

	Gasóga na hÉireann / Scouting Ireland			
	No.	Issued	Amended	Next Review Date
	POL-BOD-SG-009	July 2026	July 2026	July 2029
	Category: Safeguarding, Volunteer & Group Support			
	Digital Devices Policy 2026			

Related Documents
Safeguarding Policies
Code of Conduct
Data Protection / GDPR
Social Media Policies / processes

Revision Schedule		
Revision	Date	Description
1	2026	New Policy



Policy Purpose:

This Digital Devices Policy in Scouting Ireland aims to provide clear guidance on the safe, responsible, and appropriate use of digital devices within all Scouting activities. As technology becomes an integral part of everyday life, this policy ensures, as far as is possible and practical that young people and adults are protected online, that devices are used in a way that supports the values of Scouting, and that risks such as inappropriate content, misuse, or breaches of privacy are effectively managed.

As scouting is an outdoor informal education movement, the focus must remain on being present when scouting as opposed to being online. This policy aims to provide sufficient scouter guidance to enhance learning, participation and personal development within scouting activities.

This policy promotes positive digital citizenship, encouraging members to use technology in a respectful, inclusive, and constructive manner.

Policy scope:

This policy applies to all youth members, all adult volunteers (Scouters) and across all scouting activities (local, national and international).

This policy covers all use of digital devices during meetings, camps and overnights, events and trips nationally and internationally. Activities include Group, County and Provincial activities, National and International Events/Activities and any other activity completed within Scouting Ireland.

Safeguarding Statement:

Scouting Ireland is committed to safeguarding all children and young people. The welfare and best interests of the child is paramount. All members have a responsibility to promote a safe environment which encompasses digital safety. Digital device use presents safeguarding risks including online exploitation or grooming, cyberbullying, privacy breaches, inappropriate peer or adult communication and/or image misuse. These risks must be assessed and managed at all times.

Definitions:

Digital Devices:

Includes all devices including member-owned which are capable of any of the following:

- Communication via text, voice, images or otherwise
- Recording or displaying of images / audio / video
- Accessing online platforms and/or social media

Examples include but not limited to; phones, tablets, laptops, cloud storage media, social media, smart watches.

Key reasons for this policy include:

1. **Child Protection & Safety** – Promoting safe usage of technology and preventing online harm and exploitation.
2. **Effective Supervision** – Maintaining proper oversight and safeguards so that no youth member is left at risk of harm online or through technology.
3. **Legal & Regulatory Compliance** – Aligning with child protection laws and Scouting Ireland's policies.
4. **Quality of Scouting Experience** – Providing enough Scouter guidance to enhance learning, participation, and personal development within scouting activities. Emphasis that Scouting is an outdoor informal education movement and a focus of being 'in the moment' when Scouting, as opposed to being online.
5. **Emergency Contact** – Ensuring there is a line of communication between children and young people and their parents, when necessary for emergencies.
6. **Scouters** – Are role models and Digital Device use should be limited and generally out of sight.

At the core of the policy is respect for rights and individuals, it is designed to be flexible and fair to all and should be interpreted with this in mind.

Devices Covered by this policy

All personally owned devices include all member-owned existing and emerging technologies and devices that can take photographs; play and record audio or video; input text; upload and download content and/or media; and transmit or receive messages or images.

Emerging technologies and devices include but are not limited to cell phones, computers, tablets and storage media (e.g., flash drives, the cloud), as well as communication tools including social media sites, text messages, chat and websites.

Scouting Ireland Activities

Activities include Group, County and Provincial activities, National and International Events/Activities and any other activity completed within Scouting Ireland. Members are expected to act responsibly and thoughtfully when using technology resources – as they would off line/in person.

Personally owned devices are permitted for use during Scouting Ireland time for Scouting purposes and in approved locations and times only. Scouting Ireland expressly prohibits the use of personally owned devices in areas where there is an expectation of privacy, for example, but not limited to:

- Tents
- Changing rooms
- toilets and shower rooms
- Bedrooms

Any inappropriate use of a personally owned device, as determined by Scouting Ireland, can lead to disciplinary action including, but not limited to, confiscation of the device, immediate implementation of the Stay Away Policy, Suspension without Prejudice or termination of membership, or other actions determined to be appropriate to Scouting Ireland's existing policies including, if applicable, a report / referral to the Safeguarding Department and /or statutory services.

