



ANNUAL REPORT 2020



www.simon.ie



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About Simon Communities

The Simon Communities support over 24,000 men, women and children. We have over 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 a European level.

Whatever the issue, Simon's door is always open for as long as we are needed. For more information, please log on to: **www.simon.ie**





Our 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

**The Scheme to Support National Organisations
is funded by the Government of Ireland
through the Department of Rural and
Community Development**



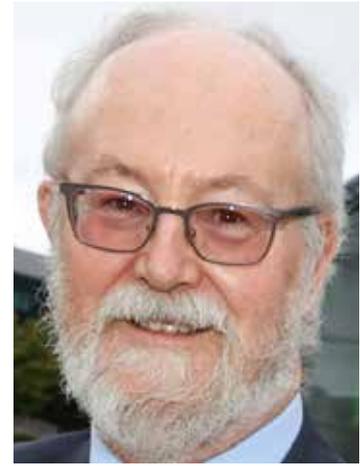
Rialtas na hÉireann
Government of Ireland



A Message from Our Chair

Mick Price

Chairperson, Simon Communities



It was my privilege to take up the role of Chair of SCI upon the retirement of Karen Golden at the end of 2020. I want to thank Karen for her extraordinary contribution to the Simon Communities of Ireland (SCI) on behalf of all the communities and particularly on behalf of our clients.

Throughout 2020, the COVID 19 pandemic took a terrible toll at home and abroad. Most of us had to spend a great deal of time at home, which I think drew attention to the importance of having a home and highlighted the very real challenges and trauma faced by people who don't. People who were homeless or at risk of homelessness were among the most vulnerable during COVID-19 and I am proud that the National Office and the Simon Communities across the country reacted very effectively to the challenge of providing a full range of essential services during this time. The organisations worked in collaboration with the State and other partners.



I want to recognise the work of the HSE, the Dublin Regional Homeless Executive, County and City Councils, Voluntary and Community organisations for the way they responded to the pandemic. This response was manifested by the provision they made in terms of accommodation and support for those who are homeless or are impacted by substance use or mental health issues. The level of inter-agency cooperation and engagement has been exceptional and I want to thank each and every one of the SCI team and the individual communities' staff for facilitating this necessary approach to unprecedented crisis.

Contrary to popular beliefs, homelessness is not confined to our cities and urban centres. The importance of offering services to people in their locality, or region where they may have existing social networks and supports, has become increasingly clear. There are eight Communities throughout the state who are offering these localised services: Cork, Dublin, Dundalk, Galway, Midlands, Mid-West, North-West and South East. The services offered by these Simon communities include: - Emergency shelters, Outreach, Day-centres and ancillary support, Drug/alcohol treatment and support, Transitional accommodation and long-term supported housing, Tenancy sustainment and settlement services, Training and employment projects.



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. Research and advocacy remain significant pillars of the work on behalf of our clients.

Homelessness often begins long before the loss of a physical structure occurs. The inclusivity, community spirit and kindness that re-emerged in Society during the COVID-19 pandemic must remain the driving force behind a broader vision of care to be provided for those in need as we go forward.

To all our donors, whether statutory, corporate, or personal, we extend our heartfelt thanks. Due to your extraordinary generosity, many lives have been saved and many others improved through these most challenging times.

With your support, we in Simon will continue to offer practical solutions to ending homelessness and to be creative and innovative in responding to needs as they arise. By matching our commitment, the Government can ensure that the vision we both share, of ending rough sleeping and long-term homelessness, is realistic and achievable.

Looking to the future, SCI undertook a Board and Executive structure review, broadened our Board membership and have commenced a forensic Strategic Plan. This process will support our organisation in achieving a high standard of excellence in our delivery to and on behalf of our clients.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank my fellow members of the Board for their time, expertise and guidance in supporting the work of the Simon Communities of Ireland throughout the year. The staff of the National Office and the local Communities deserve our thanks and praise for the highly skilled and dedicated manner in which they perform their roles. In addition, the enormous generosity of our volunteers is greatly appreciated and is at the heart of all we do at Simon.

Finally, but most importantly, I want to thank the people who use Simon services throughout the State. The fact that people turn to us at such a vulnerable point in their lives is incredibly humbling and reinforces our faith in the high quality of the services we provide. We strive at all times to do justice to the faith you place in us.

Mick Price

CHAIRPERSON, SIMON COMMUNITIES

Looking Back on 2020

A year that changed the landscape of housing in Ireland.



