of abuse happening, and nothing was done. The child was removed by the parents or refused to go again, and the scout leader was left in place. Further, in many cases when a report regarding a suspected abusive scout leader was made the scout organisation sometimes chose to close the scout group, removing scouting from the community rather than remove the individual and reporting it to the authorities. This permitted the risk to continue in other communities elsewhere.

All these issues contributed to a situation where the overall incidence of sexual abuse in scouting was largely hidden and not properly recognised until recently. With the emergence of an increasing number of victims who are willing to speak about their alleged experiences in scouting, it is possible to speculate as to how widespread the sexual abuse of young people was. It cannot be entirely confirmed by reference to documentation nor by access to individuals who are willing to speak about what they know happened. Ultimately, what you are left with is only a partial understanding of how widespread it was. All the papers are simply not available through being either lost or destroyed. Also, the alleged offenders are now deceased or not in a position of being capable to be interviewed. However, there is enough evidence available to be able to state that what went on was appalling, and totally unacceptable. It was mismanaged and hidden by a combination of incompetence and intent.

Learning Points

Key learning points for the reviewer are listed in summary form for your consideration:

1. The abuse of children in both scouting organisations took place and was handled very badly by the preceding organisations, prior to the creation of Scouting Ireland. This was known about at the highest level in both bodies. The extent to which this contributed to the merging of the two bodies into Scouting Ireland is unclear. What can be stated is that there was a lack of scrutiny as to what evidence existed about past abuse cases when the new body was formed. This is evidenced by the fact that the case material was not read, assessed, or cases even counted at the time of the formation of Scouting Ireland. The inherited files were not scrutinized until 2012.
2. Analysis of the legacy cases shows clear mismanagement and a gross failure to respond to risk. Individuals who were known to have abused young people, were not held to account consistently and often remained in scouting but with a different group.
3. Volunteers often mismanaged these situations and there were occasions when individuals tried to interfere with any attempt to address alleged abuse, to protect a suspected offender. The issue of discipline and accountability had a very poor record in scouting. This remains a significant challenge for those in authority in Scouting today. Too much attention was given to avoiding reputational damage.
4. Recent disclosures following increased public scrutiny, confirm that victims were not supported and provided with the help they required at the time that it was known that abuse had happened. It was often the case that they were not apologized to which left them feeling traumatized and angry.
5. Creating accountability structures and processes, has been shown to be a major problem for Scouting. Progress to address this has been slow and overly legalistic. Being a volunteer in Scouting is a privilege, and not a right. When wrongdoing is discovered, it still takes far too long to address it and remove an alleged offender.
6. Those that hurt a child or who do not understand the importance of putting the welfare of the child above everything else, have no place in the organisation.
7. An organisation that has major problems that affect how it responds to safeguarding concerns, will not address these unless it is forced to do so. It must face crisis and challenge before it will act.
8. The risk of a small, well positioned minority within a large youth organisation like Scouting Ireland, controlling how that organisation operates, is very great. To counteract this, you need reform that brings forward leaders who are elected to positions of authority on the basis of competence rather than through a popularity contest. Taking the right action for the right reasons and at the right time, is difficult, but becomes impossible if there are dominant alliances that control the agenda.
9. At the level of the organisation, the process of healing and becoming stronger involves owning up to the past, acknowledging it, and committing to ensuring it will never happen again. Scouting Ireland today is producing evidence that confirms that it is trying hard to do this currently.
10. Putting in place a sound policy framework is important but, is not enough to protect vulnerable young people. At least two further elements are required. Firstly, those in authority have got to want to do it. Secondly, they must recognize that by not doing it, they create risk to the young people, but also to the organization itself. This has got to matter to them. Turning a blind eye is not an option.

These are summary points of key learning areas for the reviewer. I suspect that what happened in scouting, could be present in other Irish youth organizations that are waiting for a catalyst to lay their issues bare as has happened in Scouting Ireland. I would also like to mention the importance of having "champions" within the organization who agitate for change and will do so constantly until it happens, placing themselves in the firing line. It is massively important that these people are resilient and enduring so that they do not give in to the hassle that they are subject to. For the reviewer, these "champions" really must be staff rather than volunteers.

It would be my strong belief that the way in which scouting has operated in Ireland until recently, must change. The importance of good governance structures is crucial. The culture of the organisation must change. Cronyism must be eliminated. It must be accepted by all that the safeguarding of the young person is essential. It can never be jeopardised by any other issue or priority, including the continued existence of the organisation itself.

Good governance structures, combined with a properly resourced safeguarding service, supported by a professional staff that covers the entire operation of the organisation, is the way to ensure that this does not repeat itself in the future. In the opinion of the reviewer, professionally trained staff are essential to these structures. There is a danger in asserting that an organisation that utilizes many volunteers, should keep their employed staff to a minimum. I have heard this argued in scouting that if less money is spent on staff, it will be available for use in other areas!

This is a strategy that is full of danger. The recognition, response to, and management of safeguarding risks within a youth organisation, is a complex task and one that benefits from professional training and experience. It can make use of well-trained volunteers, but if it seeks to rely upon them entirely, it will run into difficulties.

It is important that those who lead Scouting Ireland do not allow themselves to be lulled into thinking that all the problems that have been considered in this Learning Review, are historic. They are not. The potential for cronyism to rise again and to gain a foothold remains and must be guarded against. Those that have been shown to have behaved badly, should be held accountable in a robust, fair, and timely way. It should not take months to deal with. Such a process is not fit for purpose.

Conclusion

The focus of this Learning Review was not to scrutinise each of the incidents of sexual abuse that were reported as having taken place, but to draw lessons from an examination of the behaviour involved at the level of the individual and the organisation as a whole, to prevent it happening again. There is no doubt that any review of this nature will inevitably highlight tragic situations that should never have happened. It should cause some to reconsider their view of the priorities that exist for the scouting movement today.

