

PRESS RELEASE

From: Simon Communities of Ireland

Date: 2nd April 2009

Embargo: 00.01, 2nd April 2009

SIMON SAYS HOMELESS MUST BE PROTECTED IN SUPPLEMENTARY BUDGET 2009

The Simon Communities of Ireland today (02-04-09) urged the Government to honour its commitments to 'protect poor and vulnerable people' as it finalises the Supplementary Budget 2009. In their Pre-Budget Submission to Government the Simon Communities of Ireland warn that it is inevitable that homelessness will increase in the current economic climate. The Simon Communities of Ireland are also calling on the Government to deliver on its pledge to end rough sleeping and long-term homelessness by 2010.

Patrick Burke, CEO of the Simon Communities of Ireland stated: "This Government has pledged on many occasions to protect poor and vulnerable people. As we know, people experiencing homelessness and those at risk of becoming homeless, are among the most vulnerable and marginalised in our society. Currently our services around the country are at full capacity we expect this situation to worsen in the coming months.

Mr Burke said, "Given the severity of this recession and the difficult fundraising environment we are all experiencing, the very least the Government can do is underwrite existing Simon services around the country. It is the only way that we can guarantee support and services will be available to those who need it most. Underwriting existing services will not ensure that the Government's commitments will be achieved, but it is a good start.

The Simon Communities of Ireland's submission outlines five critical priorities for tackling homeless in these exceptional times. These include preventing more people from becoming homeless, making sure effective services are available to meet the needs of people currently homeless, and delivering on the promise of bringing an end to rough sleeping and long term homelessness by 2010.

Patrick Burke concluded, "We are acutely aware of the pressures of the current economic crisis and the fact that difficult decisions must be made. However, it is critical that we don't turn the clock back on the progress that we have achieved working together in addressing homelessness. All of our services depend on the generosity of the public as well as the support of the Government. Given that everyone is affected by the recession, the Government can reinforce its resolve to tackle homelessness by underwriting these essential services."

Ends

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Editors Notes

The *Simon Communities of Ireland* is an affiliation of local Communities in Cork, Dublin, Dundalk, Galway, the Midlands, the South East, the North West and the Mid West. Simon delivered support and services to almost 5,000 individuals and families who experienced – or were at risk of – homelessness in 2007. In addition, the National Office performs a coordinating role in terms of campaigning in the areas of housing/homeless policy and the wider poverty and social inclusion agenda; best practice in service delivery and working with people who are homeless; and in the area of full time volunteering promoting excellence and providing accredited training.

Simon Communities of Ireland *Submission to the Supplementary Budget 2009* can be downloaded from our website www.simon.ie. Go to the 'submissions' section of the 'press and publications' section or contact us on 01 – 671 1600 or communications@simoncommunity.com

The Government's 2010 Commitments

The Government has committed achieving the following commitments by 2010

- Ending long-term homelessness (the occupation of emergency accommodation for longer than 6 months). This commitment was included in the Towards 2016 Social Partnership Agreement is restated in the new Homeless Strategy 'The Way Home' published Aug 2008.
- Eliminating the need to sleep rough, this commitment is clearly articulated in new Homeless Strategy 'The Way Home' published Aug 2008.