

Simon Voices



Simon Speaking

CONFERENCE FOR PEOPLE IN SIMON SERVICES

'My Voice Your Voice Our Voice'

Simon Involvement and Action Group (SIAG) are delighted to announce that we are organising a Conference for November, which will be held in Dublin. The theme of the Conference will be client or service user Involvement. Client Involvement means people having a voice and being more involved in the running of their Communities.

For example

- In decision making
- Being involved in fundraising and volunteering
- Organising events
- Deciding what training should be on offer
- Being able to raise issues that are important to you
- Information sharing

This is the first Conference organised by clients for clients. It will be an opportunity to hear from a homeless organisation in the UK who are experts in Client Involvement. Also, what is going on across all the Simon Communities. You will have the opportunity to meet with Simon

EXCITING OPPORTUNITY!

Hear what is happening in St. Mungo's Broadway, a homeless organisation in London. Two speakers will share the interesting and creative ways that clients are involved there.

clients from all over Ireland and to talk about how you would like to get involved. We are going to make it an interesting and enjoyable day for everybody.

Let's get involved together

Over the coming months we will be sending more details of the event to all the Communities. If you are interested in attending talk to a member of staff.

If you are interested in having your voice heard and in joining Simon Involvement and Action Group, talk to a member of staff in your Community. We meet every month in Dublin.

Simon Involvement and Action Group Celebrates its 9th Anniversary

In May this year we celebrated the 9th Anniversary of Simon Involvement and Action Group (SIAG). Over the years many people have joined this Group, over one hundred at the last count! And we continue to welcome new members.

One of the highlights for me of being involved in this Group is in producing Simon Voices. This Newsletter is put together for clients by clients and we're always delighted to receive contributions from you, our readers.

As the longest serving member of the Group – I was at the very first meeting in May 2005 – I would like to say that I get great pleasure from attending these meetings, especially in meeting clients from other Communities. I look forward to being involved for many years to come.

Sile Nic Niocaill



IN THIS ISSUE...

Speakout

Read about debates and group discussions from last meeting on page 3

Writers & Artists Corner

Stories, poems and drawings on pages 4 and 5

If We Can Do It, You Can Do It Recipes

Turn to page 6 for some delicious recipes

Media Training



We as members of Simon Involvement and Action Group decided earlier in the year that we were interested in getting some Media training, that is, looking at what it is you need to know if you are giving your story or going to be interviewed by someone in the newspaper, TV or radio. Some people in the group had bad experiences of dealing with the media, mainly because they hadn't prepared properly. The training was held in the Carmichael Centre, Dublin on May 27th.

On the day, the training looked at questions to consider before deciding to do an interview, for example:

- What is the interview about? What are the topics?
- Why am I being interviewed?
- Can I remove any questions?
- Can I redo or edit what I said?
- Will it be a live interview or recorded?
- Will I get to see what I have said before it is published?
- Will I get paid?

When thinking about what was discussed at the training, we agreed that it would be important to make sure that you have a word beforehand with whoever is producing the TV/radio show or writing the newspaper piece, to have your questions answered. You can have someone to come along with you too, if you wish.

This day was the first part of the media training. Part 2 will be held in the Autumn and will give people a chance to prepare and practice with mock interviews.

We are hoping media training parts 1 & 2 will be run again later in the year. If you are interested, contact Catri O'Kane 0877 993860 for more details.

FEANTSA Participation Working Group Meeting in Vienna

Hi my name is Mike and I am a member of Galway Simon Action Group and a member of Simon Involvement and Action Group (SIAG). I also sit on the FEANTSA Participation Working Group; FEANTSA is the European Federation of National Organisations Working with the Homeless, this Group meets twice a year in countries all around Europe.

Our first meeting of 2014 was held in April, in Vienna, Austria. There were four main items discussed at this meeting, three of them coming from the Participation Tool Kit. This working group developed the toolkit in 2013 and it was featured in our last edition of Simon Voices.

The issues discussed were

- Service user led organisations
- Client involvement in staff recruitment
- Client involvement in governance (sitting on Boards) in Non Government Organisations
- *Open Space* in Finland, a project that aims to make open spaces available to people who are homeless

I found the scale of homelessness in Vienna itself surprising; there are 1300 people homeless in the city. On a positive note they are starting to look at how to establish client involvement in their services.

We also held a workshop involving service providers and people experiencing homelessness, which was a great success as everyone participated.

One thing I may bring back from Vienna is the belief that if we keep listening to each other, one day we will succeed in ending homelessness.



