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Press Release

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SIMON CALLS ON GOVERNMENT TO GUARANTEE FUNDING FOR HOMELESS SERVICES IN BUDGET 2010

The Homelessness Charity warns of dire consequences if protection of the most vulnerable members of society is not prioritised

The Simon Communities of Ireland today warned of the devastating impact that further cuts to key funding could have on people who are homeless and those at risk of homelessness. The warning comes as the Government prepares to unveil Budget 2010.

Patrick Burke, CEO of the Simon Communities of Ireland said today: "The Simon Communities of Ireland are calling on Government to honour its pledge to protect people who are 'poor and vulnerable' in our society by making the required funding and budgetary commitments in Budget 2010 to support people who are already homeless to move out of homelessness for good and to prevent people from becoming homeless in the first place.

The Pre Budget Submission outlines the fact that Simon services around the country have been suffering funding cuts across the board for the past two years, and the stark reality is further funding cuts simply cannot be sustained. While Simon fully understands the difficulties of the current financial situation, this is not the time to row back on the progress made on homelessness in the past number of years.

Patrick Burke went on to say: "The Simon Communities' services around the country are already operating to full capacity. In the midst of the current economic downturn more people than before are at risk of homelessness, more people will become homeless and inevitably more people will turn to the Simon Communities around the country for help in the coming months. There is an unfortunate irony in the fact that at a time when there is greater demand for our services, the Simon Communities are facing an uncertain future in terms of cuts in statutory funding.

"The Government has committed to ending rough sleeping and long-term homelessness in Ireland by 2010. We fully believe that these goals can still be realised, even under the current difficult circumstances. For these goals to become a reality the Government must show its commitment by fully resourcing and implementing the roll-out of its Homeless Strategy to ensure that the numbers becoming and remaining homeless do not rise in these challenging times. It is critical that there are effective responses to meet the needs of people who are homeless and who have complex needs across the spectrum of accommodation types including high support housing."

Simon's submission also highlights that social welfare supports are also crucial in preventing people becoming homeless and in supporting people to move out of homelessness. Rent Supplement has already been cut twice in the past year; this certainly has put more individuals and families at risk of homelessness. It is feared that any further cuts to this

important support system will cause an increase in the number of people becoming homeless.

In its submission, Simon is asking the Government to guarantee appropriate levels of funding in this Budget to essential Simon services to allow them to meet the needs of the most vulnerable people in our society at this critical time.

ENDS

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Notes for Editors:

About the Simon Communities of Ireland:

The Simon Communities of Ireland is an affiliation of local Communities in Cork, Dublin, Dundalk, Galway, the Midlands, the Mid West, the North West and the South East. 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.

The Simon Communities throughout Ireland provide the best possible care, accommodation and support for people experiencing homelessness and those at risk. Together, with people who are homeless, we tackle the root causes, promote innovative responses and urge the government to fulfil their commitments. Simon delivers support and service to almost 5,000 people who experience – or are at risk of – homelessness on an annual basis.

About the 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. This commitment was recently confirmed in the renegotiated Programme for Government (Oct 2009).
- Eliminating the need to sleep rough, this commitment is clearly articulated in new Homeless Strategy 'The Way Home' published Aug 2008.

To download the full submission please visit www.simon.ie