

**Scouting Ireland  
National Office  
Larch Hill  
Dublin 16**

**T +353 (0)1 495 6300  
F +353 (0)1 495 6301  
questions@scouts.ie**



**Date: 14th November 2019**

**RE: BOD-OUT-71**

Dear Member,

Last night's RTÉ Investigates programme again shone a light on the hurt done to young people in CBSI and SAI. We recognise the courage and bravery of all survivors who have told their stories directly to us and who featured on the programme. It is an example of leadership to all. We again apologise unreservedly to those who were hurt by the actions of adult volunteers in these organisations.

The picture that has emerged of these legacy organisations over the past 18 months is grim and shocking. Scouting Ireland inherited this situation from the CBSI and SAI and we are dealing with its consequences.

An important issue raised is why files inherited by the new organisation from CBSI and SAI in 2003 were not examined until 2012. We have acknowledged that we should have acted sooner in reviewing the legacy files but there was a presumption that these files were in order. In 2012 a paper based review of these legacy files was conducted. The purpose of this review was to look at each file to ensure that there was no volunteer currently active in Scouting Ireland named in a legacy file. No such person was found. A secondary objective was to ensure that where there was a reportable offence that all necessary reporting had been done by the legacy organisations. Of the 332 files read, it was unclear from five of the files as to whether they had been reported and we brought these files to the attention of the relevant authorities at that time.

Another issue raised is why we took no further action until 2017. The reason is that Scouting Ireland believed it had discharged its duties in reporting all known historic cases to the relevant authorities. In 2017 Scouting Ireland decided to undertake a review of its safeguarding procedures and commissioned Mr Ian Elliott, safeguarding expert, to undertake this review. It was subsequently decided to ask Mr Elliott to review all safeguarding files held by Scouting Ireland.

Mr Elliott has stated previously that only a person with vast experience in safeguarding and an understanding of sexual abuse could have elicited the evidence of historic abuse from the legacy files. Information that was absent from the files was a key determinant to unlocking the extent of historic sexual abuse in CBSI and SAI. Once Scouting Ireland understood the extent of the problem in the legacy organisations following Mr. Elliott's work, we acknowledged it, brought it into the public domain and apologised to individuals who contacted us. We also put in place the helpline to allow more survivors share their stories.

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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Our focus has been to support people coming forward to us with allegations of sexual abuse and to report any reportable offences brought to the attention of our safeguarding team to the statutory authorities - Tusla and An Garda Síochana in the Republic of Ireland and the PSNI and Gateway in Northern Ireland. Our helpline 1-800-221199 remains open Monday - Friday 9.00am - 5.00pm for those wishing to report new information to the safeguarding team. We want to assure survivors that they will be listened to, they will be treated compassionately and every new piece of information provided to us will be followed-up.

The programme made a number of allegations relating to individuals in senior positions in these organisations and their failure to act on information relating to sexual abuse in scout groups across Ireland. We cannot comment on individual cases but we can assure parents, guardians, our volunteers and staff that Scouting Ireland is a very different organisation to these legacy organisations in which so many were let down and badly treated.

We are aware of concerns that Scouting Ireland is in some way investigating itself. This is not true. Investigations can only be carried out by the relevant statutory authorities – the Gardai and Tusla in the Republic of Ireland and the PSNI and Gateway in Northern Ireland. All reportable offences brought to the attention of Scouting Ireland’s safeguarding team are reported to these authorities. They conduct their investigations completely independently of Scouting Ireland. We co-operate fully with the authorities in both jurisdictions.

Scouting Ireland has always reported any reportable offences brought to the attention of our safeguarding team to the appropriate authorities. We adopted mandatory reporting in 2003, 12 years before Children First legislation was enacted in 2015 and 14 years before it became law in 2017. Our adult volunteers must be Garda vetted and undertake mandatory safeguarding training every three years.

The continual improvement of safeguarding within Scouting Ireland is a priority for the Board and the executive. We have put in place strong governance and safeguarding measures within our organisation to help ensure scouting is a safe place for our members, volunteers and employees.

In the past 18 months we have:

- Introduced new governance structures within our organisation that provide greater accountability, transparency and openness within our organisation.
- Implemented the agreed Scouting Ireland Tusla Action Plan.
- Appointed a full time Safeguarding Manager and expanded the professional safeguarding team.
- Child safeguarding policies and procedures independently reviewed by Mr Ian Elliott.
- Developed new procedures for the assessment and handling of child protection disclosures.

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- Introduced a new disciplinary code and appointed a Disciplinary Panel of 3 members, one of whom is external to SI
- Opened a dedicated helpline where survivors can report details of alleged abuse to the organisation.
- Continue to liaise with all relevant authorities including Tusla, Gateway, An Garda Síochana, PSNI, Charities Regulator and the Charities Commission of Northern Ireland

This is not to say that we are standing still. We continue to make improvements to our safeguarding structures and look to implement best practices. Ian Elliott is conducting a Learning Review which will appraise the history of abuse in CBSI and SAI, how allegations were handled and the learnings for Scouting Ireland for the future. Mr Elliott's work has been a driver for substantial change in Scouting Ireland to date and it goes without saying that he is absolutely independent in his recommendations to us and in his judgement concerning safeguarding matters.

Again, we want to strongly assure our members, our employees, parents and the general public that we are acting with urgency and will act immediately when a safeguarding issue is brought to our attention.

We cannot allow the past to define our present or our future. Scouting Ireland is different and we will continue to prioritise safeguarding so that the thousands of children can benefit from scouting in a safe environment.

Regards,

Adrian Tennant  
Chairperson  
Gasóga na hÉireann/Scouting Ireland

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