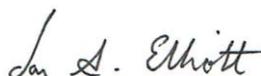
Any objective examination of the evidence presented to this Review, would lead to the conclusion that scouting failed to protect vulnerable young people and allowed risky individuals to operate for too long a period. There was a reluctance to hold people to account and to recognize the reason why the organisation existed at all which is to serve the needs of young people in a positive way.

The simple lesson for scouting today is to place the safety and wellbeing of the young person before anything else. Those who volunteer to be scout leaders should realise that to be a volunteer is a privilege. It is not a right. They should expect to have their behaviour scrutinised and commented upon. Where it is shown to be below the line of adequacy, then they should be helped to raise it above it. If they cannot, then their involvement in scouting should end. If their behaviour is thought to be a risk to young people, this should be reported immediately to the statutory authorities. The protection of children is not just the responsibility of a professional safeguarding team. It is the responsibility of every adult in the organisation. This needs to be at the foundation of all training, activities and engagements throughout the organisation.

When issues emerge that should give rise to a process of accountability, this must be delivered quickly and not be spread over months and even years. This is not good practice and does little to suggest that scouting has learned the hard lessons from not addressing the bad behaviour that is part of its history.

There should only be one system for recording and retaining information detailing the safeguarding practice of those involved in scouting. Clear policies that are monitored regularly are essential. There is a need for more professional staff to support the growth that has taken place in scouting. With over forty thousand young people involved, and thirteen thousand volunteers, Scouting Ireland is a considerable organisation and makes a valuable contribution to the lives of many in Ireland today. It must learn from its history and demonstrate that it has the capability to eliminate the abuse and mismanagement referred to in this Review. The volunteer is not supreme. The young person is.

Signed:



Independent Safeguarding Consultant

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Recommendations

1. The governance structure of Scouting Ireland should ensure that small, undemocratic cliques of members, do not exert undue influence on the decision making of the organisation. This has happened and was accepted practice until very recently. It should continue to make use of experienced governance experts to advise it on how it develops its structure.
2. A robust disciplinary process should be adopted that will hold volunteers accountable where it has been found that their behaviour is unacceptable or contravenes the expectations that are held of how an adult volunteer should behave. It is important that this process should be capable of delivering discipline quickly to avoid situations occurring which drag on for months or even years.
3. Records should be created that reflect the safeguarding practice of the organisation fairly and comprehensively. They should be centrally stored, regularly monitored, and capable of being retrieved easily. The practice of holding documentation or electronic information outside of the approved central database, should be ended immediately.
4. The Board should be regularly updated on the overall safeguarding workload that exists, at any time, in Scouting Ireland. This information, when presented by the safeguarding manager, should be interrogated by the directors to satisfy themselves that appropriate responses were made to all the safeguarding concerns that emerged.
5. A diligent attempt should be made to establish what documentation exists outside of the official records system, currently. Home visits should be made to make it as easy as possible for anyone to return documentation for archiving in Larch Hill.
6. Scouting Ireland should make an institutional apology to all those that have been harmed through their contact with scouting in previous years.
7. Effective safeguarding must be adequately resourced and prioritised in Scouting Ireland today and going forward. Eliminating preventable harm to young people must be the most important objective before Scouting Ireland today. There is evidence that this aim was ignored in previous years, as can be seen by any review of the documentation detailing the discussions that led to the creation of Scouting Ireland. Protecting young people from abuse was never mentioned.
8. Where it has been shown that an individual, regardless of their position, has placed a young person at risk through their actions, or brought dishonour to the scouting movement by their behaviour, they should be expelled directly.
9. Where risk has been identified as existing, this information should be shared with all those people that need to be informed.
10. Scouting Ireland should set up an independent audit process that monitors the quality of its safeguarding practice. An audit report should be presented to the Board, detailing the findings. The regularity of the audit process should be undertaken annually or no less frequently than every two years. The findings of the audit should be made available to all the key stakeholders, as well as the Board.
11. Scouting Ireland should continue to maintain and nurture a close working relationship with the key safeguarding statutory agencies in both jurisdictions on the island of Ireland. This relationship should also be included in the independent audit process previously recommended.
12. Scouting Ireland should deter an improper use of social media to distribute unsubstantiated allegations and to encourage the spread of cronyism. Any breach of this, should be subject to the disciplinary processes in Scouting Ireland.

Appendices:

I have included four documents which help to contextualize the work that went into the completion of this Learning Review. Appendix 1 is a paper that I presented to the Board of Scouting Ireland in January 2018. Appendix 2 and 3 letters that I wrote to the Board when I realized that my conversations with them were being recorded without my knowledge or permission, and shared with journalists. Finally, appendix 4 is a briefing paper that I prepared for the new Board and submitted to them when they took office in October 2018.

Appendix 1: A New Approach to Safeguarding in Scouting Ireland

A New Approach to Safeguarding in Scouting Ireland

Executive Summary:

This Report builds upon the Interim Review previously presented. It argues for the adoption of a new approach to safeguarding within Scouting Ireland and its associated partner bodies. It highlights the critical role played by volunteers and the heavy responsibilities that are now carried by service providing youth organisations such as Scouting Ireland, within the Republic of Ireland, because of the introduction of “Children First”. It recommends that the delivery of an effective safeguarding service should be a delegated responsibility of the Chief Executive Officer, supported by a safeguarding co-ordinator and sessional safeguarding officers located across the island. It places emphasis upon the adoption of a clear disciplinary code of practice for all, volunteers and staff, with specific sanctions applied to those who fail to comply with it.

Scouting Ireland and its partner organisations are recognised as a leading provider of services to young people across the length and breadth of the island. In seeking to achieve this, they draw on the services of a large array of volunteers, some of whom have many years of experience in Scouting and others who have been drawn in through the involvement of their children. Overall, they combine to make available a range of positive and enjoyable experiences currently for approximately fifty thousand young people. The learning drawn from those experiences for the young people is not only instantly enjoyed but has proven to be long lasting, shaping their behaviour as adults in later life.

