

Statement on behalf of the Senior volunteers

The membership of Scouting Ireland (SI) is aware that the Chief Scout, Chief Commissioner Adult Resources, Chief Commissioner Youth Programme and former National Secretary and ordinary member of the National Management Committee /former Board stood back from their positions for 6 weeks, voluntarily, in April 2018. They did this to facilitate an independent investigation into reported, 'tho unsubstantiated, actions of personnel referred to adversely in the reports prepared by a Mr Ian Elliot for the Board of Scouting Ireland. Mr Elliot's assertions were based on his review of a case of complaint of indecent assault by one adult scouter against another adult scouter.

They have deliberately avoided publishing any statements till the matters being investigated and the process being undertaken by Scouting Ireland's National Board had run their course.

However at this point, following an unduly long and questionable/flawed process, and the recent publication from SI, they have decided to make a statement.

A report (following detailed investigation) prepared by Ms Lorna Lynch (BL), concluded that Mr Mc Cann, Mr Shaloo and Ms Bermingham were totally exonerated of the accusation that they sought to interfere with the case investigation. In the case of Mr Kehoe, Ms Lynch (BL) contended actions taken did constitute 'inappropriate action'. This is contested by Mr Kehoe as part of his appeal. It is worth clarifying, again, that all such investigations are conducted only by employees of Scouting Ireland and external advisers – no volunteers are allowed be involved in conducting these investigations. This case was investigated by SI, An Garda Síochána and the Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions and was determined, by the DPP, as having no case to answer.

Ms Lynch (BL) was not able to widen the scope of her investigation to consider the actions of others, besides the volunteers, because of the restrictive Terms of Reference for her investigation as generated by the National Secretary acting under instruction. Their view is that she was barred from doing so. She alludes to this in a paragraph in the draft report, which is not present in the final report. The volunteers couldn't, and didn't, agree with these Terms of Reference. They did, however, acquiesce in engaging with the process in the broader interests of the organisation and the mistaken belief that matters would be prosecuted fairly and transparently.

It is their contention that some of the people involved in the decision to investigate four specific volunteers, were actually conflicted in that and made their decision in order to divert further scrutiny. It is perhaps not entirely coincidental that all four senior volunteers had raised issues of performance and lack of fair procedures/processes, which are on the record.

The four volunteers only became involved in this case when the subject of the original complaint sought re-instatement from suspension to being an active scout.

During the nearly three years so far, no due process has been properly afforded and rules have frequently been unilaterally revised or, in some instances, made up. They are concerned about the precedent this sets for volunteers in Scouting Ireland, who have no protection whatsoever in the event they become embroiled in a dispute of any type.

They accept that some of their actions in considering the scout's re-instatement were naïve and ill advised. They absolutely had no bad intent and Ms Lynch (BL)'s report accepts this. The circumstances were very unusual and without precedent. They accept responsibility for

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their own Scout actions and have already lost three years of their Scouting lives. Their actions that have been

highlighted had nothing to do with the allegation itself and they have been used to divert from its seriousness and a failure in having properly documented procedures.

From as early as 2015, senior professionals were being pressed to act on the association's safeguarding procedures. Despite repeated requests and later demands, notably by Mr Shalloo and Ms Bermingham in their respective roles, no actions were taken until a direct order to hire a safeguarding consultant was made in 2017.

The Lynch (BL) report has looked at volunteer involvement, and actions and decisions made, in the matters mentioned above. What is missing is a similarly in-depth analysis of the role of many others in the above case. The report by Ms Jillian Van Turnhout (commissioned by the Minister) is clear in conjoining volunteer board and CEO as 'management' of Scouting Ireland.

They would urge an external investigation arising from the barrister's opinions, there is far more to it than meets the eye. There is evidence of collusion and incompetence that, when extrapolated across other facets of Scouting's national structure, raise questions about the handling of other safeguarding cases and appeals.

With regard to their own appeal to the decision of suspension until next National Council last year, this was dismissed unilaterally by the National Secretary of SI, despite many requests and promises to the Minister that Scouting Ireland would follow fair procedures and have their case dealt with by external and non-conflicted parties.

The upgraded sanctions recently published by the Chair of the Board of SI has compounded the mismanagement of all of the above. This is now leaving the volunteers with little option but to seek justice and truth by external means.