

Scouting Ireland
National Office
Larch Hill
Dublin 16

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



BOD-OUT-84-2019

Opening Statement of Mr Adrian Tennant, Chairperson, Scouting Ireland to the Joint Oireachtas Committee on Children and Youth Affairs.

4th December 2019

Mr Chairman, members of the Committee,

I wish to thank you for the opportunity to appear here today. My name is Adrian Tennant and I am the Chairperson of the Board of Directors of Scouting Ireland. With me today is Dr John Lawlor, Chief Executive Officer of Scouting Ireland, and Mr Gearóid Begley, Safeguarding Manager, Scouting Ireland.

I would like to begin by reaffirming that Scouting Ireland is as safe an organisation as it can be. Even in the interim since our last meeting, improvements have been made to our already good safeguarding procedures and practices, not least of which the recruitment of a professional Safeguarding Manager last April and an expanded professional Safeguarding Team. But Safeguarding our young people and adult volunteers is not a static environment.

Scouting Ireland has not rested on its laurels in that regard, but instead is continuously reviewing practices and systems to ensure that we remain best in class at all times, as all youth organisations should.

- 1 -

Reg. No. 397094
Charity No. CHY3507

PATRON Michael D. Higgins PRESIDENT OF IRELAND



Member of World Organisation of the Scout Movement

Directors: A list of names and personal details of every director of the company is available for inspection to the public at the company's registered office for a nominal fee. Scouting Ireland is a company limited by guarantee exempt from using the word "limited". Registered Office: Scouting Ireland National Office, Larch Hill, Dublin 16

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

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



Scouting Ireland has gone through a huge governance transformation since our last meeting. The Board of Scouting Ireland is now fully a Board of Oversight. We will move to full compliance with the Community & Voluntary Governance code by the end of January 2020, with full compliance with the Charities Regulatory Code by year end, in time for the mandatory application of the code.

The Committee will be aware that we have recruited a new CEO to take office in the new year. We have also just completed an exercise to co-opt outside directors to the Board, enhancing our skill set. Two new Directors have been co-opted to the Board and they are Donal Lawlor, a fellow of the Association of Chartered Accountants in Ireland and a former managing director of multinational company in Ireland and Lorraine Lally, BL, a Barrister and qualified Mediator.

We have a very positive working relationship with the DCYA and I would like to take the opportunity to thank Minister Zappone and her Department for their ongoing support and guidance over the last year. Similarly, our working relationship with all of the state agencies has and continues to be very positive, including Tusla, An Garda Síochána, PSNI and Gateway teams, CCNI and the CRA.

The Board of Scouting Ireland has entered into an independently managed evaluation process to ensure proper performance management. Directors/Trustees have completed training to support their role and we are due our first election cycle at our April AGM.

- 2 -

Reg. No. 397094
Charity No. CHY3507

PATRON Michael D. Higgins PRESIDENT OF IRELAND



Member of World Organisation of the Scout Movement

Directors: A list of names and personal details of every director of the company is available for inspection to the public at the company's registered office for a nominal fee. Scouting Ireland is a company limited by guarantee exempt from using the word "limited". Registered Office: Scouting Ireland National Office, Larch Hill, Dublin 16

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

T +353 (0)1 495 6300

F +353 (0)1 495 6301

questions@scouts.ie



A full review of all Risk within Scouting Ireland has been completed and also a Workforce Plan has been delivered with required resources identified. New Departmental Core Teams and Department Managers have been appointed and are operating. All new positions are implemented via open and rigorous recruitment processes - Board, Subcommittees, Core Team and CEO. We are currently in the midst of formulating our new Strategic Plan which will be completed by end of January 2020.

A phenomenon that has emerged, which I would like to share with this Committee, is the influx of external individuals, with no previous connection to Scouting Ireland, with the skills and experience to fill competency gaps across our organisation.

We have defined new organisational structures – with clear lines of accountability and reporting.

All of this has been facilitated by a dedicated Transition Sub Committee and with the assistance and expertise of an external Governance expert. This is a period of significant change for our membership and we recognise the fast pace of the changes. However, the vast majority of our membership see the need for such governance changes and have supported the Board in its important work in this regard.

Moving to historical matters, the recent RTÉ Investigates programme again shone a searing light on the hurt done to young people in the Catholic Boy Scouts of Ireland and the Scouting Association of

- 3 -

Reg. No. 397094
Charity No. CHY3507

PATRON Michael D. Higgins PRESIDENT OF IRELAND



Directors: A list of names and personal details of every director of the company is available for inspection to the public at the company's registered office for a nominal fee. Scouting Ireland is a company limited by guarantee exempt from using the word "limited". Registered Office: Scouting Ireland National Office, Larch Hill, Dublin 16

Scouting Ireland
National Office
Larch Hill
Dublin 16

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



Ireland. 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 and it is humbling. We again apologise unreservedly to those who were hurt by the actions of adult volunteers in these legacy organisations.

