

## SIMON COMMUNITIES OF IRELAND AND EBS CELEBRATE THE PURCHASE OF 90 HOMES THROUGH INDEPENDENT LIVING INITIATIVE

Partnership initiative between EBS Building Society and Simon supports people to move out of homelessness breaking the cycle of homelessness for good

Tuesday 6<sup>th</sup> October, 2009 – On day two of Simon Week 2009, EBS Building Society and the Simon Communities of Ireland celebrated their work to date in partnership on the Independent Living Initiative. The Independent Living initiative is central to Simon's strategy of supporting people to move out of homelessness for good by providing independent housing with support where it is needed. EBS Building Society has partnered with the Simon Communities across the country on this project for five years and has worked closely with the Simon Communities around the country to provide homes to individuals and families. Almost ninety homes have been provided to date across the country through this partnership.

Speaking in Clonmel, Mary Ryan, beneficiary of a home through the Independent Living Initiative said: "It is only due to the support of the Simon Communities and EBS Building Society that my family and I have a place to call home. This has made a real difference to us; we are now in one permanent place that is warm, safe and secure and we know where to turn for support if and when we need it. I'm delighted to join in the celebrations with Simon and EBS Building Society today and to say thank you for helping my family and I at a time when we needed it most."

Speaking about the Independent Living Initiative Aidan Power, Head of Marketing and CSR, EBS said: "EBS Building Society and the Simon Communities of Ireland have been partners for almost five years working closely together in the delivery of the Independent Living Initiative. This initiative is one of the core elements of our CSR programme, Positive Impact. When entering into this partnership with Simon we were both committed to helping change people's lives through its delivery.

"We set various goals and targets as part of our overall plan and while we have been successful in achieving those targets with almost 90 individual units purchased to date all of which are now home to individuals or families, the real impact has been on the lives of the people who now call these units home. The positive impact on people's lives is truly immeasurable and is not something that can be calculated and tracked using the standard processes in a building society. Together we have achieved so much and I would like to thank the team in Simon for all their hard work along the way ensuring this project has been and will continue to be a huge success."

Patrick Burke, CEO Simon Communities of Ireland, added: "Despite the economic successes this country experienced over the past decade, we still failed many of the most vulnerable members of our society - people experiencing and at risk of homelessness. As times get harder in the current recession more people will experience poverty, more people will be at risk of homelessness, and more people will become homeless. It is critical to act now. At Simon we believe that homelessness in Ireland can be ended and the Simon Communities are actively working around the country to achieve this. We are also

working closely with the government in meeting their own commitments of ending the need to sleep rough and long term homelessness by 2010.

The Independent Living Initiative is one of the many ways we in Simon are endeavouring to make these goals a reality. We are grateful to EBS Building Society for its ongoing support and commitment to this project look forward to our continued partnership in the future."

There are many people experiencing homeless who can, with the appropriate support, move on to independent living - some are without shelter, living in emergency accommodation, others in temporary or insecure housing whilst some have experienced long term homelessness and have a range of complex need - physical and mental health conditions, alcohol and/or drug issues and fractured family relationships. The Independent Living initiative provides this unique opportunity to permanently break the cycle of homelessness. For further information on Independent Living Initiative and homelessness in general please log onto [www.simon.ie](http://www.simon.ie).

ENDS/

For further Information Please Contact:

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Note for Editors

About the Simon/EBS Partnership:

EBS Building Society is proud to support Simon Week for the second year running.

EBS Building Society partners with the Simon Communities of Ireland as part of its CSR Programme, Positive Impact. The partnership was formed in 2004. Together, the partners created the Independent Living Initiative, a programme that marked a new venture by the Simon Communities of Ireland. Supported by EBS, the programme has provided over 90 housing units to those who are homeless or living in emergency accommodation. The initiative is on track to provide its 100th home.

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 South East, the North West and the Mid West. 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 individuals and families who experience – or are at risk of – homelessness on an annual basis.

About Simon Week 2009:

Simon Week 2009 takes place from 5<sup>th</sup> to 11<sup>th</sup> October 2009 with a wide range of activities and events taking place nationally and at local level. Simon Week 2009 is proudly supported by EBS Building Society.

Simon Week represents a unique opportunity for the Simon Communities of Ireland to raise awareness of homelessness, to urge all sections of Irish Society to understand the causes of homelessness in Ireland and to take action to bring homelessness to an end. The Week also celebrates the work of Simon's staff and volunteers throughout the country.

Simon Week aims to:

- Increase awareness of homelessness and associated issues in Ireland
- Create greater awareness of the Simon Communities of Ireland and the work that the Communities engage in
- Remind people that everyone has a role to play in ending homelessness and to encourage people to get involved by volunteering, participating in events and donations