The size and complex structure of the organisation represent formidable challenges that must be overcome, to maintain their preeminent position. To shape the practice of all those involved in Scouting, they require a comprehensive and coherent policy framework which is regularly monitored. Given that Scouting Ireland is a volunteer led body, this is difficult to achieve.

The attitude towards safeguarding within Scouting has been variable and based on misperceptions as to the level of risk existing and the flow of credible allegations of safeguarding concerns. This situation has been aided by an over reliance on limiting the formal sharing of relevant information relating to identified concerns. Ironically, this information was often circulated informally leading to

the belief that some meetings, convened to address these issues, could not be assumed to be relied upon to respect confidentiality.

The critical and serious nature of safeguarding practice has not been fully appreciated until recently, leading to ineffective structures which were under resourced. Bad decisions have been made and unacceptable practice on the part of some people in leadership roles, has passed without challenge. The combined effect of this is significant organisational risk through reputational damage.

Ultimately, the aim of Scouting Ireland is to ensure that the young people who they take in as members are safe and protected from all preventable harm. (I emphasise preventable harm as sadly, not all harm can be prevented.) Similarly, Scouting Ireland must do all that they can to confirm that all the adults that they bring in and expose young people to, through their involvement in Scouting, are “fit people” to undertake that role. This places emphasis on the need to create and maintain an effective, comprehensive safeguarding structure and policy framework along with a means of monitoring adherence to those policies in the everyday practice of Scouting.

The complexity of this task should not be underestimated. Quite simply, it requires everyone involved in Scouting Ireland to be committed to making the movement as safe as it can be. Those that occupy a position of leadership carry a greater burden. They must not only comply with the dictates of policy but also model best practice from a safeguarding perspective in all that do and say. Those that do not do this, should be required to consider their position and reflect on whether they are “fit people” to continue in their role.

To emphasize this point, through the course of this Review, I have read a selected number of case files within which the actions of senior members of the movement have been described. Not only were some of these actions reckless and inappropriate from a safeguarding perspective, they placed the movement at significant risk of severe reputational damage. The possibility of those actions being critically scrutinized within court proceedings is real, leading to negative media exposure. The movement cannot expect to survive in a rapidly changing Irish society, if it ignores these issues. Everyone who has not acted in a way that is consistent with the expectations of the movement, and in compliance with the values enshrined in the Scout promise, must be held to account and face appropriate sanctions. To not do so, is to run the risk of being viewed as acting irresponsibly when responding to the need to keep young people safe.

It is becoming more likely now, in both jurisdictions on the island, for those who feel that they have been harmed by an organisation which they have encountered, to seek to initiate legal proceedings for that harm to be mitigated by financial redress. It is not uncommon for these proceedings to relate to alleged incidents that took place decades ago. The size of these awards is growing as the courts take the view that organisations that provide services to young people, should comply fully with developing legislation and a greater awareness of the risks that exist in society today. A small number of claims can have a devastating impact on the assets of any organisation that is thought to be negligent in this area. It can bring it to the point of extinction (as was the case with the Swimming Association of Ireland). The expectation held by the general public and supported by judicial decisions, is that you will do all that you can to make your organisation as safe as it can possibly be or face the consequences for not doing so.

From my own experience, I have seen the devastating impact that unaddressed risk can have on an organisation that thought of itself as being impregnable. The abuse crisis that descended on the Roman Catholic Church in Ireland is a relevant example that should be reflected upon. In that case, risk to children was not addressed and bad decisions were regularly made involving denial and cover

up. The organisation tried to protect itself and its accused members, losing sight of the need to protect actual and potential victims. The consequences were not only massive financial loss but severe reputational damage that will take many years to fade.

Any responsible body that provides services to children and young people here must take account of and learn from the tragic errors of judgement that have been made when effective safeguarding has not been prioritized. Quite simply, if you ignore it or fail to pay proper attention to establishing safe practice, the outcome could be extinction.

As you will be aware, *Children First* has now come into effect in the Republic of Ireland. This development puts previous circulated guidance on best safeguarding practice, on to a statutory footing. It is a requirement for any substantial service providing body, such as Scouting Ireland, to comply with the dictates of that legislation. To fail to do so runs the risk of prosecution and possible sanction.

In effect, the gaps that have existed to date in the policy framework for Scouting Ireland, will need to be addressed as the services that you provide will need to be risk assessed and determination made, prior to their provision, that what you intend to do is appropriately planned, supervised, and supported before it is delivered.

What this legislation will do is to move any service providing body working with young people, away from a casual view of safeguarding as an “optional extra” to the planning of youth activities to a realisation that ensuring effective safeguarding is an absolute essential before any activity can happen.

I have already highlighted to you the need for clarity regarding the threshold that you employ when deciding whether a volunteer who has faced a credible allegation that impacts on their suitability to be thought of as a “fit person” to work with young people. Steps have already been taken to address this which is to be welcomed. Decisions that have previously been made, should be re-examined in the light of this development if the individuals involved are still members of the movement. If they have left or have died, the matter can be left but where there is a current risk, then there is a need for a proper assessment to be made.

One practice that must be addressed is that of lobbying on behalf of an accused member. This is inappropriate and can lead to dangerous decisions being made. If an accused person has established relationships with individuals in positions of influence in the movement, they must not be allowed to use these as a means of exerting pressure on those involved in decision making in the case. I read documentary evidence that indicated that this occurred in cases that I looked at, which I found to be shocking. It is wrong and, in my view, directly led to bad decisions being made in those cases. Those involved should be asked to reflect upon their actions and consider whether they are “fit people” to continue in their roles.

