

# THE IRISH TIMES

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## Scouts' handling of rape claim was 'deeply flawed'

Child safeguarding expert raised serious concerns about standards in organisation

Female scout leader alleged she was raped by a male leader on camping trip

JACK POWER

Scouting Ireland's handling of a rape allegation during a camping trip eight years ago was "deeply flawed", according to a confidential report.

In a report completed in January, Ian Elliott, an expert child safeguarding consultant, raised serious concerns about standards within the organisation and called for a change in culture.

He said he had not considered Scouting Ireland "a safe organisation" after he began his inquiry last year, but he said he had been "heartened by the apparent willingness to change" as his inquiry continued, according to minutes.

Scouting Ireland, which has 40,000 juvenile members and 13,000 adult volunteers, intends to appoint an independent investigator to examine the actions of individuals in the handling of the complaint.

An 18-year-old female scout leader claimed to Scouting Ireland in 2016 that she had been raped by a male leader during a scout camping trip held in 2009.

The male volunteer was asked voluntarily to step aside. He was formally suspended in October 2016. A Garda investigation was held. He was reinstated after the Director of Public Prosecutions decided not to prosecute.

### Bad management

Defending its handling of the inquiry, Scouting Ireland said it had provided counselling and support to the woman, "who remains a valued member of Scouting Ireland".

Saying he had found "urgent" gaps in child protection policy within Scouting Ireland, Mr Elliott, who formerly led the Catholic Church's National Board for Safeguarding Children, said "examination of past practice" had brought "to light areas of bad management and wrongdoing" by some senior volunteers.

"It is recommended that these should be reviewed with the intention of holding those people involved to account for

what they have done," said Mr Elliott in a January 11th report. "Practices such as lobbying on behalf of an accused person must be eliminated. Refusing to divulge and record the content of important conversations with subjects of complaint cannot be tolerated," he said. In addition to the rape allegation, Mr Elliott said he "read 20-plus case files" and carried out over 160 hours of interviews with people in the organisation, but no information was given about any other case.

### Welfare

Calling for "a new approach" in Scouting Ireland, he said it must recognise "that the needs and welfare of the young people involved must always take precedence over that of adults involved".

During discussions over two board meetings in January, directors described lobbying on behalf of anyone facing an allegation as "gross misconduct" that could lead to "huge reputational and financial risk" to Scouting Ireland.

In future, any member of the organisation who faces allegations will be subject "to suspension without prejudice" and a notice to this effect is to be sent shortly to the membership.

Scouting Ireland chief executive John Lawlor strongly defended the organisation, saying "the safety and protection of all our members and volunteers is of paramount importance to us". Responding to questions on the handling of the complaint, Dr Lawlor said "safeguarding procedures were implemented in Scouting Ireland before it was legally required".

"These obligations are strictly observed," he added.

Scouting Ireland has already begun to act on Mr Elliott's recommendations: new systems have been put in place to store documents, and work on drafting new policy rules is under way.

→ Elliott safeguarding report was 'grim reading': page 8



**Girl in green** Young fan snaps Irish prop

■ Fan Jennifer Malone takes a picture with Cian Healy at the Irish rugby squad's training session at Carton House, Maynooth, Co Kildare yesterday. Kiwi coaching edge adds to Celtic rivalry: page 20. PHOTOGRAPH: DAN SHERIDAN/INPHO

## Trump insists arming teachers 'great deterrent'

President hosts another discussion on gun violence as outrage continues

SUZANNE LYNCH  
Washington Correspondent

US president Donald Trump reiterated his suggestion that arming teachers is a solution to gun violence in American schools, as outrage over last week's mass shooting in Florida continued.

For the second consecutive day, Mr Trump hosted a round-table discussion at the White House with members of the public to discuss the issue of gun violence.

The president elaborated on his proposal on Twitter ahead of yesterday's "School Safety Roundtable", arguing that arming teachers would be "much less expensive than guards".

### Marines

"Highly trained, gun-adept, teachers/coaches would solve the problem instantly," he said, arguing that the policy would be a "great deterrent".

Later he clarified that up to 40 per cent – not all – teachers would be armed under his proposal, with those who had served as Marines particularly suited to the role.

"We have to harden our schools, not soften them," he said, noting that police take eight minutes on average to get to a gun incident at a school. Instead, he said he would like to see "true people with great talent at guns and

being adept at guns" carrying weapons in the classroom.

