

Scouting Ireland
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BOD-OUT-23-2018

Ref: Social Media Commentary

10th December 2018

Dear Member,

All of us involved in Scouting continue to be deeply saddened by recent revelations. There is an understandable sense of concern. Parents, friends, work colleagues may all ask us questions. This is all happening at a time of great change in Scouting Ireland in relation to governance. It is also happening while our volunteers deliver scout meetings and activities up and down the island of Ireland, supporting thousands of youth members to have fun, grow, learn and ultimately become better citizens.

The people who are actually answering the calls, driving to visit traumatised victims and conducting the safeguarding work, are our staff. The work that they are doing and the burden that they are carrying cannot be underestimated. It is an example to all of us of Scouting values in action. They have shown unprecedented commitment. They are human beings, with families. They are taking on this traumatic work because they are committed to Scouting. We, the board want to say categorically, that we are committed to them.

The board has taken the decision not to engage on social media. However, that is not to say that we have not had regard to recent commentary. Thankfully, there are many examples of local good-news stories that deserve to be shouted from the rooftops. There has been constructive discussion on important matters and concerns aired. However, there has also been commentary that has not reflected our scout promise and law. At this critical time in our organisation we ask that everyone be mindful of what we say. Youth members are reading this online commentary, they overhear discussions and notice our responses. They look to us Scouters for example, for leadership.

As with face-to-face interactions we must be careful with our language. What we say matters. How we say it can be calming or inflammatory. Every time one of us comments on social media, we make a choice to either be a calming influence, or one which adds fuel to a fire. Please realise that many of our colleagues and friends in Scouting are under enormous strain. Let us remember too, that every report in the paper and every post on social media can trigger anxiety for the victims who have been so wronged in the past.

Free speech and even a reasonable expectation of transparency does not absolve us of our responsibilities to care for each other. We must be mindful not to impinge on a fellow volunteer or staff member's constitutional and legal rights. Ultimately the board may have no option but to address certain behaviours that are not appropriate or worthy of our Scout values, or that do damage to the organisation or its members.

Reg. No. 397094
Charity No. CHY3507

PATRON Michael D. Higgins PRESIDENT OF IRELAND



Member of World Organisation of the Scout Movement

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Scouts are kind. We need to remember to be kind to each other at this very difficult time while ensuring that there is full scrutiny of our past and of our current actions.

You can read our social media policy [here](#)

Please email concerns, ideas and suggestions to: board@scouts.ie

Yours in Scouting,

Lisa Barnes, Ned Brennan, Peter Garrad, Mary Hogg, Aisling Kelly, Pat Kidney, Dermot Lacey, Paul Mannion, Brian Smith, Adrian Tennant.

Scouting Ireland Board of Directors

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