

**Board Update #13 – April 2021**

**Dear Member,**

As we start this year still under the shadow of the Covid-19 pandemic and its restrictions, we would like to take this opportunity to thank our young people and our adult volunteers for their continued commitment to Scouting throughout this long-drawn-out period. Despite these challenges, our best days are still ahead of us. We know Scouting will be in high demand as restrictions begin to ease and we know Scouting is a great option for young people right now. Scouting provides safe, positive, outdoor, structured social engagement run in small groups where our young people's resilience, mental health and wellbeing benefit - this is what our young people need now.

To those Groups who have managed to Scout through the pandemic, despite the many challenges, we salute you. You have kept the flag flying and the well-being of our young people has benefited. Thank you so much.

To those yet to get back to Scouting, particularly those that have been inactive since March 2020, we are here to support you. We would urge you to begin preparations to return to Scouting as soon as restrictions begin to ease. Look to your County and Provincial supports, and those of our staff team and Programme Services Department, for ideas and ways to overcome challenges. We are sure fellow Groups in your Counties that are currently Scouting, albeit virtually, will be a great resource also.

Thanks, stay safe and scout strong.

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## **Scouting during Covid-19 - Northern Ireland**

In Northern Ireland virtual scouting activities are permitted, and a blended approach is encouraged with a focus on online/digital activities over face-to-face activities. Online training courses and meetings are permitted and are the preferred option for training delivery. Indoor Meetings is permitted from the 1st April 2021 in groups of maximum 15 youth members (not including volunteers). Multiple groups are permitted in different rooms of the building with a maximum of 15 young people (not including volunteers) per group, however the total number in your Scout hall must not exceed 50% capacity at any time. Outdoor Meetings are permitted from 1st April 2021 at your regular meeting place, which may be other than your scout hall but should be within your local area, in groups of maximum 15 youth members (not including volunteers). Multiple groups are permitted but should be clearly separated and no crossover. Person to person contact and sharing of equipment is prohibited. The consumption of food is prohibited unless it is for a medical reason, for example diabetes. Days trips, hikes, etc. away from the normal meeting place are not currently permitted. Residential overnights are not permitted at this time.

It is hoped that it will not be too long until we will get permission to move to the next phase of the Education Authority's phased introduction of youth services, which is the "Gradual Easing Phase". This phase will have a

greater focus on face-to-face activities rather than virtual, permit up to 25 youth members to meet and increase venue capacity to 75%.

## **Scouting during Covid-19 - Republic of Ireland**

In the Republic of Ireland, the Department for Children Equality Diversity Inclusion and Youth has just published its updated Covid 19 Youth Work Organisation Guidance which confirms that from the 26th April, its Level 5 applies which allows for Scout Groups to return to outdoor activities in pods of 15. Multiple groups are permitted but should be clearly separated and no crossover. No indoor meeting are permitted at this time. Our CEO and staff are in contact with the department regularly and are in the process of updating the Scouting Ireland Roadmap which will be published next week.

Whilst we continue to Scout from Home the Programme Department, together with their Project Teams have been working hard to provide resources for all sections to use both at home and in groups of 15 outdoors. Click on the links to go to our Scouting from home pages: <https://scouting360.ie> and <https://betterworld.ie>.

## Turn The Lights On Campaign

Scouting Ireland has started work on an extensive lobbying campaign to assert pressure on the Government to provide more funding for Youth Services and in particular for Scouting.

A personalised letter (via email) has been issued to every Senator, Deputy and Minister (190+ in total) from our CEO outlining information about the number of Scout Groups, Youth Members and Volunteers in their constituency as of 2020. The CEO and the Chair have been meeting with political representatives since to discuss our financial challenges and to ask for their support. This is only the start of the campaign and it will need support and perseverance from the whole organisation. The Board members are actively lobbying at their local level also, and we need all scout groups to lobby your local TD as well as County and City Councillors to support Scouting Ireland in its need for financial aid. Please contact your local support staff if you require any support.

[Click Here](#) for more information on our Turn The Lights On campaign.