The practice of lobbying for an accused person has helped to create a tension between some elements of leadership and the staff involved in trying to manage these cases. The staff felt undermined and exposed, leading to considerable feelings of frustration. It is very much to their credit that despite this, they remained fully committed to the task, doing all that could be done to protect and prevent harm occurring to others. However, not all staff remained, and it is of note that the last two singleton practitioners that have been tasked with responding to child protection cases in Scouting Ireland, have left complaining of being overloaded. The same fate, in my opinion, would face any sole worker who is placed in a similar position.

It must be recognised that those who are involved in delivering a safeguarding service for Scouting Ireland, require much more than they are presently receiving. Firstly, they should not be accommodated within a busy general office and be expected to receive calls and respond to safeguarding issues as they arise. They require separate office accommodation, with secure filing for all safeguarding records, and access to expert advice and guidance on an ongoing basis. They must be removed and protected from inappropriate lobbying or requests for information from others. These are the essentials that any new safeguarding structure should involve.

At the same time, those involved in safeguarding should be accessible across the whole of the island. This cannot be delivered by a single practitioner. It requires several people who are available to the provinces and preferably known to people there. There is an over reliance on advice and guidance being “Dublin” based which is out of step with an organisation that is so diverse and dispersed as Scouting Ireland is.

Technology can help very much in achieving this. I would suggest that consideration is given to setting up a website specifically for safeguarding within Scouting Ireland. This could be used as a means of distributing information relating to safeguarding such as legislative developments in both jurisdictions along with guidance documents. The timing of training courses could also be shared.

Through my own experience, I use technology to help me manage and support safeguarding staff based in other parts of the world. I work with staff in South America whom I speak to using a web-based facility which enables me to talk to them directly, in real time. I also speak regularly to colleagues in the United States and in England. Geography does not need to be an insurmountable barrier to good communication and effective safeguarding.

It is important to note that Scouting Ireland and its partner bodies operate across the entire island and therefore must ensure that the statutory responsibilities that apply in Northern Ireland are not lost sight of. For example, Northern Ireland has well developed legislation regarding the position of vulnerable adults and how they should be catered for in organisations providing services to them. In many respects, they are ahead of the situation that applies in the Republic and therefore have a lot to offer on an all island basis. There should be policies developed to accommodate vulnerable adults within Scouting Ireland that comply with the statutory responsibilities that are in place in Northern Ireland but are applied by the organisation across all the island.

As mentioned previously, Scouting Ireland depends on voluntary effort to operate. Those that give of their time, do so generously and deserve great praise. There is a need to ensure that these volunteers are “fit people” to undertake the roles that they are given. This requires a greater focus on recruitment and the adoption of a probationary period that allows an ample opportunity for the movement to assess whether the individual is suitable or not, for the role. I would recommend that the probationary period should be a year with an independent review undertaken by someone else outside of the immediate working environment for the volunteer.

Similarly, a volunteer must be a “fit person” for the role and prove that this is the case by their ongoing actions and contributions to Scouting Ireland. From a safeguarding perspective, all volunteers should be willing to provide information to those who undertake the management of safeguarding concerns. For example, if someone in a leadership position, undertakes an interview with someone who is the subject of a safeguarding allegation, it should be expected that they will be willing to supply a written record of that meeting for inclusion in the case file. There are no acceptable grounds for refusing to do so, and yet, I met with this exact situation in one of the case files that I read. The person involved was requested in writing by the National Secretary to supply a

record of the conversation that took place between that person and the subject of a serious allegation currently under review. This request was made months ago and followed up with further requests, and no record to date has yet been provided.

The absence of this record in the case file is very important in that it prevents a full consideration of the facts of the case. Following that meeting of which there is no record, the accused person was permitted to return to an active Scouting role. It is unknown as to what was said or what commitments were asked for or given. Yet, if this matter ever became the subject of external scrutiny through court proceedings for example, the organisation would not be able to confirm what took place at that meeting!

I cite this example because it illustrates the point that I am seeking to make. Occupying a position of leadership in Scouting Ireland carries with it specific responsibilities that must be met. A refusal to accept that should be grounds for considering whether the person refusing to provide the requested information should be allowed to remain as part of Scouting Ireland. Rules must be made, and they should be complied with fully.

It has been suggested to me that it is not possible to create a viable disciplinary code for volunteers in Scouting Ireland. The argument being that you must take account of the fact that many are volunteers. I accept that, but I most definitely do not accept that you cannot have an effective disciplinary code for volunteers. On the contrary, I believe that this is an essential part of running a safe youth organisation.

All volunteers, whether in positions of leadership or not, must be subject to a disciplinary process that carries with it a variety of sanctions that also includes possible expulsion. Adults who volunteer in Scouting Ireland must accept that their needs are always secondary to those of the young people that they serve. The safety and wellbeing of the younger members supersedes the situation of the adult. The possible risk to the child is far more important than the possible risk to the reputation of the adult.

If this latter point is fully accepted then it leads to a position where it must be recognized that adults who are thought not to be “fit people” for contact with young people, should be removed from the organisation. This should apply regardless of who they know or are friendly with, or what position they occupy, or what they have done in the past. If they do not abide by the rules, then they must go.

Similarly, there should be regular appraisal of the performance of staff to ensure that their actions comply with the expectations held of their role by the organisation. They must reflect the values of Scouting in what they do and how they do it. There is legislation in place in both jurisdictions that applies to the employment of staff which sets them apart from the role of volunteers to a very great extent. Importantly, their selection and appointment has been done based on a competence focused assessment of their potential to operate in a particular role. The same does not apply for many volunteers in leadership positions.

What I am arguing for here is a radical step back from a safeguarding process that is under resourced and not supported by a comprehensive policy framework. The need for experienced, trained personnel to be part of the process is fundamental. Many of these issues are complex and cannot be adequately dealt with by well-meaning people who lack professional competence. This is not to say that volunteers should be excluded entirely from the process. On the contrary, I would argue that they have a role to play but this needs to be properly defined.