It has been said many times but bears repeating that, 2020 was an extraordinary year. It started with the general election dominated by the homeless and housing crisis. I wrote days before polling, that the next government would need to show ambition in rethinking our housing system to serve the common good. Six weeks later, the government did exactly that due to the pandemic- at least for the short-term.

In March 2020, with the introduction of the moratorium of evictions and rent increases and the mobilisation of all stakeholders to keep those experiencing homelessness as safe as possible, we saw the start of a rapid decrease in the numbers of people in homeless emergency accommodation. Falling from 9,907 in March to 8,699 three months later (June), and falling again to 8,200 by December.

That success is all the more extraordinary when we reflect back on the context. The fears that frontline services had for the welfare of our clients is difficult to put into words here but perhaps not so difficult to imagine for those of us with vulnerable loved ones. These concerns were overcome, due to the fortitude of our clients and the extraordinary commitment of

my colleagues in Simon services across Ireland, in the homeless sector more broadly, local authorities, HSE and Department of Housing. Simon Communities of Ireland could not be prouder to work with them.

After the first few months, it became clear that something positive was happening. The reduction in homelessness was due to a combination of, more opportunities to move on from homelessness, and fewer people being pushed into homeless. The factors driving this positive change were structural. The collapse of the short-term rental market, together with local authorities allocating more housing stock for people stuck in emergency accommodation resulted in more people exiting homelessness. The preventative impact of the moratorium on evictions slowed the flow of people, particularly families into homelessness.

We were eager to capture what was happening and ensure that some good came from this experience. To this end, we continued our locked out reports, and produced two additional reports to try and capture the extent of the impact of the short-term lets phenomena. We also commissioned Professor Joe Finnerty and his colleagues in UCC to undertake 3 studies to review how the Simon communities responded to COVID in partnership with HSE, local authorities and others.



During Simon Week in October we launched our Stop Homelessness Before it Starts Campaign, seeking a comprehensive preventative strategy from government that could build on the successful ending of homelessness for so many people during the pandemic. Supporters of Simon rallied to the cause and while I have to commend the Minister and his team in the Department of Housing for the level of engagement with our campaign, we still have a huge amount of work to do to deliver on the potential for success in addressing homelessness.

During this time outside Ireland there was also a new momentum growing to address homelessness. Colleagues in FEANTSA the European Federation of Homeless Service providers working with the Portuguese Presidency of the Council of the EU and the European Commission began to work on what would become the Lisbon Declaration on Homelessness. The declaration set a target of ending homelessness by 2030 and committed to establishing the European Platform for Combatting homelessness. On behalf of the Simon Communities and the other Irish members I serve as Vice President of FEANTSA and I was very proud to contribute to the development of the declaration and the Platform.

All that said, the main driver of homelessness at the end of 2020, as in 2019 continued to be the severe shortage of secure, affordable housing. 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 the work to increase the of social and affordable homes is critical, we must not lose sight of the recent success in homelessness prevention. In fact we have to build upon it. While the work to increase the supply of social and affordable homes, we have to continue to work to Stop Homelessness Before it starts.

Until then, the Simon Communities across Ireland will continue to provide the support necessary to the thousands of people who seek help.

We take hope and courage from the support we receive from the public to continue to campaign and push for the policy change that will help to bring an end to the homeless crisis. Ensuring that everyone in Ireland can live in dignity in a secure and safe home they can afford.

Wayne Stanley

NATIONAL SPOKESPERSON

Key Moments 2020

Simon Week National Conference 2020

The Minister for Housing, Local Government and Heritage, Darragh O'Brien TD launched Simon Week 2020 at a Virtual Conference on the 28th September 2020. The conference launched independent research commissioned by Simon Communities of Ireland into the experiences of frontline service providers during the Covid-19 period.

The research was presented by Professor Joe Finnerty. This was followed by a panel discussion. Speakers at the Conference included: Professor Isobel Anderson (Professor of Housing Studies at the University of Sterling) Professor Nicholas Please (Director for the Centre for Housing at the University of York) and Joan Reinhardt (Galway Simon Community Service Manager), and Joseph Finnerty (UCC Researcher and Lecturer).





Locked Out

We continued our research into the gaps between the Housing Assistance Payment limits and market rates around the country in 2020 with our Locked Out of the Market series of reports. The reports take a regular snapshot look at Ireland’s rental market in terms of the supply of affordable accommodation.