Inappropriate communication

Inappropriate communication includes, but is not limited to, obscene, profane, lewd, vulgar, rude, inflammatory, threatening, or disrespectful language or images typed, posted or spoken by members; information that could cause damage to an individual or to Scouting Ireland, or create the danger of disruption of the Scouting environment; personal attacks, including prejudicial or discriminatory attacks; harassment (persistently acting in a manner that distresses or annoys another person) or stalking others; knowingly or recklessly posting false or defamatory information about a person or Scouting Ireland; and communication that promotes the destruction of property.

Members may not use any technology to harass, threaten, demean, humiliate, intimidate, embarrass, or annoy their peers. This behaviour is cyberbullying, which is bullying that takes place using emerging technologies and devices. Examples of cyberbullying include mean text messages or emails; rumours sent by email or posted on social networking sites; and embarrassing pictures, videos, websites or fake profiles. Any cyberbullying that is determined to disrupt the safety and/or well-being of the Group, Group member, Leader or community is subject to Safeguarding assessment or disciplinary action.

Members must be aware of appropriateness of communications when using devices. Inappropriate communication is prohibited in any public messages, private messages and material posted online by members.

Social Media & Communication:

Social networking offers valuable opportunities to support and promote Scouting beyond regular activities. However, all use must prioritise the safety and wellbeing of young people and adults.

Members should maintain appropriate boundaries and behave online as they would offline, recognising their position of trust.

All digital communication must be respectful, appropriate, and mindful that content can be shared, misinterpreted, or made public. Personal social media accounts should not be used to communicate

with youth members. Group accounts should be properly managed, monitored regularly, and administered by multiple responsible adult Scouters.

Personal information about young people must never be shared, and images may only be used with parental consent and in an appropriate manner. All interactions, particularly with younger sections, should involve parents or guardians where required. Any concerns regarding online behaviour or contact must be reported in line with Scouting Ireland's safeguarding procedures.

Members should exercise caution to ensure that young people cannot be identified by name/location due to social media posts. It is essential that young people are not tagged or equivalent on any social media post or other Scouting Ireland public media or communications.

Code of Conduct

Each Group in Scouting Ireland is responsible for creating a code of conduct – recommended for every term, every event.

It is recommended Codes of Conduct consider the following points in relation to phone and technology use:

-  Include youth participation for creating the rules around phone and technology use
-  Consider safety first, for example if a member is on a lone patrol or there is a high possibility of members being separated from their group, allow for phones to be brought to the activity. Safe phone use will need to be considered.
-  Phone use to be prohibited where suitable. This will ensure there are safeguards against online harm or exploitation and unintentional harm from phone and technology use. It will also promote screen-free activity and good mental health.
-  Ensure there is a communication pathway for parents and children in case of emergency or if required for a child's wellbeing. i.e. a designated Scouter 'on call' number for events.

Enabling Participation

Scouting Ireland is open to all. Scouters must plan to enable all members with additional needs both visible and hidden needs to participate in Scouting. Each youth members needs should be assessed individually by the Section/Group/Team Scouters.

Education

Educating and creating awareness to young people in Scouting Ireland on the use of digital devices is essential to supporting their development as responsible and informed citizens. Members should be encouraged to understand both the benefits and risks of technology, including online safety, privacy, and respectful communication. Through age-appropriate guidance, they can develop good digital habits, critical thinking skills, and an awareness of how their online behaviour impacts themselves and others. This approach promotes positive digital citizenship and empowers young people to use technology safely, responsibly, and in line with the values of Scouting.

Programme & Educational Use of Digital Devices

Scouting Ireland recognises that digital devices, when used appropriately, can support a modern Scout Programme. In line with the Scout Method and WOSM principals, they can enhance informal education through youth-led learning, exploring, creativity and collaboration.

Constructive uses include supporting outdoor skills, reflecting on activities, accessing learning resources, and developing digital literacy, teamwork, and responsible citizenship. Use should be purposeful, age-appropriate, and balanced with the outdoor, social and experiential, focus of Scouting ensuring it enhances rather than detracts from the Scout experience.