Mike in Vienna with members of the FEANTSA Participation Working Group

Dublin Simon Community SPEAKOUT

A Speakout is a place where all the clients or service users along with the staff and managers are invited to participate in debates and group discussions concerning issues related to homelessness and homeless services. A panel of external guest speakers are also invited who are from different government bodies, to answer questions and also to give insights about plans and actions that take place to address the problems.

Members of Client Action Group (CAG) organised and ran this Speakout which was held on April 22nd. We were divided into sub groups and each group had responsibility in different areas, in order for the event to be delivered successfully and to make sure everything was under control.

The topic for this Speakout was Rent Allowance and the title for the event was **"Opening Doors or Closing Doors?"** There was a good turnout; around 70 to 80 people were present along with local councillors. On arrival, each person was registered and given a coloured label with their name on it. We were then divided into groups; with each group having people of the same coloured labels.

Audio clips telling different stories were played and a group of volunteers dressed in black wore masks and walked across the floor, holding a few sign posters which had captions of issues in relation to homelessness. Later a different situation was given to each group on rent issues, on the main challenges faced by people. The group had a discussion and gave ideas for solutions and steps that need to be taken to resolve the problems. These smaller groups were facilitated by CAG members. The questions arising from the discussions and the situations were put to the panel of Councillors who responded according to their jobs, knowledge and ability.

Some of the answers and solutions given by the panel of Councillors were as follows:

The rent cap should be looked into and we should definitely look into issues concerning people with disabilities.

A line was read from the housing policy which was **"Committed to making rent sector attractive to all."**

One final solution was voiced - Provide more social housing.

There was also a **"Talking Wall"** where people were free to write their thoughts and express their views and opinions.

The day ended with a few raffle prizes being given out and also everybody was provided with food and refreshments for dinner. The event was a great success.



My Grandmother's House

I used to go to my Grandmother's house for my summer holidays. It was the most wonderful time of my life. My Gran used to bring me to the farm up the road to get milk and homemade butter. We would stop at the pump at the side of the road to get water. When we got home my Gran would give me some fresh scones with butter and blackcurrant jam. I can still remember the smell of the freshly baked scones and the taste of butter and jam.



My grandfather had his garden. He used to grow lots of fruit and vegetables. He grew strawberries, raspberries, blackcurrants, onions, lettuce and potatoes. We used to go with him to the bog to get turf. My Grandfather had an ass called Jack who was very stubborn. Sometimes Jack would not move at all. I would sit on top of the cart of turf on our way home and we would stop on the railway bridge and watch the train go by.

My Gran and I sat in front of the open fire in the evenings and she would tell me ghost stories. On Sunday morning I went to Mass with my Grandparents. On the way home we would stop and go into the fields to gather mushrooms. When we got home, Gran cooked the breakfast. The smell went all over the house. I will never forget that wonderful smell.

Chris Walsh

Getting Over It/Life Goes On

Life is full of ups and downs, especially now with the financial state we are in. Hospitals are closing some wards, wage cuts, bill hikes. Nothing seems to be going right and there are more people depressed now than ever before, and they do not know what to do. Can we be down and always thinking of the worst and wait for it to happen? Some of us might be able to do something for ourselves and to help others think a bit more and maybe able to help others who need a bit of a push. OK there are times you feel down, but so is the next guy, so you have to get up and do what you can, see what you can do to help. Have some positive thinking, and it may not seem that bad. Also, we can have our dreams and hopes.

Francis Sal

Is Forever Forever?

As I said in some of my other stories, I get stories from listening to music and song. Some time ago I was listening to a song by R. Van Hoy "Forever is Forever". Is forever forever? Or how long is forever? Should one plan for the forever or just plod along and hope for the best and that things will work out? There may be some people that just plod along. On the other hand, you get the person that just has to do things almost right away and do it perfectly. You also get the one that panics if the smallest things go wrong. As I sit here and think, if forever was everlasting, eternally, what would we do? Would we change things or just hang in and carry on?

What would you do?



