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Report: **Scouting Irelands Six Monthly Safeguarding Report to update the Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth (DCEDIY).**

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1	**Preamble- Purpose of report** This report aims to update the Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth (DCEDIY) on the progress of Scouting Ireland's Safeguarding Department since May 2024. This is the third six-monthly report to the DCEDIY. Scouting Ireland's Scout Groups involve over 30,000 young people and over 10,000 adult volunteers across the Island of Ireland. Since 1908, young people in Ireland have been involved in Scouting. Scouting Ireland is one of Ireland's largest national youth organisations, dedicated to developing life skills for young people. Scouting Ireland continues its journey to ensure safeguarding is at the centre of everything we do. Young people in Scouting are supported, encouraged, and facilitated by adult volunteers, all of whom understand the commitment and trust placed in them by parents, guardians, our stakeholders and wider society. Scouting Ireland aims to nurture the personal development of young people through the Scout method; a non-formal education approach unique to youth work.
2	**Safeguarding Manager's Qualifications, Registration & Supervision & Training** The Safeguarding Manager and author of this report is a professionally qualified Social Worker, CORU registered (Registration Number 003369). The Safeguarding Manager leads a team of case officers, vetting officers and admin staff in his department. The Safeguarding Manager is committed to ensuring the highest standard of safeguarding practices and services are provided in Scouting Ireland. Staff in the Safeguarding Department receive regular individual professional supervision and ongoing training in accordance with their individual needs and in meeting the needs of the service. External supervision/counselling is also available to the staff team on an individual basis where need is identified. The Safeguarding Manager provides individual and group supervision to the staff team and in turn receives external clinical supervision and is committed to ongoing training and development.
3	**Safeguarding Team & Accommodation** Scouting Ireland's Safeguarding Department has separate office accommodation based in Scouting Ireland's National Office in Larch Hill. Only the safeguarding staff can access the office accommodation by an electronic 'fob'. This ensures that highly sensitive phone calls and casework discussions can be carried out in privacy and confidentiality is maintained. Non-recent files are stored in fire-proof safes, and more recent files are in data-protected electronic systems. Committed and long-standing safeguarding case officers are experienced professionals who carry out duties in a skilled, respectful manner and with the upmost diligence. A new and welcome addition to our team this term is a highly experienced and qualified social worker, working on a part time basis and carrying out specific duties in line with her experience and qualifications.

	In 2024 the Safeguarding Department Staff have engaged in ongoing professional development including: • Designated Liaison Person Training -Tusla • Allegations and Complaints - NYCI • Sex Offenders use of technology – Joe Sullivan / Global Safeguarding • Young People with Problematic Behaviour – Joe Sullivan • Just Looking, Online Offending – Marre Crabbe • Speaking to children about CSA – The CSA Centre • Spotting the signs and indicators of CSA – The CSA Centre • Speaking to children about abuse – The CSA Centre • Global Safeguarding Conference, London. Our department has organised 'Fair Procedures' Training for January 2025 the staff team to enable us to update policies and procedure in this regard. The Safeguarding manager feels this will add significant valuable awareness in progressing our work.
4	**Safeguarding Website** A dedicated Safeguarding website is available on Safeguarding (scouts.ie) The website is an information area for stakeholders and other interested parties to access Safeguarding policies and procedures. It provides contacts to Scouting Ireland's Safeguarding Department as well as updated bulletins, "Safeguarding Specifics", which focus on topical themes. Our 'Make a Report' and 'Ask a Question' features introduced this year have proved successful where Scouters can report in non-emergency concerns and ask questions via our general Safeguarding email address. Our website is being constantly updated to keep Safeguarding fresh for our members and others who are interested in our work. The website currently features out new eLearning programme as will be outlined below.
5	**Safeguarding Reports to the Board of Directors (BOD)** Safeguarding is a standing agenda item for every BOD meeting. The Safeguarding Manager prepares an update report for Scouting Ireland's Board of Directors, quarterly and as required. The Safeguarding Manager attends the Board meeting in-person every quarter. The Safeguarding Manager also has a direct line of communication to the chair of BOD and has utilised this during Safeguarding matters.
6	**Safeguarding Sub Committee** Scouting Ireland's Safeguarding Sub Committee of the BOD exists as an oversight committee for safeguarding matters.