We published four Locked Out reports in 2020, along with two additional short snapshot studies in April and May to assess the initial impact of the pandemic. Over the year, we saw the housing landscape shift dramatically due to the COVID-19 pandemic.



Research

At the Simon Community of Ireland, we undertake and commission research, both qualitative and quantitative, to support and underpin our policy positions with evidence. To this end, in 2020 we commissioned Joe Finnerty and colleagues in UCC to undertake 3 studies to review the response of Simon Communities to COVID in partnership with HSE, local authorities and others.



Snapshot of the Services provided in 2020 by the Simon Communities

During 2020, local Simon Communities worked with

A total of **24,127** people



Including **1,426** families



with **2,416** children

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

1,369

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



110,219

total nights of emergency accommodation was provided.



6,174

contacts were made by our rough sleeper and outreach teams

582 soup runs were provided in Cork.



1,504 people accessed Specialist Treatment and Support Services in 2020. Specialist treatment and support services address some of the issues which may have contributed to homelessness occurring or may be a consequence of homelessness.

1,329 people availed of drug and/or alcohol treatment services, of these:

← RECOVERY



There were **1493** needle exchange contacts.

363 people accessed health specialist services



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 and housing policy, and 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.

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 2020 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 in relation to the general election which took place in February 2020.

We reached a large national audience through 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.

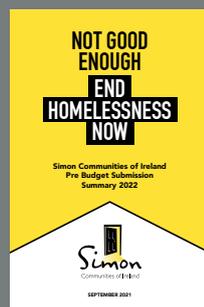


Simon Week 2020

Our Simon Week National Conference took place in September 2020 and involved a wide range of activities and events at a national and local level.

In 2020 the theme was 'Stop Homelessness Before It Starts'. The Simon Communities campaign sought to raise awareness of the homelessness challenge and the importance of homelessness prevention measures. We put forward three key demands to government in order to prevent individuals entering homelessness. Our annual national conference went online and featured a range of expert speakers.

We also used the occasion to launch our Pre-Budget Submission for Budget 2021.



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 2020, 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.



Our Policy Submissions

Ambition for a Programme for Government 2020, March 2020

SCI submitted a post general election document to all TDs outlining our recommendations for the programme for government.

Community Development Approaches to Homelessness, August 2020

This note was provided to Minister for Community Development Joe O'Brien on the potential for use of community development funds for homeless services.

Public Consultation on future Priorities for EU Cohesion Funds in Ireland, September 2020

Response to public consultation on how European Social Fund and European Regional Development Fund should be allocated, SCI focus on leveraging the funds for housing infrastructure.

Submission to Department of Housing Statement of Strategy Consultation, October 2020

SCI made submission to Dept. Housing on their upcoming three-year statement of strategy.

Submission to Department of Social Protection Statement of Strategy Consultation, October 2020

SCI made submission to Dept. Social Protection on their upcoming three-year statement of strategy.

Submission to Action Plan for European Pillar of Social Rights, November 2020

SCI made submission to European Commission on prioritising housing and homelessness in the implementation of the European Pillar of Social Rights.

Pre Budget Submission 2021, September 2020

SCI Made its pre-budget submission to the Department of Housing. A public facing version of this pre-budget was published during Simon Week.



National Fundraising

At the Simon Community of Ireland, we work on tackling the core issues driving homelessness through policy and advocacy work and through our national fundraising partnerships we support the frontline work of the Simon Communities across Ireland.

It is true to say that without the generosity of individuals and companies throughout Ireland Simon would not be able to continue our vital work. We rely on the assistance of corporate supporters and partners in a wide range of areas. 2020 was a very difficult year but we were also received an

outpouring of support from local and national partners who helped us to meet the needs of those experiencing homelessness in a variety of ways; financially, through donations of PPE, by organising events and by volunteering. We hope this wonderful support can continue in the future as we work through the challenges we continue to face.

While we would like to thank all our donors and volunteers who have helped in whatever way they could to support our work. In particular, we would like to recognise the contribution of:

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

In May 2020, the Simon Communities of Ireland and the Royal Institute of Architects of Ireland held the seventeenth 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 €160,000. We would like to thank the RIAI, their members, and everyone who took part for their continued support and commitment to supporting 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. We would like to thank all involved for raising vital funds to support our work, particularly their critical financial support when COVID hit, and we look forward to working with SSE Airtricity in the future.