The president also suggested that teachers who were required to carry guns could be paid a bonus.

### Pressure

The White House is coming under intense pressure to act on gun control, as protests take place over the high school shooting in Parkland, Florida, which left 17 people dead. On Wednesday, Mr Trump hosted survivors of the incident and families of some of the victims, who called for action on gun control.

In addition to arming teachers, Mr Trump has also suggested he may be willing to raise the age at which adults can buy certain guns to 21, as well as support legislation banning "bump stocks", devices that are attached to guns to simulate automatic fire.

Legislative changes would need the support of Congress, however, which returns to session next week.

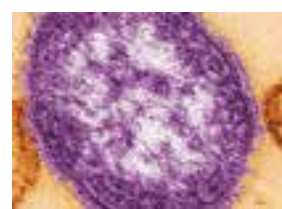
In a sign of the tough political balancing act ahead, Mr Trump tweeted his support for the National Rifle Association, describing those who work at the organisation as "great American patriots".

→ Furious Florida students force senator to backpedal on support for gun lobby: page 9



**66** National plan was accompanied by a range of documents but little supporting evidence

John Fitzgerald, Business This Week



**66** Measles back with a vengeance due to fake health news

Opinion, Muiris Houston, page 18



**GAA president bows out**  
Seán Moran assesses Aogán Ó Fearghail's term  
Sport, page 22

## IFA pays €1.9m settlement to former general secretary

EOIN BURKE-KENNEDY

The former general secretary of the Irish Farmers' Association (IFA), Pat Smith, has reached a settlement with the organisation for €1.9 million plus legal costs, estimated to be in excess of €500,000, after two legal actions arising out of his controversial departure in 2015.

Mr Smith left his post as IFA general secretary in November 2015, amid speculation around his salary, which was later revealed to be in excess of €500,000 per annum.

The subsequent outcry over his €2 million exit package, which was withheld by the organisation, triggered a major crisis within the IFA, which eventually forced the resignation of then president Eddie Downey.

Mr Smith later brought two

legal actions against his former employer, including one for breach of contract over its failure to pay him €2 million severance, and one alleging he was defamed by the IFA in statements to the media in the wake of his departure.

■ Pat Smith: hoping for successful future in renewable energy sector

In the High Court yesterday, IFA counsel Mark Connaughton confirmed both legal actions had been settled and the IFA now "accepted that Mr Smith was a highly effective, hardworking and dedicated executive of the association".

It also accepted it had made

certain statements in the media at the time of his departure that were defamatory of Mr Smith and regretted the damage caused to his reputation.

Separately, the IFA said it had agreed to pay Mr Smith €1.55 million in respect of the action for breach of contract and €350,000 in respect of the separate defamation action, and his substantial legal costs.

Mr Smith, who did not appear in court, said as far as he was concerned the matters were now closed and he looked forward to developing a successful future with his new business in the renewable energy sector.

His departure from the IFA came on foot of disquiet among grassroots members over his salary.

→ Analysis: Difficult pill to swallow for IFA: page 2

## Weather

Cloudy and mostly dry. Gusty southeasterly winds, making it feel rather cold. Highs of 5-8 degrees

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## Home News

**Murder trial:** The Regency Hotel trial has been adjourned pending an investigation into the circumstances of the death of the lead investigator: page 4

**Presidency:** Michael D Higgins has said in Athens that he no longer rules out running for a second term: page 7

## World News



**Syria:** Russia has blocked a UN resolution that would have established a 30-day ceasefire and allowed humanitarian deliveries in eastern Ghouta: page 10

## Business This Week

**Banks:** The chief executive of KBC Ireland has said the country's banks should be cut some slack by regulators over non-performing loans

**Tax:** The mountains of paperwork that go with tax returns will be done away with under the Revenue's plan to fully digitise PAYE

## Sports Friday

**Soccer:** Celtic crashed out of the Europa League after a 3-0 loss at Zenit St Petersburg while Arsenal advanced despite losing 2-1 at home to Östersunds

**Golf:** Rory McIlroy double bogeyed the last in the Honda Classic in Florida to finish on a two over par 72

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Karlin Lillington on Zuckerberg's testimony

Business + Technology



Belfast rape trial restrictions lifted

Discussions held without jury can now be reported

Conor Gallagher, page 2



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Workers in line for nearly 7% pay rises

EOIN BURKE-KENNEDY

Workers are in line for their biggest pay rise in a decade, with salaries expected to grow by nearly 7 per cent on average over the next two years, according to the Central Bank.