Most importantly, what is required is the adoption of a new safeguarding culture in Scouting Ireland that is based on the primacy of the safety and wellbeing of its young members, as opposed to those of the adults involved. This new culture should recognise that effective safeguarding is a complex and demanding task that requires adequate resourcing and complete commitment from all within the organisation. In my view, this has not previously been the case.

A Proposed New Structure for Safeguarding:

I would strongly recommend that the task of ensuring the effective delivery of a safeguarding service should be recognized as a delegated responsibility carried by the Chief Executive Officer for Scouting Ireland, who should report to the Chief Scout, and through that person, to the Board. Reporting to the Chief Executive Officer should be a safeguarding co-ordinator/manager, who in turn would be supported by several safeguarding officers located across the island. These people would be employed on a sessional basis as and when required. Similarly, the safeguarding co-ordinator/manager would be engaged on a part time basis only. The role of safeguarding officer would require the post holder to have relevant experience and proven professional competence in the assessment of safeguarding concerns.

The roles of safeguarding co-ordinator and officers should not require the individuals to be part of Scouting Ireland or to have served as a volunteer in the organisation. However, it would be important that those individuals would support the aims of the organisation and be in sympathy with the values enshrined in the Scout promise.

Most of the safeguarding concerns that arise at present are matters that can be dealt with quickly and easily. However, there are a smaller number of more serious cases that need a much more considered and robust response. It is these cases that are the most worrying, and just a small number of them each year arise at present. It does not follow that this will be the case on an ongoing basis.

In the first instance, there is a need to recognize risk when it arises and respond to it quickly and appropriately. Once this has happened, there is also a need to record the actions that have been taken so that if the matter ever arises again in the future, it can be quickly established as to what response was made to it. This is of great importance to the management of any possible future legal actions. There is little point in trying to rely on personal memory after several years to try to recall what was done in a case, as the individuals involved may no longer be available for consultation.

Delivery of a Safeguarding Service in Scouting Ireland



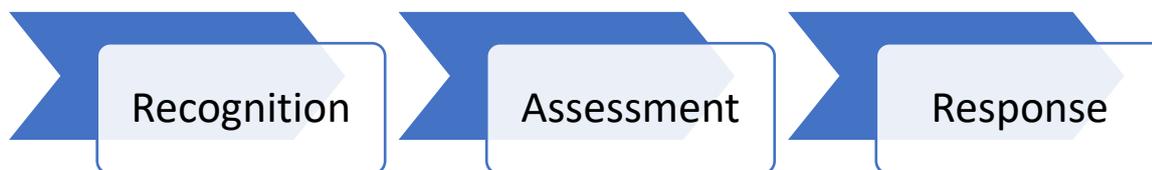
The CEO would be required to provide a briefing to each meeting of the Board. It would be recommended that Safeguarding should be a standing item on the agenda for every meeting of the Board. The briefing should be provided for the CEO by the safeguarding co-ordinator and should detail the number, form, and seriousness of the safeguarding concerns reported since the last meeting. It should also describe the response made to the concerns. Where it is considered that potential risk to the organisation may exist through the existence of the concerns, this should be specified in the briefing.

Through the co-ordination of a safeguarding response, the briefing to the Board should also attempt to identify what training needs have been recognized as existing across the organisation. This should include any deficits in safeguarding awareness amongst those in leadership roles.

The content of the safeguarding briefing should be gathered by the co-ordinator/manager through the safeguarding officers that have undertaken work within the preceding weeks. Combined with this information, those providing safeguarding training would be called upon to give details of what work has been undertaken in that field.

It would be anticipated that the existence safeguarding as a standing item on the agenda, would contribute towards ensuring that the importance of the issue does not get lost within the many other matters that have to be dealt with.

A Safeguarding Process



In the first instance, a safeguarding concern must be recognized as a matter that should be looked at. I would suggest that the creation of several safeguarding sessional officers, located around the island, should make those conversations to discuss whether a matter warrants closer examination, easier to manage. However, Scouting Ireland should also develop different means of sharing concerns when they arise. I have already suggested the creation of a dedicated safeguarding website with associated email addresses that people can use, as one practical way of doing this. A dedicated helpline could be staffed on a sessional basis by the safeguarding officers. This would reduce the reliance on a single person based within the National office in Dublin.

It would also be strongly recommended that the stages of assessment undertaken when a safeguarding concern is reported, should be detailed within a guidance document, and referenced within the Code of Good Practice.

The Safeguarding Policy Framework

There is a need to define specific policies and a range of guidance documents within Scouting Ireland. These could be made available through a dedicated website to the membership. Issues such as providing services to vulnerable adults, would be one example. Also, being explicit that engaging in certain behaviour such as drinking alcohol, using recreational drugs, or engaging sexual relations, would not be acceptable when involved in Scouting activities. It has been reported to me that the latter is generally understood, but it is not explicitly stated anywhere in a set of rules for the organisation. This is a deficit that needs to be addressed.

From a safeguarding perspective, defining a tight disciplinary code for Scouting Ireland is an essential step. It must be understood that allegations made against any member should be assessed by the organisation from a basis of whether the person can still be considered a “fit person” to work with young people. This is not solely defined by a court process or where there is an admission by the subject. There is a need for an assessment and judgement to be made as to whether they can still be thought of as a “fit person” or not. This can be a complex task and requires the input of people who have the necessary experience and professional competence. It is a judgement that the organisation may well be held accountable for in the future through a judicial process. Therefore, it needs to be given careful attention at the highest level before being adopted.

