

AT TIME OF ECONOMIC CRISIS PEOPLE VIEW ISSUES OF HOUSING AND HOMELESSNESS AS CRUCIAL

Simon and EBS call on public to turn support into action as Simon Week 2009 draws to a close

Friday 9th October - Simon and EBS Building Society today revealed new research results which demonstrate the priority which the Irish public place on the issues of housing and homelessness. 72% of people recently polled agree or strongly agree that government policy should enable people to live in homes of good quality, suited to their needs and in a good environment.

Patrick Burke, CEO of the Simon Communities of Ireland, said: "Even in this time of crisis, the Irish public view the matters of housing and homelessness as crucial. In the current difficult economic climate people are reminded how precious their home is to them and how difficult life would be without it. In addition, people really empathise with the difficulties faced by those experiencing homelessness. Judging by the phenomenal response we have received so far during Simon Week, the public know that now, more than ever, we need all the support we can get to help those without a home to get their lives back on track.

"We are now into our fifth day of action on homelessness as part of Simon Week 2009. We again thank EBS Building Society for their generous support with our activities this week. So far we have received a fantastic response from the general public, from politicians across all parties and from the business world. We would ask people to turn this support into action and to visit www.simon.ie to find out more about the seven actions you can take to help end homelessness in Ireland. Working together we can achieve the 2010 commitments of ending the long term homelessness and rough sleeping."

Aidan Power, Head of Marketing and CSR at EBS Building Society said: "EBS Building Society and the Simon Communities of Ireland have been partners for almost five years working closely together to help address the issue of homelessness in Ireland. This week has seen Simon receive tremendous support from all sectors and it truly celebrated the great work being done by all eight Simon Communities across the country. It's positive to see that even in a difficult economic environment, people are thinking about those in their community and are supportive of those more vulnerable in 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 week has been and will continue to be a huge success in raising awareness around the issue. I hope that people will now take it upon themselves to go to the Simon website and see what they can do to help end homelessness in Ireland for good."

Simon Week - Seven Days of Action on Homelessness which is running from 5th to 11th October, is being supported for the second year running by EBS Building Society. Over the course of the week a wide range of activities and events have been taking place throughout the country. Simon Week 2009 focuses on two key government commitments on homelessness: ending the need to sleep rough and ending long-term homelessness by 2010. Visit www.simon.ie to find out how you can get involved.

ENDS/

For further information please contact:
Niamh Allen, Communications Officer/087 264 5485

Note 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 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 the Simon / EBS Partnership

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 Simon Week 2009:

Simon Week 2009 takes place from 5th to 11th 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

About the research

EBS Building Society, as part of the work it does in conjunction with the Simon Communities of Ireland, commissioned Behaviour & Attitudes to carry out research amongst the general public. A questionnaire was developed and included in the Behaviour & Attitudes TeleBarometer survey. This uses a syndicated approach to collecting information from a national sample of 1000 adults. Interviewing took place between 3rd and 15th September 2009. Participants were invited to respond to the following statement, which is the government's housing policy statement.

"Government policy must enable every household to have available dwelling of good quality suited to its needs, in a good environment and, as far as possible at a tenure of its choice"