



# Annual Report 2019



[www.simon.ie](http://www.simon.ie)

**Support by**



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# About Simon Communities

**The Simon Communities support over 18,000 men, women and children. We have 50 years of experience providing homeless, housing and treatment services to people facing the trauma and stress of homelessness.**

We are a network of independent Communities based in Cork, Dublin, Dundalk, Galway, the Midlands, the Mid West, the North West and the South East, responding to local needs and supported by a National Office in the areas of policy, research, communications and best practice. We share common values and ethos in tackling homelessness and, informed by our grassroots services, we campaign for more effective policies and legislation regionally, nationally and at European level. Whatever the issue, Simon's door is always open for as long as we are needed. For more information, please visit

[www.simon.ie](http://www.simon.ie)



## Services include

- Homelessness prevention, tenancy sustainment and resettlement.
- Street outreach, emergency accommodation and harm reduction.
- Housing with support and Housing First services.
- Homeless specific health and wellbeing services (counselling; addiction treatment and recovery; and mental health supports).
- Personal development, education, training and employment services.
- Foodbanks, drop-in centres and soup runs.

# A Message from Our Chairperson

**Karen Golden** Chairperson, Simon Communities



The Simon Communities across Ireland supported 18,087 people experiencing or at risk of homelessness throughout 2019, an increase on the 16,700 people supported in 2018. This Annual Report demonstrates the very significant impact of the work of the Simon Communities, as the housing and homelessness crises continued to deepen across the country in 2019.

In 1969 when the first Simon volunteers began providing much-needed soup and sandwiches to people who were sleeping rough in Dublin city centre. It would have been impossible for those early volunteers to foresee the scale of homelessness in Ireland, as we marked fifty years of tackling homelessness in 2019.

Throughout the year, staff and volunteers across the Communities responded to the increasing number of people looking for help. They supported people facing homelessness, whatever their situation, with care and compassion. The Communities provided prevention services, soup runs and street

outreach, emergency accommodation, housing first services, supported accommodation, transitional and longer term housing options. Health and well being supports included addiction and counselling services for clients with more complex needs. Training and employment supports enabled people to integrate into education and workplace environments. We work across cities, towns and rural areas and provide targeted supports for men, women, young adults and families.

The team at the Simon Communities of Ireland national office continued to campaign strongly for a commitment to ending homelessness in Ireland, in a year in which official figures showed that the numbers of people in emergency accommodation reached a record high of over 10,515 adults and children.

Increases in the number of people experiencing homelessness in 2019 continued to be driven by an insufficient supply of housing, and a lack of affordability and security in the private rental market. Rent increases, evictions and the shortage of secure affordable housing options were key causes of homelessness for too many individuals and families.





We believe that with the right prevention policies and tailored supports, we can live in a country where homelessness is rare and when it does occur it is for a short period of time. In 2019 we continued to campaign for better public policies to address the homelessness crisis. At its core, the solution to the homelessness crisis is more homes. We have campaigned for an ambitious programme for social housing building, as well as reforms to the private rental market and welfare payments as immediate homelessness prevention measures.

We provide and campaign for the provision of other crucial services for people experiencing homelessness. These include specialised healthcare services, mental health and wellbeing supports, education, training and social supports.

Each day our clients demonstrate immense courage and fortitude in the face of the trauma and isolation that homelessness, or the threat of homelessness, brings. We pay tribute to their determination to keep moving forward.

I want to thank the frontline staff and volunteers of each of the Simon Communities across Ireland, for their deep commitment to supporting people facing homelessness. Their dedication and expertise have helped many individuals and families move on in their lives to a more secure future.

I also wish to thank the team who work in the Simon Communities of Ireland national office, who undertake crucial advocacy, policy and research work, and campaign to ensure that implementing policies to address and resolve the homelessness crisis in Ireland is a priority for Government.

We are very grateful for the support we receive from statutory funders and our many donors and supporters across the country, without whom we could not do the work that we do. This support means that Simon's door will remain always open, for as long as it's needed.

**Karen Golden**

CHAIRPERSON, SIMON COMMUNITIES

# Looking Back on 2019

**Wayne Stanley** National Spokesperson



2019 was the year in which the numbers of individuals in emergency accommodation in Ireland reached record levels, at over 10,500 people. The transformative nature of 2020 pandemic in all of our lives and all sectors of society means reflecting on 2019 can feel like looking back at a different era. However, we can learn a lot about our current challenges by understanding what the conditions were before the current crisis. The homelessness crisis in 2019 continued unabated.

