

As previously reported on this site, when Youth Initiatives became aware of allegations regarding the conduct of an employee in 1998, it was reported to social services and to the RUC and the employee was immediately dismissed. In early 2020 we reported updated information to the Social Services, Charity Commission and PSNI. The PSNI have an active investigation into this man's behaviour in Belfast and are in possession of all of the documentation relating to that time. Since the outset we have been co-operating wholeheartedly with this investigation and continue to do so.

Regarding YI's association with SOS and SoW, we confirm historic ties to these bodies and acknowledge there are a small number of staff who are associated with SOS and SoW. Neither of these organisations are involved in any of the operational decisions within Youth Initiatives. This is the sole responsibility of the Management Team.

In relation to YI's current safeguarding and checks, we have robust structures, systems and policies in place. All staff are subject to Enhanced Access NI checks prior to being employed, receive certified statutory safeguarding training, and go through two internal training courses annually. Prior to accepting international volunteers we must receive a letter from their local police department stating they are deemed safe to be around young people and supplied references are followed up on. Accepted volunteers also receive statutory safeguarding training as part of their induction process and go through inhouse safeguarding training.

Due to the ongoing criminal case in NI, the ongoing civil cases in the US, the legalities of disclosure and the constraints of the GDPR legislation around distribution of personal data, we are limited as to what else we can share at this time.

Like many people who hold fond memories of the early days of YI, we are devastated and share the grief and sense of betrayal at the criminal actions of two of its formative employees. Youth Initiatives has grown and evolved over the last 25 years and safeguarding is central in all projects. Our team of staff and volunteers are committed to awakening hope, inspiring initiative and mobilising young people to make a vital contribution to their community and to a shared future in Northern Ireland.

In Spring 2022 we engaged with thirtyone:eight, an independent safeguarding organisation who verified our safeguarding policies, systems and checks. We are in communication with Thirtyone:eight regarding completing a review of the process in 1998 and how it was conducted and are working through their standard processes to explore what this may look like.

We understand that there may remain concerns for past YI young people or parents of current participants. If you or anyone else you know, need to talk about these or if there is anything else that you want to report please contact thirtyone:eight on 0303 003 1111 in strictest confidence. Alternatively contact the Gateway team of the social services in NI or the PSNI.

**Youth Initiatives Management Team & Trustees**