In its latest quarterly bulletin the bank said wages were expected to rise by 3.3 per cent in 2018 and 2019, twice the current eurozone rate, on the back of strong economic growth and a further tightening of the labour market.

The increases would be more pronounced in sectors facing a shortage of skilled workers, among them professional and scientific services, which include accounting and law firms; financial services; and information and communications, which include the State's large IT industry. These sectors would be forced to pay more to attract or retain staff.

The bank said, pay rises would be more modest for workers in retail, accommodation and food services.

Headline inflation

Although headline inflation remains relatively subdued, this level of wage growth would support household incomes via higher real wages, which would further strengthen domestic demand, the bank said.

John Flynn, its head of economic analysis, said a notable feature of the recent acceleration in employment was the growth in full-time work, which was pushing up average hours worked across the economy and providing an additional boost to earnings.

Mr Flynn also noted that the recovery in consumer spending was closely tracking the rise in nominal incomes, suggesting it was being driven by the improvement in the labour market, in contrast to previous periods, when growth was driven by rising credit or asset prices.

Contillon: Business, page 2



Escalating tensions threaten to bring US and Russia into direct conflict in Syria

Trump warns in tweet that action is imminent as navy carrier deployed

'We don't participate in Twitter diplomacy', says Russia in snub to US president

ISABEL GORST in Moscow

Tensions between Washington and Moscow escalated yesterday as Donald Trump warned the US was about to launch a missile strike on Syria and taunted Russia for supporting Syrian president Bashar al-Assad.

The US has pledged to punish Mr Assad for a suspected poison gas attack on the town of Douma, in the eastern Ghouta region near the

Syrian capital on Saturday. Russia has dismissed accusations that Mr Assad was responsible as a "provocation," and demanded an impartial investigation of the attack.

Mr Trump broke with US national security procedures to warn that an attack on Syria was imminent yesterday after the Russian ambassador to Lebanon Alexander Zasyukin said his country would shoot down US weapons targeting Syria and destroy the site from where the missiles were launched.

"Russia vows to shoot down any and all missiles fired at Syria. Get ready Russia, because they will be coming, nice and new and 'smart!'", Mr Trump tweeted. "You shouldn't be partners with a Gas Killing Animal who kills his people and enjoys it!"

Dmitry Peskov, Vladimir Putin's press spokesman, responded to Mr Trump's outburst with a mild snub. "We don't participate in Twitter diplomacy. We stand for serious approaches," he said. "As before, we consider it important not to take steps that could destabilise an already fragile situation."

Major airlines

Escalating tensions over the chemicals attack threaten to bring the US and Russia into direct conflict in Syria where they have backed opposing sides in the civil war. Major

airlines began re-routing flights yesterday after air traffic controllers warned that rockets could be fired into Syria in the coming days. Eurocontrol, Europe's main air traffic control agency, said aircraft flying in the eastern Mediterranean should exercise caution due to possible military action.

In a move to increase its naval presence in the eastern Mediterranean, the US was planning to send its Harry S Truman carrier strike group and its 6,500 sailors from Norfolk naval base in Virginia yesterday to sail to the region, a journey that would take more than 10 days.

Russia has 15 vessels from its Black Sea Fleet deployed in the east Mediterranean, including the warship earlier used to launch cruise missiles against terrorist targets in Syria and some submarines. Syria has denied responsibility for the al-

leged chemical weapons attack. However, the World Health Organisation said yesterday it had received reports that hundreds of people had visited Syrian health facilities with "signs and symptoms consistent with exposure to toxic chemicals".

The US was still assessing intelligence about the attack to ascertain whether Syrian forces were responsible, said US defence secretary Jim Mattis yesterday, shortly after Mr Trump tweeted that an

US sailors on the guided-missile destroyer USS Donald Cook as the ship leaves Larnaca in Cyprus to move within striking range of Syria. PHOTOGRAPH: GETTY IMAGES

attack on Syria was imminent. The US stood ready to provide military options if appropriate, said Mr Mattis.

West's options limited: Opinion, page 14



Physics are 'better than LSD' Physicist Carlo Rovelli gives his frank views on Hawking, God and Schrödinger Science, page 12



Old enough to die - and to eat butter Writer Barbara Ehrenreich is in rude health Arts&Idea, page 13



Jumping all the obstacles Rachel Blackmore - first woman to win the Grand National? Sports Thursday

Scout leader not vetted despite Garda advice

JACK POWER

Scouting Ireland failed to question if a scout leader who had been accused of rape was fit to act as a volunteer before reinstating him, according to a confidential review.