This year's pandemic demonstrated how fragile the situation was, and just how at risk thousands of people would be crowded in emergency and temporary accommodation. The failures to tackle the crisis in 2019 and the years preceding it meant that the task set in 2020 to protect people experiencing homelessness from the public health threat was all the more daunting. I am in awe of my colleagues in Simon services across the country for what they have achieved in both contexts.

The main driver of homelessness in 2019 continued to be the lack of secure, affordable accommodation. Our Locked Out of the Market research series demonstrated throughout 2019 that there is a chronic lack of affordable accommodation across Ireland. The series measures the number of private rental properties available within standard and discretionary Housing Assistance Payment (HAP) rates, and found in 2019 that HAP payments offer a very limited protection for those at risk of becoming homeless, given the chronic lack of supply within HAP rates.

The essential long-term solution to homelessness in Ireland is a sufficient supply of social and affordable housing to meet the needs of the population. While social house building continued to grow in 2019, it remained far off the pace necessary to meet demand and end homelessness. 5,771 new social houses were built in 2019, and an additional 2,772 social houses were acquired nationally. This is far off the 15,000 new social houses that the annual housing needs assessments of local authorities show us, are required annually to meet demand.





In our policy submissions in 2019 we continued to put forward practical solutions to ending homelessness. In our pre-budget submission, we called for ramping up of housing provision, including providing budget for cost-rental homes and Housing First. Recognising the trauma and mental health toll that homelessness can have on individuals, we called on Government to increase non-capital mental health spending, including homelessness-specific mental health services, and that the National Drugs Strategy be implemented immediately.

It is widely recognised that the number of people in emergency accommodation represents a narrow count of the scale of homelessness in Ireland. Clients experiencing hidden homelessness continues to be a persistent and emerging feature of the work that the Simon Communities do, and in policy terms we called in 2019 for research to be commissioned to understand the scale of hidden homelessness across the country.

As part of Simon Week 2019, we commissioned Amarach Research to survey 1,000 people to get a sense of the potential level of hidden homelessness in Ireland. Respondents were asked if in the last 12 months they had known a family or individuals who was forced to stay

with family or friends because they did not have a tenancy of their own. Incredibly almost 1 in 3 said they had. This set out in stark terms the scale of the task that is in front of us and that structural change to our housing systems to introduce more security and affordability is required. Clearly there is no quick fix and we require substantive and sustained political ambition but ending homelessness is possible.

The support we have from the public for our campaigns continues to demonstrate that people remain outraged and dismayed by the ongoing humanitarian crisis on our streets, in hostels, hotels and BnBs across the country. We take hope and courage from the support we receive from the public to continue to campaign and push for the necessary policies to end this crisis, and ensure everyone in Ireland can live in dignity in a secure and safe home. Until then, the Simon Communities across Ireland will continue to provide the support necessary to the thousands of people who knock on our door for help.



**Wayne Stanley**

NATIONAL SPOKESPERSON



# Key Moments 2019

## RIAI Simon Open Door

The sixteenth RIAI Simon Open Door took place in May 2019. This national fundraising campaign, a partnership between the Royal Institute of Architects of Ireland (RIAI) and the Simon Communities of Ireland, saw RIAI architects donate their time and expertise by offering an hour long consultation to members of the public, who in turn make a donation to the Simon Community.

## The Right to Housing

Simon Communities of Ireland continued to campaign to secure a referendum to insert a right to a home into the constitution. Simon is a founding member of Home for Good, a coalition brought together to campaign on this issue.





## Locked Out of the Market

We continued our research into the gaps between Housing Assistance Payment limits and market rates around the country in 2019 with our Locked Out of the Market series of reports.

The report series looks at the current state of Ireland's rental market in terms of supply of affordable accommodation.

We published four Locked Out reports in 2019.

## Simon Week Conference 2019

Our Simon Week conference in 2019 was opened by Minister for Housing Eoghan Murphy TD. The conference looked at the need for innovative multidisciplinary thinking required to address the housing and homelessness crisis.

The keynote speaker was Michael O'Leary, author of 'The Levelling.' Speakers included Orla Hegarty of UCD, Professor Sheila Killian of UL and Vasileios Madouros of the Central Bank of Ireland.



# Snapshot of the Services provided in 2019 by the Simon Communities

During 2019, local Simon Communities worked with

A total of **18,087** people



Including **4,331** families



with **6,406** children

Emergency accommodation, rough sleeper teams, foodbanks, drop-in centres and soup runs are often the first point of contact for people

**1,765**



people accessed emergency accommodation provided by the Simon Communities over the year.

