Thank you for choosing to support the Simon Communities in Ireland.

The housing and homeless crisis in Ireland continues, showing no signs of slowing down. There are now nearly 6,000 men, women and children in emergency accommodation. At least 90,000 people are on the social housing waiting list. The cost of renting is increasing each quarter, yet the number of properties available is decreasing. The Simon Communities in Ireland work all around the country with over 7,500 people a year supporting them on their journey out homelessness. The Simon Communities are based in Cork, Dublin, Dundalk, Galway, the Midlands, the Mid West, the North West and the South East.

Simon Community Fact-File

* Rents up 32.3% nationally while the number of properties available decreases by 77% since 2012.
* A total of over 13,000 social housing units were delivered in 2015 with only 28 house actually being built.
* The number of new private residential properties completed in 2015 was 12,666 compared to 93,419 houses in 2006.
* 70% of mortgages in arrears are in arrears for more than 90 days.
* The number of people in emergency accommodation has grown to almost 6,000 people.

The Simon Community’s fact file highlights the extent of the crisis impacting on every region and community across Ireland. The fact-file focuses on the growing number of people in emergency accommodation and rough sleeping; the inadequacies of the rent supplement system in addressing the crisis; and the crippling shortage of housing in the private rented sector, mortgage arrears and repossessions in the private housing sector housing output.

Niamh Randall, national spokesperson for the Simon Community outlines; ‘’Our fact-file clearly demonstrates the pressures on all parts of the housing market yet Ireland’s approach to the housing markey is completely disconnected; home ownership, the private rented sector, social housing and homelessness are approached in isolation when in fact they are all interconnected. Our fact-file highlights rent increases of 32.3% nationally while the number of properties available to rent decreased by 77% since 2012 and are now at an all-time low. At the same time, the gap between market rents and rent supplement/HAP limits has continued to rise. The Simon Communities fact-file demonstrates 95% of properties available to rent are beyond the reach of people in receipt of state housing support’’.

Niamh further explains ‘’With more and more people entering emergency accommodation, urgent action needs to be taken to prevent any further individuals and families from becoming homeless, and to give those stuck in emergency accommodation an opportunity to find a home. New housing takes time to build so it is imperative that new ways of increasing supply are explored’’.

The Simon Communities deliver support and service to over 7,500 people and families who experience or are at risk of homelessness on an annual basis.

Homelessness – The numbers

* There are currently 5,881 men, women, and children in emergency homeless accommodation nationally, 912 families with 1881 children.
* During one night in November 2015, there were 152 people without a place to sleep in Dublin City. This included 91 people sleeping rough and 61 people sheltering at the Nite Café.
* In December 2015, the Simon Communities reported a 20% increase in the numbers of individuals and families around the country turning to our services for help.
* Locked out of the Market III, (Simon Communities Study) found that 95% of rental properties are beyond the reach for those in receipt of state housing support. Of all the properties available to rent in the eleven regions studied, only one was available for a single person.

 Tracey’s Story

‘When you are homeless, there’s an awful lot you have thrown at you. A lot of people look at you saying you must have done something to be where you are. I would have slept out most nights, at least four nights out of every week. I wasn’t able to handle the death of my mother and had to ask my family to look after my children. Then when my partner passed away a couple of years ago, I ran…I just couldn’t go back to the house. That’s how I ended up homeless.

‘Living on the streets, you don’t know from one end of the day to the other where you’re going to end up. A lot of times there were no beds available so you would have to ring up to get a sleeping bag. It wasn’t gold they were giving out, but to me that sleeping bag meant so much. You then need to rummage around, looking for cardboard to lie on for the night. Once it’s cold you try to find somewhere safe as well as somewhere that’s sheltered, as it could start raining. You also need to be somewhere that the Simon Rough Sleeper Team can find you in the morning’.

If I was lucky enough to have any change, I would get on the buses or the trains, just to get in out of the cold and space out my day. I’ve gone all over the country, just to get a bit of heat and be able to use the bathroom. You stick out like a sore thumb. You think you’re keeping yourself alright but you’re not. Everyone knows you’re homeless, they just know by looking at you’.

*One day my social worker got in touch with the Simon Community and put my name forward for a place in their treatment and recovery services. I was nervous going in and it was a challenge every day, but that made me want to do it more. I was saying to myself “Yes, I’m going to do this.”

“Now people aren’t afraid to sit beside me. Now I look like anybody on that bus or that train. It means the world. My children always were the best thing ever that happened to me. I’m so proud of them and yet they tell me every single day that they’re so proud and they admire me. It makes the next chapter of my life exciting.”

“Simon services need to be seen to be appreciated, to see what they are doing for people. The Simon Community is a lifeline. In some cases, and in my own, it’s a matter of life and death.”*

**With the encouragement and support of Simon, Tracey has now moved on from homelessness. She is living in our residential aftercare service and has started a Pre-Employment Course.**