In 2016 a woman leader alleged that she had been raped on a camping trip seven years earlier, when she was 18. The man was suspended but not prosecuted; the Garda then advised Scouting Ireland that he should be officially vetted before returning to his role. "This

advice was not acted on," the report, which has been obtained by The Irish Times, says. Scouting Ireland's board approved the man's promotion months after his suspension was lifted, last year. Some directors knew of the allegation against the man but did not inform others.

The review, carried out by Ian Elliott, who previously headed the National Board for Safeguarding Children in the Catholic Church in Ireland, says parents would be "deeply shocked" at the suggestion that "an alleged rapist should not be

robustly investigated" by Scouting Ireland "to confirm that they are a suitable person to continue as a volunteer". The organisation has 40,000 juvenile members and 12,000 adult volunteers.

'Robust examination'

Before the organisation allowed him to return to scouting "a robust examination of all the evidence available should have been made, including his behaviour during the Garda inquiry", Mr Elliott said. Scouting Ireland decided that the man

had "no case to answer" after the Director of Public Prosecutions ruled out bringing charges, but Mr Elliott stressed the threshold for a criminal prosecution is that of proof beyond all reasonable doubt. Mr Elliott said he could find no evidence "that consideration was given to the relative probability" that the incident could have happened as described by the woman, who was "largely ignored". While under suspension the man "sought to use" scouting connections "to exert as much pressure" as possible to end the

internal process, the review says. In addition, he was given liaison support during the investigation, but the alleged victim was not, despite facing "considerable" pressure.

Mr Elliott said it was "simply incredible" that chief scout, Christy McCann, met the man last January, in a meeting arranged by senior volunteer, David Shalloo, which had "demonstrated a blatant disregard" for agreed safeguarding policies.

Investigation criticises Scouting Ireland: page 8

Weather

Rain and mist but drier later with some sunny spells. Top temperatures 9-10 degrees

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Home News

Waiting lists: The Government will seek to remove about 17,000 people from in-patient and day case hospital waiting lists this year: page 7

German ties: Minister Simon Coveney will today unveil proposals for closer Irish-German ties: page 8

World News



Ryan to quit: US House speaker Paul Ryan has said he will not run for re-election in November, in a move that will heighten anxiety among Republicans: page 9

Business + Technology

Arnotts facelift: Selfridges is to pump €11 million into its Dublin department store, Arnotts, to fund a refurbishment and an upgrade of its technology systems.

Facebook inquiry: Mark Zuckerberg endured tough questioning in his second appearance on Capitol Hill.

Sports Thursday

Soccer: Cristiano Ronaldo scored an injury-time penalty to send Real Madrid into the Champions League semi-finals in dramatic circumstances.

GAA: St Vincent's will begin the defence of their title with uncertainty about Diarmuid Connolly.

Lotto: 2, 7, 33, 35, 40, 42 (10). No winner. Plus 1: 1, 19, 23, 31, 32, 46 (26). Plus 2: 8, 19, 25, 27, 41, 43 (2).

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# Inquiry into scout child sex abuse allegation

Gardaí investigating allegation of child sexual abuse on a scout camp in 2014

Minister receives confidential disclosure in relation to allegation of abuse

## JACK POWER

A file has been sent by the Garda Síochána to the Director of Public Prosecutions (DPP) over an alleged case of child sexual abuse during a scout camping trip in 2014, at Larch Hill, south Co Dublin.

Gardaí are investigating a scout leader who allegedly abused a 12-year-old boy on a camping trip more than three years ago, which was reported to Garda early last year.

The confidential disclosure in relation to the allegation was received by Minister for Children Katherine Zappone last week.

The allegation claims the male leader entered the boy's tent at night, at Larch Hill

**Ms Zappone told the Dáil she had recently received several confidential disclosures regarding Scouting Ireland of 'grave and serious concern'**

campsite, south Co Dublin, and sexually abused him.

The male leader was in the same scout troop as the boy at the time, and the juvenile member has since left the group. It is understood gardaí have sent a file to the DPP in recent weeks, following an investigation. The leader under investigation is still involved in a scout group.