## Census Returns

As groups continue to struggle with all the challenges which Covid-19 has thrust upon us, we have seen a significant drop in our census returns and registrations. The figures for this year, to date, are shown below:

Groups Census Return	Group Numbers	Youth Members	Adult Members	% Drop since 2020
Census Submitted and Paid in Full	258	13,837	6,397	-26%
Census Submitted and part paid.	97	6,372	2,520	-14%
Census only Submitted.	47	1,475	691	-26%
No Census Information	65	No Info	No Info	No Info

On a national scale, we currently have an average 24% decrease in membership compared to last year. 40 Groups have recorded 10 or fewer youth members and 30 Groups have recorded zero youth members in their group. This decrease represents a fall in youth members of 26% and the drop in income of €1.25 million in January 2021 versus 2020 because of Scout's inability to pay a membership fee this year compared to membership fees collected at the same time last year.

Before the announcement that Groups can meet in groups of 15 outdoors from the 26th April the following information has been recorded

Groups Planned return to Meetings.	Return before 1st Sep. 2021	Return on or after 1st Sep 2021.	No Date Given
Census Submitted and Paid in Full	122	41	95
Census Submitted and part paid.	54	23	20
Census only Submitted.	23	13	11
No Census Information	8	17	40
Total	207	94	166

Please remember, that if your group find themselves in a difficult position financially, contact with your local support officer.

## AGM

This years' AGM will be held online on Saturday 22nd May 2021. We have 2 nominees for the office of Chief Scout and five nominees for the election of directors. At present, postal ballot forms are with Group Nominees or Group Leaders. These need to be completed and returned (by post) in the envelopes provided, to arrive at National Office no later than 17:00 on Friday 7th May 2021. The postal ballots will remain unopened and in safekeeping until Tuesday 11th May 2021 when they will be opened in the presence of our Statutory Auditors, who will supervise the counting of all votes received.





Scouting Ireland is hosting two 'Meet the Candidates' events, one for Chief Scout Candidates and the other for Director Candidates. Both events will take place on Thursday 22nd April 2021 online. Registration will be required to attend, information will be emailed shortly.

Motions have been received and considered by the Motions Committee and they have approved 17 motions to go forward to the AGM. Further information regarding these motions will be sent to Groups in due course.

#### **Director Positions for election at the AGM**

The election for Directors was announced in January with 3 positions available to be filled. Given that the 4th place was not vacant at the time of the original notification of the election, it is not within our capacity nor is it good governance to change the number of positions available after the AGM notifications were sent to groups. This precedent was set when the chair resigned in January 2019, which was just after the AGM notices had been sent to groups. It was decided then not to change anything, given that notices had already gone out. It would not be proper for the Board to change the election nominations after the announcement.

Three directors are retiring by rotation including the current Chair and a new co-opted director is currently being recruited.

#### **Financial Statements**

The financial statements for Scouting Ireland CLG were approved at the board meeting on 3rd April 2021 and will be circulated to members with the AGM documents. This followed an extensive process of review including consideration of the cash flow. As Directors our responsibility is to approve the accounts and to lay them before the membership. To approve the financial statements, the board is required to establish that the Scouting Ireland Services is a going concern for at least twelve months from the date that the accounts are approved. What is meant by a going concern is that all liabilities will be met as they fall due – that is, we can pay our way either from income or from reserves.

When we considered our reduced sources of income, our reserves and our budgeted expenditure for insurance, administration, staffing, training, volunteer travel and subsistence, professional fees, national scout centres, programme, legal provisions and operational reserve our income was not enough to cover all of our expenditure. This budgeting process involved the board making painful decisions with regards to staffing and other measures as set out.

## Staff Support

As you are aware, we have been forced to place our staff on a three-day working week, (except for our Safeguarding Team). This is, unfortunately, a result of a downturn in our finances, (24% reduction of members and 50% reduction in membership income (Jan 2021)) caused by the Covid-19 pandemic. To reduce costs and protect the finances and long-term sustainability of the organisation this step was regrettably unavoidable.

You will appreciate that as a result of the implementation of this measure that staff will be available to deal with their workload and queries 3 days per week for the foreseeable future. This means a 40% reduction in the working week and the services and supports that they can provide to the organisation and membership however, certain areas will of course be prioritised. It will mean unfortunately, some less pressing services and projects will not be possible to be delivered while this Short-time work is in place.

In these trying times, for staff and volunteers, we would appeal for your understanding and patience regarding staff responsiveness to your service requests. Please [click here](#) for further information from our CEO.

National Office will be open to respond to queries and to provide prioritised support to groups on Wednesday to Friday only, from 09:00 – 17:00.

