



Simon Communities' 3 Common Sense Solutions

To ensure homes are delivered quickly and adequate services are put in place

1. Increase housing – and the right kinds of housing

More housing – and right kinds of housing – must be made available for people who are on the brink of homelessness and those who are already homeless. These must be in areas where other support services are readily accessible. This is crucial for an effective 'housing led approach' to ending homelessness.

2. Provide adequate support services

Ireland must also tackle the issues that often cause or accompany homelessness. These include low income, debt burden, poor health and wellbeing, loneliness and isolation, problematic drug and/or alcohol use, and unemployment. Ensuring the availability of the right support services can help people move out of homelessness and also prevent homelessness.

3. Prevent homelessness before it happens

Once a person falls into homelessness it can be a very difficult journey back to stability. Proven and cost-effective prevention can avert homelessness and support households in danger of becoming homeless.

1. Increase housing – and the right kinds of housing

1.1 Social Housing and Homeless Budgets

- The Department of the Environment's budget must be increased to cope with the rise in demand for housing must be increased by at least €250 million in Budget 2015.
- A proportion of social housing allocations must be ring-fenced for people moving out of homelessness.

1.2 Rent Assistance

- A review of rent supplement limits must be carried out immediately and rent supplement brought into line with real market rents.
- Provision must be made nationally for higher rent payments under the Rent Supplement Scheme (RSS) and the Housing Assistance Payment (HAP) scheme, to specifically help people moving out of homelessness to secure housing.
- The new Dublin Protocol which helps families at risk of losing their homes must be extended on a nationwide basis.
- Community Welfare Officers (CWO's) must be given clearer guidelines on the use of discretion to help people to exit homelessness and support those at risk.
- Fast track the rollout of the Housing Assistance Payment (HAP) scheme.
- There must be no further increases to the minimum contribution to rent supplement.

1.3 Private Rental Sector

- Tighter legislation is needed to protect those who depend on the private rental sector for decent homes.
- A Deposit Protection Scheme must be set up to safeguard renters' deposits.
- Rent controls need to be applied as a matter of urgency.
- Clear incentives (tax breaks for landlords) must be considered to increase the amount of private rented accommodation on the market.

1.4 NAMA Properties

- The transfer and selection process of NAMA properties for social housing must be fast tracked.
- Local authorities are considering if some NAMA properties offered in 2013 are suitable for a private and social housing mix, with a focus on meeting homeless needs. This is welcome, as long as the housing is appropriate.



Improved early intervention initiatives must be put in place for people who fall into rent arrears with their local authority.

2. Provide adequate support services

2.1 HSE Social Inclusion Budget

- The HSE's 'social inclusion' budget must be restored to 2013 levels if the Government is to achieve its goal of ending long-term homelessness.

2.2 Drug and Alcohol Services

- There must be sufficient support services for people with drug and alcohol problems, including access to treatment pathways nationwide.
- There must be no further cuts to the Drugs Budget or the Drug Initiatives Budget.

2.3 Mental Health

- Community mental health services must continue to develop. The budget for mental health services must be brought back from €20 million to €35 million. The remaining €15 million, which was due in 2014 for mental health, should be restored.

2.4 Education and Training

- The cuts to education and training in Budget 2013 must be reversed. When people take up these courses, they shouldn't end up financially worse off for doing so.

3. Prevent homelessness before it happens

3.1 Prevention and Early Intervention

- More funding must be provided for information and advice services for households struggling to pay bills and remain in their homes.
- Improved early intervention initiatives must be put in place for people who fall into rent arrears with their local authority.
- Reasonable case-by-case measures must be put in place for people at risk of eviction because of anti-social behaviour.

3.2 Social Protection Budget

- The social protection budget must be restored to 2013 levels if the Government is to achieve its goal of ending long-term homelessness.

3.3 Basic Social Welfare Payments

- Basic welfare payments must be increased in line with cost-of-living so people are not exposed to greater hardship.
- The length of time a person can remain on Jobseeker's Benefit must be reversed back to 12 months in duration.
- Supplementary Welfare Allowance must be realigned to basic social welfare payments.

3.4 Age Related Social Welfare

- Cuts to welfare payments for young people, especially those who are vulnerable, must be reversed in Budget 2015.
- Discretion must be applied in the cases of people who are under 25 who are at risk of homelessness. Not all young people can rely on family or remain in the family home.

The Simon Communities in Ireland



The Simon Communities in Ireland are a network of eight regionally based independent Simon Communities that share common values and ethos in tackling all forms of homelessness throughout Ireland supported by a National Office.

The Simon Communities in Cork, Dublin, Dundalk, Galway, the Midlands, Midwest, Northwest and Southeast are uniquely placed to mobilise local support and respond effectively to homelessness issues in each region – local responses to local issues using local resources.

The Simon Communities are independently resourced and governed. We work collectively through a national Office to conduct valuable research, inform and influence national policy, best practice and raise public awareness of the common issues affecting people who are homeless in Ireland.

The Simon Communities have been providing services in Ireland for over 40 years. In 2013 we worked with over 5,000 people, including families, in both tackling and preventing homelessness.

Whatever the issue, for as long as we are needed, Simon's door is always open.

Services range from

- Housing provision, tenancy sustainment & settlement services, housing advice & information services helping people to make the move out of homelessness & working with households at risk;
- Specialist health & treatment services addressing some of the issues which may have contributed to homeless occurring or may be a consequence;
- Emergency accommodation & support providing people with a place of welcome, warmth & safety;
- Soup runs & rough sleeper teams who are often the first point of contact for people sleeping rough.

For further information contact

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