	The committee meets with the Safeguarding manager regularly, and at least quarterly. The subcommittee chair is a BOD member and reports to the BOD on matters arising. We welcomed two independent members earlier this year, both qualified social work practitioners and a further two are about to onboard – a highly qualified law professional and another child protection social worker. There is an on-going open call for other internal and external members and we hope to attract someone with legal experience and/or an Garda / Police. The terms of Reference for the subcommittee are available on Scouting Ireland's Safeguarding website.
7	**Safeguarding Policies & Procedures** Scouting Ireland's Child Safeguarding and Child Protection policies and Procedures exist to ensure the safety and well-being of children, young people and vulnerable adults in our organisation, which is a priority. Policies specific to Safeguarding include: • Scouting Ireland's Code of Behaviour to assist adults engaging with children in Scouting. • Scouting Ireland's Safeguarding Adults at Risk Policy • Membership Risk Assessment Policy: Adult members suspended without prejudice for a safeguarding purpose. • Membership Risk Assessment Policy: Youth members suspended without prejudice for a safeguarding purpose. • Responding to Victims of Abuse within Scouting Ireland • Scouting Ireland's Procedure for Suspension without Prejudice • Scouting Ireland's 'Stay Away' Policy • Scouting Ireland's Disciplinary Process
8	**Review of policies and procedures** Updates for 2024 include amendments to our 'stay away' policy, how we process and issue 'stay aways' leading to returns or suspensions with prejudice. A full review of how we assess Scouters who have been suspended without prejudice and have been 'cleared' by the statutory authorities is being piloted at this juncture. 'Suitability to return to Scouting Assessments' are being carried out on those individuals to ensure they are suitable to be volunteering in our organisation. A review of Scouting Irelands Safeguarding Policies is ongoing and Safeguarding work plan for 2025.
9	**Vetting & Access NI.** The practice of vetting has been in place since Scouting Ireland was established in 2003 and was further endorsed as policy in 2018 to include 16-18-year-olds supporting events and programme activities for young people. Scouting Ireland's policy for vetting frequency is every three years. Scouting Ireland is committed to ensuring that our legal requirement for all people working directly with children and vulnerable adults under the National Vetting Bureau (Children and Vulnerable Persons) Acts 2012-2016 is adhered to. Equally, in the North of Ireland Access NI is part our work and a change in the application procedure and administration to ensure our compliance with the

	AccessNI in the Department of Justice Northern Ireland is underway and will be rolled out to our members North of the Border in December 2024.
10	**Safeguarding Training – Adults** **eLearning – Launch** Scouting Ireland's Safeguarding and Volunteer & Support Departments were proud to announce the launch of its new Safeguarding eLearning Training Programme "On My Honour" in September 2024 as planned. This new bespoke online course is designed to equip scouting Irelands adult members (and 16-18year olds with parental consent) with the essential knowledge and skills needed to protect children, young people and vulnerable individuals, ensuring compliance with the latest safeguarding standards and best practices. The new bespoke eLearning course has been a year in development and is specific to Scouting Ireland. The course is designed to reflect the profile and activities of our members and our organisation's safeguarding processes and procedures. The course will be an integral part of Scouting Ireland's extensive safeguarding programme which trains over 7,000 people every year through a combination of in-person and online training. Our new eLearning course 'On My Honour' is an important addition to our Child Protection Awareness Programme (CPAP) which is designed and delivered by the National Youth Council of Ireland (NYCI) who also train Scouting Ireland's CPAP trainers. 'On My Honour' will enable members to remain compliant with their safeguarding training in a flexible and convenient way and will provide you with consistent, accurate and up-to-date safeguarding information which can be referred to as needed. **Learning outcomes:** 'On My Honour' provides participants with an increased/refreshed knowledge of: - Safeguarding and protection when working with youth members and vulnerable individuals in Scouting Ireland - The definitions of abuse and how to recognise the signs of abuse - Reporting procedures and legislation - Being a Safeguarding Scouter and contributing to a positive safeguarding culture in Scouting Ireland. The response from members who have completed the 'On My Honour' programme has been very positive. The interactive elements make the course more engaging, and participants can progress at their own pace, revisit content as needed and choose learning environments that suit them best. **Testimony:** The eLearning module includes a powerful testimony from a former scouter who was failed by scouting and we are grateful to them for sharing their experience. This testimony is a stark

	reminder there is no place in Scouting Ireland for those who seek to harm children or young people or vulnerable adults. **Expectations/compliance:** No adult volunteer (all adults from the age of 18) as per membership and vetting policies can engage with young people in scouting until they have complete/are compliant with the Vetting/AccessNI process and mandatory safeguarding training. And, in line with best safeguarding practice repeat both Vetting/AccessNI and Safeguarding training every three years. Scouters who have completed the Safeguarding training recently are encouraged to complete the new eLearning course, but it is not mandatory for those individuals until their three year timeframe expires. Those who are non-compliant will be requested to 'stay-away' as per the updated 'stay-away policy' (Sept 2024) until they are compliant with both vetting/AccessNI and Safeguarding Training. **eLearning platform:** The eLearning course is now available to all adult members by signing up to Scouting Irelands eLeanring platform hosted by 'Moodle': Safeguarding (scouts.ie) **Further Training in Safeguarding:** The Safeguarding Department continue to work with our internal and external partners with regards to the development of further Safeguarding training for our adult members. Our 2025 work plan in this regard will include the further development of: 1. In-Person Safeguarding module for Group Leaders, County Commissioners, Provincial Commissioners (People in charge of people). 2. Safeguarding module for our 'Scouting Together' course. 3. Safeguarding 'Afloat' – the Sea Scouts are looking to develop awareness training specific to sea scouting. 4. Safeguarding module for overnights/ camp leads/ expedition leaders. 5. Welfare/Listening Ear Teams 6. Develop awareness training in the area of Transgender & equality / LGBTQI+ with our internal and external partners We are deeply committed to ensuring that the latest societal concerns and issues such as human trafficking and radicalisation continue to be integral to the ongoing development of our members.
11	**Safeguarding Training – Youth Members** A project team to develop a Youth programme in Safeguarding for Scouting Ireland was established in 2023. This age-appropriate child-centred programme was launched at our Safeguarding conference in September 2024. Safeguarding training for Scouting Ireland's Youth Members will empower them with knowledge and skills to protect themselves and seek help in situations where their safety or well-being may be at risk. The training aims to educate our Beavers, Cubs, Scouts, and Venture Scouts about their rights, personal safety, and how to recognise and respond to potential risks or harm. The programme is intertwined in our 'One Programme' and will be reviewed throughout 2025.