Section Policy and Guidance:

Beavers	
Guidance:	No Personal Digital Devices
Exceptional Circumstances	Medical or Social/ Communication Needs – With written parental guidance for use.
Education:	Age Appropriate: ➤ Posters / Art Activities ➤ Games ➤ Acting / Role Play Activities

Cubs	
Guidance:	No Personal Digital Devices.
Exceptional Circumstances	Medical or Social/ Communication Needs – With written parental guidance for use.
Education:	Age Appropriate: ➤ Posters / Art Activities ➤ Games ➤ Acting / Role Play Activities ➤ Speak with cubs around bullying and code of conduct as part of program and reference that this behaviour can take place online as well as in person. ➤ Code of conduct should be followed at all times.

Scouts	
Guidance:	Limited Use of Personal Digital Devices
Exceptional Circumstances	Medical or Social/ Communication Needs – With written parental guidance for use.
Weekly Meetings & day time meetings	➤ Only in exceptional Circumstances or for the purposes of activities and Learning. ➤ Responsible Planning.
Overnights & International Trips	➤ Limited Use ➤ Prohibited use in areas where a reasonable expectation of privacy exists: Changing areas, Sleeping areas, toilets and shower areas. ➤ Responsible Planning ➤ Clear written and agreed Code of Conduct / Youth led, Parents informed.
Education:	Age Appropriate: ➤ The code of conduct should be followed at all times. ➤ Posters / Art Activities ➤ Games ➤ Acting / Role Play Activities ➤ Bullying and code of conduct as part of program and reference that this behaviour can take place online as well as in person.

Venture Scouts	
Guidance:	Limited Use of Personal Digital Devices.
Exceptional Circumstances:	Medical or Social/ Communication Needs – With written parental guidance for use.
Weekly Meetings & daytime meetings	➤ Responsible Planning.
Overnights & International Trips	➤ Limited Use ➤ Prohibited use in areas where a reasonable expectation of privacy exists: Changing areas, Sleeping areas, ➤ Responsible Planning ➤ Clear Written and agreed Code of Conduct / Youth led, Parents informed. ➤ In addition to the code of conduct, Venture Scout Units are encouraged to develop an annual Digital Devices charter for their unit. ➤ The Charter should be developed in line with typical Scouting Processes – namely PLAN-DO-REVIEW and incorporate items such as; Photography and sharing of images, social media appropriate use, cyber bullying, Data Protection, consequences for Inappropriate usage/ breach of charter, lost and found procedures

Education:	Age Appropriate: ➤ Code of Conduct ➤ Digital Devices Charter – Unit based ➤ Posters / Art Activities ➤ On line educational websites / videos ➤ Games ➤ Acting / Role Play Activities ➤ Scenario based training ➤ Vetting & Safeguarding Training for 16-18year olds (Parental Consent required)

Rover Scouts / Adult Scouters	
Guidance:	Limited Use of Personal Digital Devices.
Exceptional Circumstances:	N/A
Weekly Meetings & daytime meetings	➤ Responsible Planning.
Overnights	➤ Limited Use ➤ Prohibited use in areas where a reasonable expectation of privacy exists: Changing areas, Sleeping areas,
International Trips	➤ Responsible Planning ➤ Clear Written and agreed Code of Conduct
Education:	Safeguarding WOSM resources Appropriate On line resources, web pages,

Storage of Digital Devices while Scouting (where relevant)

When Scouters are responsible for youth members' digital devices, they must ensure they are kept safe, secure, and used only as intended and agreed through a code of conduct. Devices should be stored in a locked or supervised area, with access limited to authorised adults. Scouters should handle devices respectfully. This can be particularly challenging at camp, where supervision is less formal, so extra care, clear routines, and consistent guidance are essential to maintain safety and security of members personal devices.

Scouting Ireland bears no financial responsibility for personal items which should be covered via personal insurance.

Scouting Ireland, National Office, Larch Hill, Dublin 16, Ireland.

T: 01 4956300

www.scouts.ie

Further Supports:

Safeguarding Department

Volunteer & Group Support Department

Programme Department

Ends.