I have already commented on the importance of managing social media in a way that limits the possibility of it being used to groom vulnerable young people for abuse. This requires responsibility and maturity to be displayed by all those in positions of leadership. It is not acceptable to use social media channels as a way of creating fantasies aimed at giving amusement to followers. Not everyone will appreciate that what is being described is meant to be fantasy. Therefore, those that

engage in behaviour of this nature must accept that they are unsuitable to hold positions of leadership and should stand down from them.

Similarly, those that seek to befriend single young people through social media channels such as Snapchat, should understand that simply issuing the request leaves them open to being scrutinised to establish that grooming is not present.

High risk activities, such as those that bring single adults together with an individual child or young person, should only be happening when the activity has been fully risk assessed. As a basic requirement, it should be supported by written down policies and guidance for those involved. I would cite "The Listening Ear" service as an example. Young people who are worried, distressed, or anxious, are often very vulnerable. If an organisation is targeting these young people with a view to engaging them in a process aimed at supporting them, they need to ensure that everyone who is involved is a "fit person" to undertake the task. The process of offering advice, guidance, or just listening, must be properly supervised as those who avail of the service may have heightened vulnerabilities.

Disciplinary Sanctions

Scouting Ireland primary reason for existing is not to provide a hobby or past time for adults. It exists to provide positive, enjoyable, constructive, and safe experiences for the young people who are associated with it. Their needs are preeminent. The situation of the adults must always be understood as secondary. Consequently, the need to ensure that all the adults are "fit people" for the tasks entrusted to them means that Scouting Ireland must be robust in its assessment of all information that comes to light that indicates that someone may not meet that criteria. Where that is the case, then they should have the means available to them to remove the person from further involvement in Scouting activities directly. I would argue for a "suspension without prejudice" approach to be adopted to replace the current "voluntary abstention".

In some of the cases that I read, the request for voluntary abstention had been ignored by the subject leading on eventually to their suspension. I simply want to shorten the process, without prejudice, to allow a proper assessment to take place.

The decision to impose "a suspension without prejudice" on an individual should be brought as a recommendation to the Chief Scout, and the National Secretary, by the Chief Executive Officer. They may confirm or seek further information from the CEO prior to agreeing to the request. It would be anticipated that the circumstances that gave rise to the request for the action, would be part of the content of the safeguarding briefing provided by the CEO at the next Board meeting.

It is important to emphasise that this mechanism is not a judgement as to whether someone is guilty of an offence or that an allegation is true. It is a device that does not pass judgement but is aimed at creating space that will permit a proper and full assessment of the situation to be made. This could involve a statutory investigation but not in every case. Clearly, if evidence exists that the allegation that gave rise to the concern, is true or has been admitted to, then it would not be appropriate to use this mechanism.

In my view, Scouting Ireland must be enabled to remove more easily those people whom they believe are not "fit people" to work with young people. They should not delegate this task entirely to

the statutory authorities. They must recognize that the needs of the young people come first before those of any adults involved.

Final Comments

Scouting Ireland and their partner bodies do an excellent job with a very large number of young people. The majority of the adult volunteers are hardworking, dedicated, individuals who represent excellent role models for the young people that they have contact with. Despite that, there should be no room for complacency. Not everyone who volunteers to work with young people has their best interests at heart. They may be quite unsuited to the role and they need to be counselled out before they cause disruption.

What is needed is a new approach to safeguarding within Scouting Ireland. A different structure has been described which places greater emphasis on applying individuals with relevant experience and professional competence to the tasks associated with delivering a safeguarding service. This should take place within a safeguarding culture which sees the safety and wellbeing of children as being preeminent. Children come first before anything else. The practice of lobbying on behalf of an accused member must be ended. Activities that are high risk should be properly assessed and supervised if they are to take place. Deficits in the policy framework should be identified and addressed. The concentration on National Office as being the sole source of safeguarding advice and guidance, should be balanced by the appointment of sessional safeguarding officers across the island, making help in this area more readily available to everyone.

Those involved in safeguarding should have separate office accommodation that facilitates privacy and the storing of records that contain sensitive material. Being located in the National Office is unsuitable and can lead to inappropriate disclosures taking place amongst staff and volunteers.

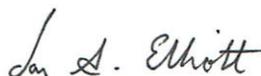
Where an allegation has been made against a member, a mechanism should be available to those charged with assessing the matter, which allows that process to go forward without hindrance. Rather than requesting voluntary abstention, suspension without prejudice should be adopted. Where there is evidence that strongly supports the allegation, such as an admission on the part of the accused, then direct action should be taken quickly to effect removal rather than temporary suspension if warranted.

Given the fact that past practice has been shown to be suspect regarding alleged abuse, past case files should be critically read with a view to identifying potential organisational risk, as well as other possible current safeguarding risks. A report on this exercise should be prepared and presented to the CEO and then to the Board. The assessment of past files should be undertaken by an experienced and independent professional as a matter of priority.

If a new approach to safeguarding within Scouting Ireland is to be effective, it requires everyone in a position of leadership to commit to making it happen. Safeguarding needs to be a standing item on the agenda of every Board meeting. Independent critical scrutiny should be regularly sought to examine practice and consider are there better ways in which we can deliver our services? The

challenges are considerable, but the rewards are even greater, especially from the perspective of the vulnerable young person who has just joined Scouting Ireland.

Signed:



Independent Safeguarding Consultant

www.ianelliottsafeguarding.com

Appendix 2: Letter to the Board of Scouting Ireland dated 27th February 2018

Letter to the Board of Scouting Ireland dated 27th February 2018

Following the unfortunate developments that have taken place over the course of the last week, I have decided to write to you to express my great disappointment at the fact that someone amongst your number, has breached the confidences that I was assured were in place, when I met with you. No one has come forward to me to say that they were responsible, and I can only assume that no one now will. I am unsure as to what the motivation was for the release of this documentation to the media, but it has caused me considerable reputational damage.