12	**Safeguarding Networks** The Safeguarding Manager continues to attend regular meetings of two National Safeguarding Networks Committees – One for Children/Young People and one for adults. Both committees exist to share best practices in the Safeguarding arena and are a source of valuable learning for policy and practice implementation. The Safeguarding Department regularly liaise and meet with external partners such as: • World Organisation for the Scout Movement (WOSM) • The UK Scout Association (IN particular the Safeguarding Manager and Team). • BelongTo • TENI • Invisible Traffick (Northern Ireland) • The National Youth Council of Ireland • Cara Friend (Northern Ireland) • Others as appropriate
13	**Safeguarding Department's connections with statutory and other services & agencies** The Safeguarding Department, in line with its statutory responsibilities, have regular contact with the statutory services in the Island of Ireland, namely The Child & Family Agency (Tusla), An Garda Siochana, The Police Service Northern Ireland and The Gateway Service Northern Ireland. This department has established relationships with these services on a National, Local and Departmental Level. Scouting Ireland's Safeguarding department has contacted the Charity Regulator in the Republic of Ireland and the Charity Commissioner for Northern Ireland when appropriate and in line with our legal and policy requirements. The Safeguarding Department continues to regularly collaborate with other relevant services, departments and agencies as was outlined in previous reports.
14	**Scouting Irelands Safeguarding Conference 2024** The Safeguarding Manager and team are in the process of organising a Safeguarding conference. This event aims to pull together our Scouting Ireland Safeguarding Trainers with professionals and experts in the Safeguarding arena. The Safeguarding Conference took place on the 13th September 2024 in the conference centre at Larch Hill. Guest Speakers included: • Dr Ruth Elliffe, Trinity College Dublin on Domestic Violence and the impact on children & families. What volunteers should look for. • Simon Davis, Safeguarding Manger the Scout Association, UK

- Lisa O'Loughlin, NIAP – The work of NIAP and Sexually Harmful Behaviour
- Adult Safeguarding and others
- Inspire Wellbeing

The Safeguarding Conference welcomed.

- Scouting Ireland's (SI) Safeguarding Trainers
- SI Provincial Training Coordinators
- SI Provincial Commissioners
- SI Scouting Irelands Support/ and other staff
- External Partners and Colleagues from the Safeguarding Networks Committees
- Other invited guests
- Other interested SI members by agreement with their local Provincial Commissioner

The event was linked to Scouting Irelands 'Cruinniu weekend' which is an annual event consolidating national events into one weekend – National Youth Assembly, National Conference, Group Leader Conference. This is Scouting Ireland's flagship event, marking the start of the Scouting Year.

We welcomed the Chief social worker from the Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth who's parting comments were extremely positive and encouraging.

We envisage that Guest speakers will become an integral part of our ongoing learning for staff and our Safeguarding Trainers and that a Conference like this will take place every second year/as required and as resources allow.

Audits

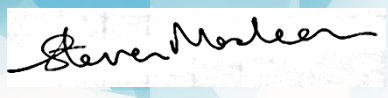
Scouting Irelands Safeguarding Department have engaged with Tusla's trial self-audit tool and formed part of Tusla's provisional collaborative meetings to progress.

In addition, we are currently working on WOSM's 'Safe from Harm' self-assessment tool. This will provide a check/balance on where Scoutign Ireland is with regard to Safeguarding and Safe from Harm processes and procedures on a Scout world stage. The audit is due for completion around March 2025.

Conclusion

Scouting Ireland continues on a journey to ensure that our youth members have every opportunity to enjoy all Scouting activities in the safety and knowledge that our policies and procedures are not only adhered to but excelled by all our adult volunteers when it comes to their engagement with children and young people.

There is no place in Scouting Ireland for those who seek to harm children or young people, nor vulnerable adults. The theme for 2003 *'Safeguarding is everyone's responsibility, Safeguarding should be effortless'* has continued into 2024 and used throughout correspondence, training and conference materials by the Safeguarding Manger and the Safeguarding Team.



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