**20,255**



contacts with soup runs in Cork and Dublin throughout the year.

**7,345**



people accessed food bank services in the Midwest.

**338**

emergency accommodation beds provided **116,000** bed nights throughout the year.

## Specialist treatment and support services addressing some of the issues which may have contributed to homelessness occurring or may be a consequence of homelessness

Specialist treatment and support services was provided in

**2,374** cases in 2019, with some people accessing treatment more than once.



### RECOVERY

Our treatment and support services include drugs and alcohol treatment, counselling, and GP services.

**2,193** needle exchange contacts in Dublin, with **79** people using needle exchange services in Cork and Midwest.



# Snapshot of the Services provided in 2019 by the Simon Communities

## Prevention, early intervention and advice services

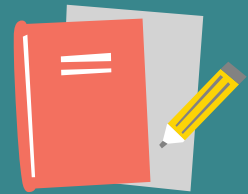
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Prevention, early intervention and advice services were accessed in

**2,694** cases, with some people accessing services more than once.



## Education, Training and Employment Services



**846**

people accessed Education, Training and Employment Services provided directly by the Simon Communities. Education and training included computer skills, arts & crafts and literacy skills.

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**All of our Communities also offer referral to external education, training and employment services.**

## Housing and Housing First services helped people make the move out of homelessness

**5,010** people were supported with tenancies and housing all around the country in 2019 with low, medium or high support, depending on need.



**1,282** people were supported in Simon Housing.



## Supporting the work of our Communities

**1,647** volunteers supported the work of their local Simon Community.



**10** Simon shops around Ireland generated much needed income for Simon Community services.



**We thank everyone who supports our shops.**

# Policy, Research & Communications

The Simon Communities of Ireland engages in evidence-based policy work to put forward solutions to the homelessness crisis, and improve public policy in the area. We seek to influence Government and other key decision makers in welfare, homeless, housing, addiction and mental health policy.

Through stakeholder engagement, participation in meetings and interagency groups, policy submissions and responses to public consultations, we aim to put forward evidence-based solutions to influence the policy environment around homelessness. We also undertake and commission research, to support and underpin our policy positions with evidence, both qualitative and quantitative.

In 2019, the Simon Communities of Ireland were represented in major national policy fora and at key stakeholder meetings, including the National Homeless Consultative Committee (NHCC), and bilateral meetings with the Department of Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government.

Throughout the year, we participated in a range of partnerships and networks with other organisations that share our aims including the Children's Rights Alliance, Community and Voluntary Pillar, the European Anti-Poverty Network and Mental Health Reform, and the Irish Council for Social Housing. We also continued as active members of the European Federation of National Organisations Working with the Homeless (FEANTSA).

In 2019 we continued to shine a public spotlight on homeless issues through our communications and media work. We raised our policy solutions through media appearances and engagement, and sought to keep homelessness as a priority issue for the public, particularly with the political system moving towards a general election footing in the latter half of the year.

We reached a large national audience in the media over the course of the year, and continued to grow our strong presence on social media, particularly twitter and facebook. The role of National Spokesperson is supported from within the National Office, speaking on behalf of all eight Simon Communities on national policy and strategy matters.





## Simon Week 2019

Our annual week of campaigning and awareness raising – Simon Week – took place in October 2019, and involved a wide range of activities and events at a national and local level. In 2019 the theme was ‘Ending homelessness’. Thousands of men, women and children are homeless or in fear of losing their home.

The Simon Communities campaign sought to raise awareness, of the public and the political system, of the scale of the challenge and the solutions. Our national seminar, ‘Ending Homelessness’ also took place as part of Simon Week 2019, and featured a range of expert speakers giving their perspectives on potential solutions to the crisis.

We also used the occasion to launch our Pre-Budget Submission for Budget 2020.

## Right to Housing

Part of the Simon Communities’ core philosophy is a commitment to the right to housing – the belief that everyone is entitled to live in secure and adequate accommodation, regardless of their background or circumstances.

In 2019, we continued our close collaboration with colleagues to build a campaign to secure political commitment for a referendum to insert a right to housing in the constitution.

The work has led to a number of organisations, academics and advocates coming together to form Home for Good, a coalition to secure a referendum on a right to a housing. The Right to Housing will remain a crucial part of the National Office’s policy and campaigning work in future.



# National Fundraising

The Simon Communities can only continue to make such a difference to the lives of those who are homeless or at risk of homelessness through the generosity of individuals and companies throughout Ireland. Without our committed supporters, we would not be in a position to continue providing vital services across the country. 2019 was no different and we would like to thank all our donors and volunteers who have helped in whatever way they could to support the work of Simon.