The picture that has emerged of these organisations over the past 18 months is grim and shocking. Although Scouting Ireland inherited this situation from the Catholic Boy Scouts of Ireland and the Scouting Association of Ireland, we have not shirked our responsibilities in looking after our survivors, inviting them to contact us directly, which the majority did, offering support where we can and we are continuing to deal with the consequences of the betrayal that some adults in the past visited upon our most vulnerable members.

It should be recognised that once Scouting Ireland understood the extent of the problem in the legacy organisations following Mr Elliott's work, not only did we acknowledge it but it was **we** who brought it into the public domain. We have apologised to all individuals who contacted us. We also maintained the helpline to allow more survivors to share their stories.

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 9.00 am - 5.00 pm for

- 4 -

Reg. No. 397094
Charity No. CHY3507

PATRON Michael D. Higgins PRESIDENT OF IRELAND



Member of World Organisation of the Scout Movement

Directors: A list of names and personal details of every director of the company is available for inspection to the public at the company's registered office for a nominal fee. Scouting Ireland is a company limited by guarantee exempt from using the word "limited". Registered Office: Scouting Ireland National Office, Larch Hill, Dublin 16

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

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



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 RTÉ 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. Whereas we cannot comment on individual cases, we can assure this Committee, our 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.

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.

- 5 -

Reg. No. 397094
Charity No. CHY3507

PATRON Michael D. Higgins PRESIDENT OF IRELAND



Member of World Organisation of the Scout Movement

Directors: A list of names and personal details of every director of the company is available for inspection to the public at the company's registered office for a nominal fee. Scouting Ireland is a company limited by guarantee exempt from using the word "limited". Registered Office: Scouting Ireland National Office, Larch Hill, Dublin 16

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 Túsla Action Plan.
- Fully completed the findings of the Jillian Van Turnhout Governance Review.
- As previously stated, we appointed a full time Safeguarding Manager and expanded the professional safeguarding team.
- Child safeguarding policies and procedures have been independently reviewed by Mr Ian Elliott and further developed by our Safeguarding Manager and Team.
- Developed new procedures for the assessment and handling of child protection disclosures.
- Introduced a new disciplinary code and appointed a Disciplinary Panel of 3 members, one of whom is external to Scouting Ireland.
- Continue to liaise with all relevant authorities including Túsla, Gateway, An Garda Síochana, PSNI, Charities Regulator and the Charities Commission of Northern Ireland

This is not to say that we are standing still. As already stated, 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 the Catholic Boy Scouts of Ireland and the Scouting Association of Ireland, how allegations were handled by these organisations and the learnings for Scouting Ireland for the future. Mr Elliott's work has been a driver for substantial change in Scouting

Scouting Ireland
National Office
Larch Hill
Dublin 16

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



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.

Regrettably, for personal reasons, he cannot be here today.

Again, we want to strongly assure this Committee, 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.

Conclusion

Finally, we cannot allow the past to define our present or our future. The key credential we present for that different future, is the manner in how we are facing up to that past, in those historic scouting organisations. Scouting Ireland is different. Scouting Ireland is and will continue to prioritise safeguarding so that the thousands of children can benefit from scouting in a safe environment.

I want to conclude by reminding the Committee of the dedication of our youth members, their parents, our adult volunteers and our professional staff team. Our unsung heroes that are the 14,000 adult volunteers and small but highly dedicated staff who have kept Scouting going in their communities across the island through challenging times.

- 7 -

Reg. No. 397094
Charity No. CHY3507

PATRON Michael D. Higgins PRESIDENT OF IRELAND



Member of World Organisation of the Scout Movement

Directors: A list of names and personal details of every director of the company is available for inspection to the public at the company's registered office for a nominal fee. Scouting Ireland is a company limited by guarantee exempt from using the word "limited". Registered Office: Scouting Ireland National Office, Larch Hill, Dublin 16

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

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



But as we advance to a better, safer and engaging future for our young people, Scouting Ireland will retain its standing in our communities and country, continue its important work in developing the citizens of today and tomorrow, always with the young person to the fore.

Adrian Tennant

Chairperson of Scouting Ireland

December 2019

- 8 -

Reg. No. 397094
Charity No. CHY3507

PATRON Michael D. Higgins PRESIDENT OF IRELAND



Member of World Organisation of the Scout Movement

Directors: A list of names and personal details of every director of the company is available for inspection to the public at the company's registered office for a nominal fee. Scouting Ireland is a company limited by guarantee exempt from using the word "limited". Registered Office: Scouting Ireland National Office, Larch Hill, Dublin 16