I gave a commitment to you to protect your identity and not share with anyone else that I am currently working with you. I did as you requested but you have now placed me in a situation where it is widely known that I am engaged with you and have supplied you with my professional assessment of your safeguarding practice. I would regard it as inevitable that the actual reports that I wrote for you, will find their way, via the Minister, into the public domain. I am not responsible for this in any way but there is little I can do to halt it. The clock is very definitely ticking on this matter.

The leak has made it impossible for me to repeat open communication with you on the sensitive and challenging issues that we have previously discussed. As I do not know who to trust, I must assume that any contact we have will require that all identities I refer to, will be redacted. Change in an organisation is always difficult to achieve but it is so much more difficult when you are constantly at risk of having your work profiled in the media. This is not what I would have wanted but it has been forced upon me by some person or persons amongst you.

To add to the difficulties that the last few days have caused me, I must also inform you that I now realise that the Critical Case Review that I submitted to you, and which we spent several hours discussing, was incomplete. Therefore, I must ask for it to be withdrawn and amended to take account of new information that has been shared with me. A senior member of the Board has told me that they had a planned meeting with the subject of the complaint on 14th January 2017. They did so following telephone calls made by another member of the Board and the subject themselves. The matters discussed are relevant to the Review but until this week I was completely unaware of this meeting. No record of the meeting was created and placed in the case file. It is not for me to comment further on the seriousness of this belated disclosure, but I cannot allow my Report to go forward without an amendment being made to it.

The last few days have been very difficult. I have been forced to accept that I cannot place my trust in you as a Board to maintain the confidences that you asked me to respect. I have also been given cause to doubt your appreciation of what is meant by “**full disclosure of relevant facts**”. These two elements create major difficulties for me in undertaking any further work with you.

What for me is genuinely surprising is the fact that we spent many hours together in robust discussion around the Case Review when people who knew of these contacts with the subject were present and they never declared that knowledge! This has caused me to wonder what else is known and not being shared.

Jan A. Elliott

27th February 2018

Appendix 3: Letter to the Board of Directors of Scouting Ireland dated 10th April 2018

Letter to the Board of Directors of Scouting Ireland dated 10th April 2018

On the 27th February this year, I was forced to take the unprecedented step of writing to you to announce that I was withdrawing open communication with you henceforth, because of the leakage of confidential material to the media. I stated, at that time, that I anticipated that the media may be able to access further confidential reports in time, through “*Freedom of Information*” requests to the Minister if we were asked to provide copies to her. In fact, this has not happened but a copy of the amended Critical Case Review which I submitted in February, is now in the possession of a journalist. I believe that an article is to be published shortly which will focus on this Report.

I had wrongly thought that the risk lay in the Minister being forced to release any reports given to her when in fact, the real problem lay in the inability of someone within the Board being able or willing to respect the confidences that I had been assured were in place, for me to undertake this work.

As I have previously stated, it is very difficult to undertake organisational change of the nature that has been proposed in normal circumstances. It is so much harder to try and do it when your work is being profiled in the media and you have no right of reply. I have also been greatly disturbed by comments which have been reported to me that question the accuracy of my work and allege that I did not speak to some individuals about the case that was the focus of the Review. I strongly reject both these allegations and if ever asked to provide evidence to the support my assessments, I would be able to do so. All meetings were recorded, and I will robustly defend my work if needed.

Yet again, I am having to draw to your attention the seriousness of what has happened. I was asked to undertake a review and prepare a report on a strictly private and confidential basis. I did this, and I have respected your request to me to not make others aware of the fact that I was commissioned to do this work. In return, you have leaked my work to the media and permitted open discussion of its content within your organisation. I am referring here to the fact that despite being asked not to discuss the case review, a candidate for the Board could do so at candidate's meetings. I am not aware of any action being taken against this individual which makes a nonsense of there being a disciplinary code in place!

I have spent many years building a professional reputation for high standards in my work. I will not allow my work for Scouting Ireland to be unfairly criticised or undermined to suit the hidden agenda of a small minority of individuals who operate without any moral code and are totally focused on their own situation.

For many months, I have been greatly exercised by the lack of accountability that exists in Scouting Ireland for misconduct. You appear to hold to the view that failing to disclose relevant facts to an inquiry, for example, is not a matter for resigning. I wonder what is! You simply cannot operate on the basis that you are above any moral code. You are not. Accountability is your responsibility. It is not mine and I would respectfully suggest that you turn your attention to considering how you are going to hold people accountable for the misconduct that has already taken place.

Jan A. Elliott

10th April 2018

Appendix 4: Sex Offending in Scouting Ireland: A briefing paper for the Board of Directors

This paper was presented to the current Board of Directors of Scouting Ireland shortly after they were elected

Sex Offending in Scouting Ireland: A briefing paper for the Board of Directors

Executive Summary: *The purpose of this paper is to provide a briefing on the likely number of victims of sex offending, which took place in Scouting Ireland or the bodies that preceded it and who may be alive today. The estimates provided will be guided by published research findings drawn from academic journals both here and across the world. It will consider the number of known or alleged sex offenders who were members of Scouting, combined with their access to children and young people, and the length of time that the opportunity existed for them to offend. It will use documents and case records, combined with the personal testimony of victims, staff members, and long-term volunteers.*

In attempting an exercise of this nature, it is important to state clearly the limitations that exist. Our knowledge and understanding of what took place is partial. The records are poor and incomplete. The time elapsed from reported offences being committed to today, is often decades. Alleged perpetrators are deceased and are therefore not available to be brought before any court or to enter any defence against their accusers. However, set against this, we have some documents that indicate that sex offending was known about and may or may not have been responded to. We have credible personal testimony from a growing number of victims, who do not appear to have been in contact with each other and have come forward with their stories about sex offending in Scouting. We also have the recollections of staff and volunteers that, when considered along with other evidence, add considerable weight to what is reported by victims.

Therefore, it appears prudent to examine the information available to us and attempt to quantify the numbers of people who may have been hurt through their association with Scouting.