The Simon Communities of Ireland are fully committed to achieving the standards contained within the ICTR Statement of Guiding Principles for Fundraising. We welcome your queries and feedback via any of the contact points provided. Your help means we will work together to address the reality of what people are facing, move more people out of

homelessness, ensure prevention measures are in place to keep people in their own homes and provide ongoing support to ensure that they are sustained.

We rely on the assistance of corporate supporters and partners in a wide range of areas. 2019 was an exciting year for the Communities across Ireland, with local and national partnerships supporting us both financially and through events and volunteering.

We hope this wonderful support can continue in the future as we work through the challenges we face today. In particular, we would like to thank:



## RIAI Simon Open Door in association with the Royal Institute of Architects of Ireland (RIAI)

In May 2019, the Simon Communities of Ireland and the Royal Institute of Architects of Ireland held the sixteenth annual RIAI Simon Open Door campaign. Certified RIAI architects donate their time and expertise by offering an hour-long consultation to members of the public, who in turn donate €95 to the Simon Community. More than 1,400 consultations were held across the country raising over €140,000. We would like to thank the RIAI and their members for their continued support and commitment to the Simon Communities across Ireland.

## SSE Airtricity

The Simon Communities of Ireland and SSE Airtricity began a three-year partnership in 2019. SSE Airtricity employees took part in a number of fundraising activities throughout the year, including a Sleepout in December. We would like to thank all involved for raising vital funds to support our work and look forward to continuing this partnership.

## The Freemasons of Ireland

2019 saw the beginning of a partnership between the Simon Communities of Ireland and The Grand Lodge of Ireland as part of their Vision2020 festival of fundraising activities for their chosen charity partners. This partnership has been a great success so far with a number of events held and we wish to thank the Freemasons of Ireland for their ongoing support.

## Rough Set Ireland Fundraiser

From the 18th - 25th of December, 2019 comedian Francis Cronin set out on a 240 kilometre walk from Galway to Dublin, finishing at the Forty Foot on Christmas morning.

Fundraising and entertaining throughout his journey Francis raised a wonderful total of €18,000 for the Simon Communities of Ireland. We want to thank Francis and all those who supported him along the way.

# Financial Overview

In 2019 the Simon Communities of Ireland generated income of €989,130. This compared to income of €2,435,273 in 2018. Donations from the general public and from our corporate partners accounted for the majority of our income (87%). It would be impossible for us to continue the work that we do without such generous support.

In June 2016 a Pobal Grant funded by the Department of Rural and Community Development was awarded to the Simon Communities of Ireland through the Scheme to Support National Organisations 2016 to 2019. This funding is restricted to support a percentage of the salary and overhead costs of two posts Best Practice and Training Coordinator and Head of Policy and Communications.

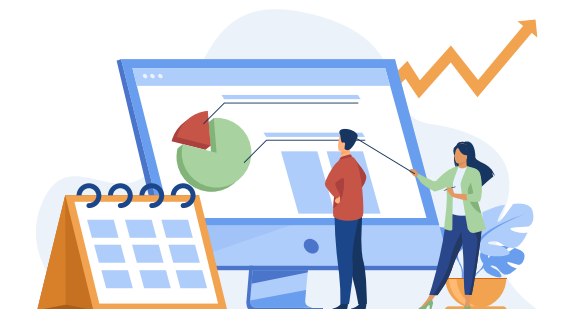
In June 2019 a new grant was awarded by Pobal, funded by the Department of Rural and Community Development was awarded through the Scheme to Support National Organisations 2019 to 2022. The amount of grant awarded was €238,538 for the term 1st

July 2019 to 30th June 2022. This funding is restricted to support a percentage of the salary and overhead costs of two posts; Policy Officer and Head of Policy and Communications. Total grants advanced from Pobal during the year ended 31st December 2019 and recognised in the financial statements for 2019 is €64,559 (2018: €89,869).

No capital grants were received from Pobal and SCI is fully tax compliant as per the relevant grant circulars.

Expenditure in 2019 was €987,280 which was down from €2,592,971 in 2018. Included in this expenditure were fundraising costs of €62,735 and €556,490 dispersed to affiliate Simon Communities to support their operational costs. This created a net surplus for the year on the income and expenditure account of €1,850, (2018 Net outgoing (€157,689)).

In 2019 no staff member received salaries of more than €60,000. Pension contributions made by the organisation in 2019 amounted to €854 (2018 €9,541).