## Ongoing investigations

The boy disclosed the alleged incident of sexual abuse two years later, in 2016, and the matter was reported to gardaí in early 2017. A spokeswoman for the Garda said they could not comment on "ongoing investigations".

Ms Zappone has referred the disclosure of alleged child sex abuse to the Scouting Ireland chief executive Dr John Lawlor, to investigate the matter and provide her with an up-

date "as a matter of urgency". Previous complaints over inappropriate jokes and hugging were made against the leader by a parent of the boy, prior to the alleged sexual abuse disclosure from the boy.

The complaints were investigated by Scouting Ireland in 2015. Two staff members, including their child protection officer, interviewed both the parent and the subject of the complaint.

During a meeting that lasted an hour and a half, the male leader stated the complaints were an attempt to "discredit" him, according to written minutes of the discussion obtained by *The Irish Times*.

Scouting Ireland did not respond to questions in relation to the child sex abuse allegation.

On Thursday, Ms Zappone told the Dáil she had recently received several confidential disclosures regarding Scouting Ireland of "grave and serious concern".

The disclosures to the Minister regarding Scouting Ireland follow reports in *The Irish Times* concerning the organisation's "flawed" handling of a rape allegation made in 2016, which concerned two adult leaders.

## Governance concerns

State funding worth nearly €1 million a year remains suspended over governance concerns at the youth organisation. Four senior scouting figures have stepped aside from their positions while an independent inquiry is completed into how senior volunteers in the organisation handled a rape allegation in 2016.

Chief scout Christy McCann announced on Thursday he had informed the organisation's board that he was "temporarily" standing down.

David Shalloo, chief commissioner for youth affairs, also said he would "temporarily step aside" from his role, pending the investigation's conclusion; along with Thérèse Bermingham, chief commissioner for adult resources, and board member Ollie Kehoe.



# Scouting Ireland is facing Pandora's box of historic abuse cases



**Jack Power**

Audit of hundreds of files has not yet begun despite recommendation by expert

Locked away in Scouting Ireland's national office in Larch Hill, Tibbradden, south Co Dublin, sit hundreds of past child-protection case files in an alarmed room under lock and key, some dating back decades. Most staff working in the organisation's headquarters go about each day without a thought about the ageing folders gathering dust in the organisation's national office near the Co Wicklow border, which is sheltered by woods and is set amid surrounding campsite fields.

The potential revelations within those safeguarding files about how past cases were handled, which range from minor incidents to more serious allegations of abuse, remain undisturbed.

But an initial look at a small number of serious sexual abuse allegations among the historic files showed they "haven't been handled well", according to one senior source.

A full audit of all historic cases of alleged abuse, which five months ago safeguarding expert Ian Elliott recommended should take place, has not started. In January he told Scouting Ireland's board again the historic review should be a "priority", given that "past practice has been shown to be suspect regarding alleged abuse" cases.

The cases must be reviewed to make sure there is no risk to

current members due to potential "mismanagement" of past allegations, Elliott told the organisation's board last November. Scouting Ireland hired Elliott last July to review its safeguarding structure.

The organisation, which has 40,000 juvenile members, needs to know if an alleged abuser in any case handled incorrectly is still alive or active in the organisation, he said.

## 'Bad decisions'

Elliott's report examined more than 20 sample case files, and found that a practice of lobbying for – and from – the subjects of allegations appeared to have gone unchecked, and in several cases "directly led to bad decisions being made".

"In each of the cases that I examined there was evidence of the subject of the complaint making attempts to influence the process through lobbying. It appears that this was accepted practice," he said, adding anyone outside the organisation would view it as "unacceptable".

"Be prepared" is the scouting motto. It's unlikely many of Scouting Ireland's board members were prepared for the public and political turmoil the findings of Elliott's confidential work would create for the organisation that traces its roots to 1908, which have been revealed in a series of reports by *The Irish Times*.

Overall, Elliott found "significant gaps" in its safeguarding structures and an absence of written policies for what was acceptable behaviour for volunteers.

The stakes for Scouting Ireland were nothing less than "extinction", Elliott warned, if it ignored the failings he identified, and did not act to establish "safe practice" when it came to child protection.

Elliott headed the National Board for Safeguarding Children in the Catholic Church in Ireland for six years, where he led the reforms of the church's child-protection structures.

Drawing on this, Elliott asked the board to reflect on the "devastating impact" unaddressed risk had had on the

church, an organisation "that thought itself as being impregnable".