There are several misperceptions that exist regarding sex offenders. They are frequently thought of a homogenous group of people when, in fact, they are not. Within the set of sex offenders, there are several subsets and their typical offending profiles vary as well. Research has shown that the subset of sex offenders that are likely to be the most prolific regarding the number of victims, are males who select male victims that are extra familial. To gain access to these children they will choose occupations or hobbies, that give them the opportunity to spend time with young people. It is for this reason that careers that afford access to children such as teaching, show much higher incidences of sex offending than others.

As opportunity may be restricted by tightening controls within a career, these individuals who seek sexual gratification for themselves through contact with children, will seek out membership of organisations where children are found, such as sports clubs, or youth organisations.

Importantly, this subset also shows high levels of recidivism. Detection and even prosecution are not a deterrent to them, rather an obstacle that must be managed and overcome by the determined offender.

If it is known by those who prey on children that an organisation exists which provides unfettered access to children when they are removed from their carer's protective custody, and within which there is an unquestioning acceptance of their suitability to volunteer, this is very attractive to the sexual predator with an interest in children. When the records that exist of past practice are examined, it is this situation that is described. A youth organisation with few safeguards or controls.

To illustrate this point, it was reported to me by a previous volunteer, that she personally knows of one case, through her own experiences, of a self-confessed sex offender, who was encouraged to remain in the organisation even when it was known, through his own admission, that he was not able to control his urges to have sex with children. That behaviour was accepted and covered up by those in authority at the time, because of the offender's relationships with people in senior positions. Eventually, the sex offender was permitted to leave which he did.

There is no record of any attempt being made to reach out to or provide support to any of the victims that this person may have created. His offending was not reported to any of the statutory authorities and when a new Scout den was being opened in the area where he lived, an invitation was sent to him to attend the event to acknowledge his important contribution to Scouting!

Sex offenders within Scouting are highly motivated people and this is reflected in the fact that some of them have risen to the highest level within the organisation at various times. Credible allegations have been received relating to very senior Scouts. They have given immense amounts of their time to Scouting and worked tirelessly to reach those senior levels. It is reasonable to speculate that their drive came from their sexual desires and their use of children for sexual gratification.

Events that involve taking children away on residential or camping trips, provide an excellent opportunity for abuse. Not surprisingly, these locations feature heavily in the reported testimonies of victims who speak of being raped following being given alcohol by a Scout leader whilst being on a camp. Two adult victims came forward recently to report their abuse and identified the same alleged perpetrator. They were not in contact with each other, but both described the same experiences. They were isolated from their friends and enticed to the offender's tent on the promise of being given alcohol. (They both spoke of being given Harp Lager, and whiskey.) Then they were violently, anally raped by the Scout leader. They were eleven and twelve years old.

The experience had a massive impact on their lives which they are still struggling with today. Emotional difficulties, mental health problems, loss of self-esteem, financial problems, alcohol abuse, and self-harming behaviours, were all reported by the victims. It would not be an exaggeration to describe the events that were reported as occurring on the camping trips, as life changing.

The Scout leader occupied a position of seniority in Scouting. He was never prosecuted for these alleged offences. When recently interviewed, a current, long term volunteer within Scouting Ireland, confirmed that it was known that this person was an offender and that others were asked to keep a watching eye on him when camps took place!

To date, there are a small number of victims who have come forward and spoken of their experiences. To their information, we can add the statements taken from long term volunteers and

staff members which support what they have said. Records exist in some cases to also add weight but not in every reported case.

To confirm, the purpose of this paper is to provide for you an estimate of what number of undeclared victims may there be, as an extrapolation of the information available so far. It is recognised that it is partial and that it may be changed by additional written records, further personal testimony, and disclosures from other victims.

The profile of all the alleged offenders identified to date, are that they are male. They choose male victims who are extra-familial. The clear majority are long term volunteers who spent many years in Scouting and often rose to positions of prominence in their Scouting careers. Their offending behaviour appears not to have been a barrier to promotion in their roles, even though it was known about by their senior colleagues at the time.

There are many, widely varying estimates of how many victims a sex offender may create through his abusive career. It would not be unreasonable to suggest that this could be several hundred. A Scout leader who has unfettered access to children over a period of twenty years and who is not deterred in his offending, could produce a victim pool of over a thousand. Salter quoted in 2003 the following:

“In another case documented by Salter (2003), a school athletics director abused children over a period of nearly 20 years. This man estimated he had abused 1,250 children.”

Given that we are aware of the existence in Scouting of male sex offenders who choose male victims, who are extra-familial and who have access to large numbers of children over extended periods stretching many years, it is reasonable to suggest that the victim pool arising from offending in Scouting could be in the many hundreds if not thousands.

There are many important factors to note which could have an impact on restricting the number of victims that seek help and support through disclosure to Scouting. From the victim’s perspective, you would have to strongly believe that the organisation cared enough about what happened to provide that help without being compelled to do so by legal action. Many victims could not face the emotional challenge of public disclosure of what happened to them and are therefore discouraged from legal action. However, they would be open to and want to receive help. It would not be unusual for a survivor of abuse to have not declared to their partner or family that this had happened to them.

The danger for the organisation is that they would place an interpretation on the number of self-disclosures of abuse in Scouting as being an indication of what the actual reality was. This would in my view, be wrong. Sex offending in Scouting has existed and been an unaddressed problem within the organisations that preceded Scouting Ireland. The attitudes that fostered and supported its continuance may be summarised in the term “cronyism”. This is still a problem today which is why there must be strong sanctions taken against those who do not behave in a way that reflects the values of the organisation. We must have accountability and integrity within Scouting Ireland, or the organisation faces a bleak future.

Signed:

Jan A. Elliott

Historical Abuse in Scouting: A Learning Review

Independent Safeguarding Consultant

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