Financial Overview

In 2020 the Simon Communities of Ireland generated income of €1,231,734. This compared to income of €989,130 in 2019. 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 2019 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 in the Community and Voluntary Section. 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 2020 and recognised in the financial statements for 2020 is €79,513 (2019: €64,559).

No capital grants were received from Pobal and SCI is fully tax compliant as per the relevant grant circulars including 44/2006 and DRER Cir 13/2014.

Expenditure in 2020 was €393,596 which was down from €430,790 in 2019. Included in this expenditure were fundraising costs of €68,039 (2019: €76,294). In addition the Simon Communities of Ireland dispersed € 837,040 (2019: €556,490) to its affiliated local Simon Communities to support their operational costs. This created a net surplus for the year on the income and expenditure account of €1,098 (2019: €1,850).

In 2020 one staff member received a salary in the range of €60,000 to €70,000. Pension contributions made by the organisation in 2020 amounted to €4,469 (2019: €854).

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

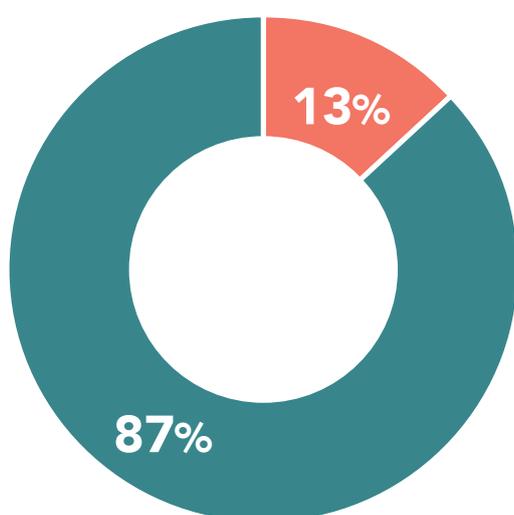


Organisations. The annual financial statements are prepared in accordance with the Companies Act 2014 and FRS 102. In addition, the Simon Communities of Ireland adheres to the Statement of Guiding Principles for Fundraising and is registered with the Charity Regulatory Authority.

The Simon Communities of Ireland annual accounts are audited by JPA Brenson Lawlor Ltd. 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 2020.

2020 Income

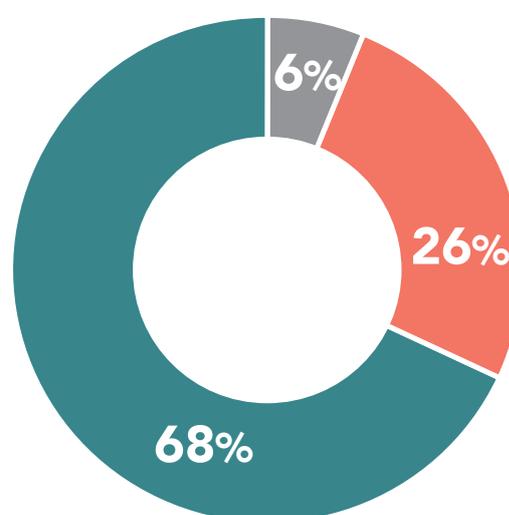


87% – Fundraising & Operational Activities **€1,075,837**

13% – Grants **€155,897**

Total Income €1,231,734

2020 Expenditure



26% – Programmes & Activities Affiliated Simon Communities **€325,557**

68% – Programmes & Activities SCI **€837,040**

6% – Fundraising **€68,039**

Total Expenditure €1,230,636

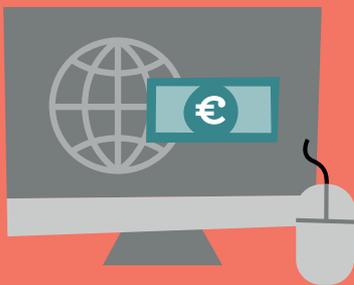
Net Surplus €1,098

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



Send us a donation by Post

Donations can be sent to:

Simon Communities of Ireland,
Carmicheal Centre,
Coleraine Street, Dublin 7

(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 Communities of Ireland 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 or your local Simon Community, contact the Fundraising Team on **01 671 1606**.

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 us on **01 671 1606** to discuss tailoring projects and initiatives to match your company's interests and objectives.

Alternatively, email **info@simoncommunity.com** for more information.



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.





**Carmicheal Centre
Coleraine Street
Dublin 7**

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www.simon.ie

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