"Risk to children was not addressed and bad decisions were regularly made involving denial and cover-up. The organisation tried to protect itself and its accused members, losing sight of the need to protect actual and potential victims. The consequences were not only massive financial loss but severe reputational damage that will take many years to fade," Elliott said.

A small number of civil legal actions from alleged victims of sexual abuse, claiming organisations had failed to protect them from preventable harm, could result in huge financial cost, often in six figures.

However, Elliott commended Scouting Ireland for commissioning the robust review, and its "willingness" to be prepared

**Mr Elliott asked the board to reflect on the 'devastating impact' unaddressed risk in the same area had on the Catholic Church**

to face difficult issues, even ones dated far back in the past.

## Rape allegation

In one case, Elliott was asked to review an allegation made by a female adult leader in 2016, who claimed she had been raped by a male adult leader on a camping trip seven years earlier, when she was 18 years old.

Reporting back, he criticised the actions of chief scout Christy McCann, David Shalloo (chief commissioner for youth affairs), Thérèse Bermingham (chief commissioner for adult resources) and ordinary board member Ollie Kehoe.

Barrister Lorna Lynch has been hired to independently inquire into the "reported actions" of the four senior volunteers. The four officers stepped aside on Thursday night, pending

the conclusion of Lynch's inquiry.

The move came after Minister for Children Katherine Zappone suspended State funding worth nearly €1 million a year to the organisation, over concerns about its governance.

Following the leak of Elliott's report to *The Irish Times*, some directors circled the wagons. In a statement, McCann said the disclosure of the confidential report had been a "betrayal and a breach of trust". At national council level, the whistleblower was accused of breaking the scout law, which states: "A scout is to be trusted. A scout is loyal."

## Tensions

Scouting Ireland is "volunteer-led", meaning the role of staff is to implement the policy set by the volunteers. There is a tension between the two sides of the organisation; in some cases staff felt pressurised by lobbying from volunteers over their work, but volunteers have also reported "heavy-handed" responses from staff to complaints.

"The practice of lobbying for an accused person has helped to create a tension between some elements of [the volunteer] leadership and the staff in trying to manage these cases. The staff felt undermined and exposed, leading to considerable feelings of frustration," Elliott's report said.

An unpublished internal fact-finding report obtained by *The Irish Times* found that tension between staff and volunteers was serving the organisation "very poorly". The report, carried out by a mediation consultant in recent years, examined relationship breakdowns in Co Galway. It concluded there was a "them-and-us" divide that would only widen if left unaddressed, but a follow-up report was not commissioned.

Dublin City Council Labour councillor Dermot Lacey, a long-time scouting volunteer, said he had "learned more about politics in scouting than he ever did in City Hall as a councillor".

There is a strong level of loy-

alty between senior volunteers, which was "natural" between people who work together, Lacey said. But accountability is needed when things went wrong.

Garrett Flynn, former board member and chairman of 115th Ballinteer scout group, said a reform of the board was required. "I would feel there should be a combination of people who come from a strong scouting background, and then people with a solid corporate background or major charity experience," he said.

The apparent "failure to follow procedure" at national level, detailed in Elliott's report, should not be allowed to reflect poorly on local scout troops, he said. "All this boardroom stuff is detached from the day-to-day scouting in communities," he said.

## Tragedy

Scouting Ireland has found itself in the spotlight previously, often in tragic cases where young members have died while on scouting trips.

On Sunday, December 6th, 2015, Aoife Winterlich (14), who lived in Walkinstown, Dublin, was with a small group of scouts when she and three others were knocked into the sea from rocks near Hook Head lighthouse in Co Wexford. She was winched from the water along with another scout, Philip Byrne, by an Irish Coast Guard helicopter, and taken to Waterford General Hospital, but died several days later.

The tragedy occurred while the scouts had been given 20 minutes "free time" to eat their lunch, an inquest into the incident heard. The two scout leaders had told them to stay within the walls of the lighthouse yard. At the inquest, Byrne said he did not recall being told not to go down to the rocks. The trip to the lighthouse took place during the week of Storm Desmond.

The inquest returned a verdict of death by misadventure, and the cause of death was brain damage due to a near-drowning.

Scouting Ireland is currently carrying out a review into the in-

cident. However, the young girl's mother, Anne Winterlich, was critical this was only happening more than two years after the incident.