## Strategic return to Work for some Staff

At our last meeting, 3rd April last, we looked at the needs of the organisation to manage its way through, and out of, the current financial pressure visited upon it due to the Covid 19 pandemic. At our February Board meeting, we made the difficult decision to place the majority of our dedicated staff team on a three-day week. As difficult as this decision was, it was, and is, necessary for the company to survive the current financial challenges and has enabled the Board to declare Scouting Ireland as a going concern. However, in order to plan for our recovery, we recognise that in pursuing our efforts to rebuild the organisation and return our staff complement back to working fulltime, a strategic approach is required.

To that end, and in a first step in planning for our recovery, the Board has decided that both the CEO and CFO roles need to return to working five-days a week. The board have decided that these additional days will be used to pursue extra funding in order to expedite, not only the speedier return of all our staff team to a five-day week, but also the financial recovery of Scouting Ireland as a whole.

The effective date for this is from week beginning 12th April 2021. The Board will regularly oversee progress with the CEO.

## **Staff Retirements and Resignations**

Rose Doyle, a long serving member of Scouting Ireland is retiring at the end of June. Rose has been a valued member of the staff team for over 25 years, and we want to thank her for all the dedication and hard work given to Scouting Ireland over the years. Rose has been part of the administration staff team and has worked across many different areas. Among many other tasks, Rose also takes the minutes at every AGM (previously National Council) and this year's AGM in May will be her last. We would like to take this opportunity to wish Rose much health and happiness in her retirement.

We also have a member of staff leaving us to take up a position elsewhere. Karol Quinn, current Manager of the Programme Department who has been with Scouting Ireland for 17 years is leaving us to take up an alternative position. Karol has been nothing but diligent, dedicated, and dependable. We are very sad to see him go and it's going to take a while for us to adapt to Karol leaving, as his positive influence on the team has been immense. As he moves onto the next stage of his career, we know that he can achieve any goal that he sets for himself. On behalf of all of us in Scouting Ireland, we wish Karol the very best of luck.

## **Role of Provincial Commissioners**

The Volunteer and Group Support (previously the Volunteer Resource

Management and Group Support) Core Team continue to work with our PCs in strengthening the role of the PC as well as the PMST within our new structures. Meetings have commenced as they look at their role and position within the structures. The PCs have a vital role to play in the support of our Counties, and in turn our Groups as we all try to return to Scouting. [Click here](#) the link to go to the Provincial Commissioner Terms of Reference

## **Role of NMC and status of Scouting Ireland (the association)**

The NMC is continuing to progress the winding up of the Association. There are a number of serious and complex legal, financial, property, insurance and other problems, which continue to be worked through by the NMC, board and management to ensure the orderly wind up of association. When the work is complete, the Association will be reduced to a "special purpose entity" which will remain in place for a number of years.

[Click Here](#) for further information on this. Scouting Ireland is fully governed by the Board of Directors and the sole purpose of the NMC remains the orderly wind down of the Association as we know it. This important work is progressing, and further updates will issue in this regard in the near future.

## **Dignity and Respect Charter**

Gasóga na hÉireann/Scouting Ireland is committed to implementing and promoting measures to protect the dignity of our young people, our adult

volunteers and our staff. We equally encourage respect for all within Gasóga na hÉireann/Scouting Ireland. To this end the Board has developed a Dignity and Respect Charter, in keeping with our Scout Promise and Law. It is designed as a one pager that can be exhibited beside the Safeguarding Statement in all places where we meet, either as Sections, Groups, Committees and right up to the Board Room. The Charter is a companion document to our existing policies on conduct, behaviour, anti-bullying and disputes, etc, and should inform us of our obligations in terms of respecting the dignity of those we share the Scouting Trail with, be it in person or online. The Dignity and Respect Charter will be published shortly.

### **National Conference and GL Conference**

The Board of Directors are planning to hold a Group Leaders Conference in September. A Project Team will be set up to organise the Conference and will be filled by means of an Open Call. It is also the intention of the Board to hold its National Conference next February. This will allow Provinces to hold their Conferences before this date and outcome from the Provincial Conferences can be fed into the National Conference. Again, a Project Team will be set up to organise the Conference and will be filled by means of an Open Call. Please watch your inbox for details of the Open Calls.

As always, we would like to acknowledge the long hours put in and dedication of members at all levels of Scouting Ireland. If you have ideas about how to build a stronger Scouting Ireland, then do please get in touch and get involved.

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Scouting provides  
safe, positive and  
structured social  
engagement in  
small groups  
outdoors.