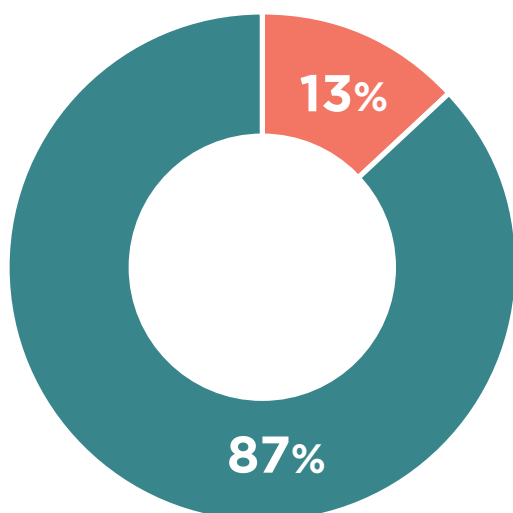
The Simon Communities of Ireland is committed to openness and transparency both within the organisation and externally with donors, funders, supporters and the public. The Board have signed up to the *Governance Code for Voluntary Organisations*. The annual financial statements are prepared in accordance with the Companies Act 2014 and FRS 102. In addition, the Simon Communities of Ireland adheres to the Statement of Guiding

Principles for Fundraising and is registered with Charity Regulatory Authority.

The Simon Communities of Ireland accounts are audited by JPA Brenson Lawlor each year and the financial year runs from 1 January to 31 December.

The following extracts are taken from the audited accounts for the year ending 31 December 2019.

## 2019 Income

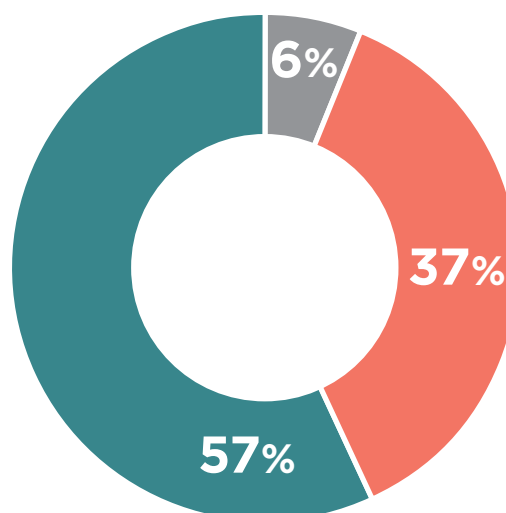


87% - Fundraising & Operational Activities **€864,411**

13% - Grants **€124,719**

**Total Income €989,130**

## 2019 Expenditure



Programmes & Activities Affiliated Simon Communities **€556,590**

Programmes & Activities SCI **€368,055**

Fundraising **€62,735**

**Total Expenditure €987,280**

**Net Outgoing €1,850**

# How you can help

The invaluable work the Simon Communities do is only possible through the generosity of the public and our corporate supporters. If you would like to help tackle homelessness in Ireland, there are a number of ways that you can do so.

## Donate Online

Visit [www.simon.ie](http://www.simon.ie)



## Send us a donation by Post

Donations can be sent to:

**Simon Communities of Ireland,**  
St. Andrew's House,  
28-30 Exchequer Street,  
Dublin 2

*(Please do not send cash in the post).*



## Donate over the Phone

Using a Credit or Debit Card call our fundraising team on **01 671 1606** with your card details and your transaction will be handled in strictest confidence.



## Leave Simon a Legacy



A legacy is a lasting gift that will ensure Simon can continue working toward a society where no one is homeless or at risk of becoming homeless.

For further details on how to name the Simon Communities of Ireland as a beneficiary in your will, contact the Fundraising Team on **01 671 1606** or email [laurafinn@simoncommunity.com](mailto:laurafinn@simoncommunity.com)

## National Corporate Partnerships



The Simon Communities of Ireland work with a number of corporate partners and there are many ways your company can help and get involved.

For queries on how to partner with us please contact Jennifer on **01 671 1606** to discuss tailoring projects and initiatives to match your company's interests and objectives. Alternatively, email [jenniferkitson@simoncommunity.com](mailto:jenniferkitson@simoncommunity.com)

## Tax Effective Giving



If you are a PAYE or self-assessed tax payer and have donated €250 or more in the course of the tax year or in previous years, Simon can reclaim the tax paid on your donations.

Simon can claim for self-assessed tax payers who have made donations of €250 or more.

Donations from companies qualify the donor for tax relief.

**St. Andrews House**  
**28-30 Exchequer Street**  
**Dublin 2**

**01 671 1606**  
**communications@simoncommunity.com**

**www.simon.ie**

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