Francis Sal

Writers and Artists Corner

The Small and Big Things in Life

In life we don't realise what we've got until it gone
We wait too long to say I am sorry, I was wrong
Like, we just hurt the ones we carry closest in our hearts
We let the stupidest things ruin our lives
We let the unimportant things in our heads take over
And mainly it's too late to see what's made us blind
Make sure that you let your loved ones know
On time, what they mean to you
Take your time to let them know
Before your time is over
Before it is too late!
Be grateful with what you've got
The smallest things could mean the most

Sa.Baas

She's Only Gone

At last her gallant soul took flight
Into the land where there is no night
But her name's carved in our hearts to stay
As we think of the things that she used to say
So she is not dead, she is only gone on
Into the brighter, more wonderful dawn!
For people like her were not born to die
But, like the sun that shines in the sky
They warm the earth and the hearts of men
And in happy remembrance, they live again
So while she sleeps and her voice is still
Her spirit goes on and it always will

ML

Bright Lights in my Heart

There are two lights in my heart
 One is my blue light, it shines so bright
 The other is my pink light it also shines so bright
 These lights will never stop shining. They are part of me
 When I am gone and no more, my light will still shine brightly in their hearts
 What is in the heart will never leave the heart
 So my blue and pink lights will shine forever
 My blue light is my son and my pink light is my daughter

Chris Walsh

Writers and Artists Corner

Dependency

We must hold the hand of the one in need,
 of the one who has fallen into the darkness
 of dependency, perhaps without ever knowing how.
 And we must say to him or her

You can get up

You can stand up

It is difficult, but it is possible if you want to.

Shelly

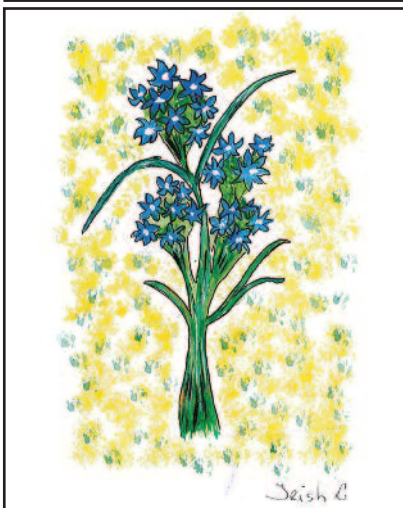
Last Night

From the ashes in the grate,
 I see another chore doing.
 From last night's ember now spent,
 All eternity's warmth from my little fire.

The chore's the cleaning,
 And last night's memory's gleaning.
 Show me the other – new day's beginnings,
 And this all from only spent ashes...

Tonight's fire – warmer for the last night's,
 With memories to amuse with,
 Tonight's warmth for an eternity and more,
 Prudence to keep the chill at the door.

Domhnall Bruic.



IF WE CAN DO IT – YOU CAN DO IT RECIPES

Chicken Pasta Bake



200g pasta cooked according to pack instructions and drained

100g **cooked** chicken, chopped

100g tinned or frozen peas

100g tinned or frozen sweetcorn

1-2 tsp dried or fresh parsley (optional)

250ml white sauce (if you don't want to make your own use a jar or a packet)

Grated cheese for topping

Method

- Simply mix all the ingredients together, put into an oven-proof dish and sprinkle with the grated cheese. Cook for about 30 minutes at 180 C/Gas 4. Easy and delicious!

Melted Chocolate Sundae



1 x 100g dark chocolate broken into chunks

1 x 100g bar white chocolate broken into chunks

2 x scoops of your favorite ice cream (per person)

Sliced banana

Whipped cream to serve

Method

- Place a heat proof bowl over a saucepan of boiling water, making sure the bottom of the bowl is not touching the water. Place in the chocolate chunks until they melt, stir occasionally.
- Put the ice cream into a bowl and add the banana slices and when the chocolate is melted, pour over followed by the whipped cream. This recipe will make enough chocolate sauce for 4 servings.

Simon Voices Needs You!

We want to hear from you. Please send your personal stories, opinions, poems, pictures or news to Catri O'Kane, Simon Communities of Ireland, St Andrew's House, 28 – 30 Exchequer Street, Dublin 2 or email to catri.okane@simoncommunity.com If we publish your entry we will send you €10.00 phone credit (any network) as a small thank you. This does not apply to SIAG members.

We may not be able to publish everything we receive. Thank you to everybody who has sent in a contribution.

Competition



Be in with a chance to win a €50 voucher! Can you work out who or what the riddle below is about?

My first is the first of first

My last is the first of the last

My middle is the double of middle of you

If you think you know the answer contact - **Simon Action and Involvement Group c/o Catri O'Kane Simon Communities of Ireland, St. Andrews House, 28 – 30 Exchequer Street, Dublin 2.**

Or text your answer to **0877993860**

Or email catri.okane@simoncommunity.com

Closing date: 31st October 2014