

83% OF PUBLIC FEAR HOMELESSNESS WILL INCREASE AS A RESULT OF ECONOMIC CLIMATE

SIMON WEEK 2009, SUPPORTED BY EBS BUILDING SOCIETY, TO FOCUS ON SEVEN DAYS OF ACTION ON HOMELESSNESS

Sunday 27th September 2009 - Over 80% of the public believes that the number of people becoming homeless will increase as a result of the current economic climate. 72% of those surveyed agreed that this increase in homelessness will coincide with a decrease in the Government funding available to tackle homelessness. The findings of the research were made known today by the Simon Community and EBS Building Society as they announced details of the upcoming Simon Week 2009.

Simon Week 2009, which will run 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 are planned throughout the country. Simon Week 2009 will focus on two key government commitments on homelessness: ending rough sleeping and ending long-term homelessness by 2010.

Patrick Burke, CEO of the Simon Communities of Ireland, said: "Simon Week represents a unique opportunity for us to raise awareness of homelessness in Ireland, 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. During our seven days of action on homelessness we are calling on members of the general public, politicians, business people to visit www.simon.ie and find out more about the seven actions you can take to help end homelessness in Ireland.

"It is so important that Irish people understand that homelessness never went away during the years of the Celtic Tiger. People who are sleeping rough and people who are homeless for a very long time are the most vulnerable people in Ireland today. The recent economic downturn means that even more people than before are at risk of becoming homeless. In the months ahead the local Simon Communities around Ireland will have more people turning to their services for support, they will meet more people who are at risk of homelessness and more people who have actually become homeless. Now, more than ever, Simon needs your support to meet the needs of the most vulnerable people in our society. The Government has committed to end rough sleeping and long-term homelessness in Ireland by 2010. We firmly believe that this goal can still be achieved - even under the current difficult economic circumstances."

Aidan Power, Head of Marketing and CSR at EBS Building Society said: "EBS has been a long time supporter of the work of the Simon Communities in Ireland. Our business is uniquely focused on enabling people to buy their homes, but we are acutely aware of those on the margins of our society for whom the idea of owning their own home is out of reach. We are also aware that the number of people who are finding themselves in this position is rising, due to increasing unemployment. The work of the Simon Communities in Ireland is more important than ever and our aim is to assist them in raising awareness of homelessness during Simon Week 2009."

For further information on Simon Week 2009, supported by EBS Building Society, log onto www.simon.ie or onto www.ebs.ie.

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For further information please contact:

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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 Survey Findings:

The above survey was carried out by NFP Synergy on behalf of the Simon Communities of Ireland National Office and the Dublin Simon Community. The results are based on a nationally representative sample of 1,000 adults aged 16+ in the Republic of Ireland. The survey was carried out via telephone interview, with each call averaging approximately 10 minutes. For further information on this study please contact Niamh Allen as above.