"I was hugely upset at the fact that a report was not done into Aoife's death, it should have been done," said Winterlich, who is involved in legal proceedings with Scouting Ireland. The fact that a review had not been launched automatically after the death of a juvenile member was "worrying for an organisation with all those children in their care," she said.

Aoife Winterlich had joined the scouts only shortly before the trip, and was described by her mother as a "funny, kind, beautiful and creative" girl.

"I think what they should have said was: 'What happened was horrendous'; and make assurances that changes will be made that this will never happen again," she said. "I would have expected an apology, as any parent would under the circumstances."

Scouting Ireland did not respond to questions on when the report into Aoife Winterlich's death is expected to be completed. In response to Elliott's report, Scouting Ireland has made a number of reforms. When an allegation is made against a leader, they are "suspended without prejudice" pending an investigation, rather than asked to voluntarily stand aside. The organisation is recruiting a "safeguarding co-ordinator" and plans to hire additional child-protection officers. A clearer disciplinary code is in the offing.

Meanwhile, the Pandora's box of historic case files is locked away in Larch Hill. The implications for Scouting Ireland's future, once the files have been opened, remain to be seen.

## THE TWELFTH SUPPLEMENT IN THE IRISH TIMES CENTURY SERIES



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YOU ARE WHAT YOU READ

# 'Hands-on' osteopaths seek official recognition



**Mark Hilliard**

Profession sees itself as complementary to mainstream medicine despite scepticism

A retired boxer walks into an osteopath's clinic with persistent sinus infection and a repeat prescription for seemingly ineffective antibiotics.

After examining his head, stretching his mouth cavity and manipulating the muscles around his neck, the osteopath draws a sneeze and a giant ball of mucus. The problem is solved.

It is a true story but an atypical example of osteopathy in practice and, frankly, the type of stories they are cautious about telling.

Practitioners view their work as seriously as "establishment" doctors, treating everything from back pain to recurrent headaches, post-natal complications to sports injuries.

The issues patients present themselves with are legion, and while regularly alleviated on the osteopathy table, it is a prac-

tice that lives in the shadow of scepticism, hampered by a lack of regulation and research.

Today the Osteopathic Council of Ireland (OCI) will use its agm as a launching point to lobby for statutory regulation, essential to promote its field. "We don't see any reason why we shouldn't be regulated as such given the fact that the profession has been established in other countries," says its president, Cameron Paulberg.

## Majority

The OCI claims to represent the large majority of practitioners. Membership requires a recognised qualification, although these are not available in Ireland, and 1,000 hours of supervised training.

Osteopathy seeks to cure pain and other issues by examining the body in its entirety, as opposed to localised treatment.

Practitioners view it as complementary to established medical treatment, strongly rejecting the "alternative therapy" label.

The majority of issues are musculoskeletal in nature - wide-ranging joint pain, the prevalence of which helps explain the appeal of osteopathy.

A recent report published by the Economic and Social Research Institute and the Health and Safety Authority, examining workplace injuries and illness between 2001 and 2014, found high levels of musculoskeletal conditions.

They accounted for 47 per cent of illnesses experienced by workers across eight sectors - including 46 per cent in health, 66 per cent in construction and 63 per cent in agriculture, forestry and fishing.

Dr Julie Ellwood, who completed her PhD in London and has been practising in Ireland

for 14 years, has noticed an increase in adolescent cases due to a relative decrease in physical activity. This can manifest itself in general joint pain.

"It's hands-on work with the musculoskeletal system - the muscles, the ligaments and the joints - and getting the framework of the body to move with as much ease as possible," she says, stressing there is "nothing airy-fairy about it."

## Specialist care

Dr Ellwood says patients are often referred to other specialist care, particularly when ongoing private treatment can be expensive. But she highlights the need for more research in her field, noting a lack of financial support. "We do work very hard to get on the evidence-based ladder."

This is a principal concern of the established medical com-

munity and undermines confidence in osteopathy.

Dr Mark Murphy, chairman of the Irish College of General Practitioners says about 20 per cent of its members' 25 million annual consultations relate to musculoskeletal conditions and physiotherapy is "often the first line" of recommended treatment.

"Osteopaths may use some conventional evidence-based medical techniques, including physical massage and stretching of muscles, but there are also components of osteopathy that lack scientific evidence," he said.

"It is very important in healthcare, that only practices which have an evidence-base are supported and advertised. Therefore patients need clarity from regulators on who are providers of safe evidence-based practices."