



Statement by Irish Girl Guides

Irish Girl Guides are issuing this statement in response to recent public and media commentary.

27 February 2019:- While discussing Scouting Ireland public references have been made to 'Scouting and Guiding'. We request that when referring to 'Scouting' and 'Scouting Ireland' references to 'Guiding' are omitted. Scouting Ireland caters for both boys and girls and offers a different programme. Scouting Ireland is a completely separate organisation from our organisation. Scouting and Guiding are not interchangeable terms.

The Irish Girl Guides recognise the welfare of our members is of paramount importance and we have policies and procedures in place to safeguard the children in our care. Our Safeguarding and Child Protection policy and practice has been developed to comply with the *Children First Act 2015*, *Children First: National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children (2017)*, and Tusla's *Child Safeguarding: A Guide for Policy, Procedure and Practice*.

The Irish Girl Guides believe transparency and openness are the best way to protect children. In light of the revelations over the past year in relation to Scouting Ireland, our organisation has reviewed our files. We have no historic or current internal cases of alleged child abuse. In line with best practice, we report any concerns we have over the welfare or safety of a child to the relevant statutory authorities.

If one of our volunteer leaders has a concern for a child who they believe is at immediate risk they are advised to contact the Gardaí. If a leader has a concern for the welfare of a child, they are directed to Tusla, the Child and Family Agency. Our Safeguarding Officer and volunteer safeguarding teams follow up with local leaders to ensure all reporting requirements are met.

The Irish Girl Guides offers an exciting programme for girls and young women from 5 to 30 years of age, and opportunities for women of all ages. We cater for girls only because we strongly believe that girls need time in a girl-only safe setting with a programme facilitated by women who will act as role models and encourage them to challenge themselves and follow their dreams. Through participation in Guiding, girls experience leadership from a young age via our programme and structures. Girls take on various roles and use the skills and knowledge gained throughout their lives. In society, tradition places certain expectations on girls and women. In Guiding, girls and women challenge those stereotypes and take on positions of leadership, using their talents and abilities to contribute to a more equitable world. This develops girls' confidence, improves self-esteem and offers a unique opportunity to grow and develop as responsible citizens of the world.

We believe it is essential that every member has a voice that will be heard and acted upon. We thank our volunteer leaders for continuing to ensure Guiding provides a safe and fun environment for all our members.

ENDS

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