Simon
Communities of Ireland

ANNUAL REPORT 2011

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CONTENTS

	page
Message from our Chair	05
A word from the Head of National Office	07
Looking Back at 2011	09
Campaigning and Policy	10
Key Campaigning Moments	13
National Fundraising Success	15
Best Practice and Training Co-ordinator	16
Full Time Volunteers 2011	17
Financial Overview	18
How You Can Help	19

Brian helping out at the Dundalk Simon grow your own garden.

MESSAGE FROM OUR CHAIR

A WORD FROM OUR CHAIR 2011: **DR MARY LEE RHODES**

THE ENVIRONMENT IN WHICH Simon operates has many challenges and no more so than in recent times, as we focused on supporting the local Simon Communities during a period of rising need and decreasing resources. 2011 was also a difficult year organisationally; it was a period of retrenchment and 'cutting our coat to fit the cloth'. All organisations in public and voluntary services are facing significant budget cuts and Simon Communities is no exception. In 2011, the Board had to make very difficult decisions; in some cases, functions could be distributed among the local communities; in others we had to find ways to reconfigure our operations to become more efficient. The result was that operating expenses are down by almost 20%, and staffing has been reduced by the same percentage. We continue to look for ways to ensure that we deliver effectively and efficiently on our commitments to our Communities, our funders and the Irish people.

I would like to extend heartfelt thanks to my fellow members of the Board of the Simon Communities of Ireland; their support, commitment and guidance have been invaluable. I would also like to acknowledge the hard work of all the staff teams in the eight local Simon Communities. It is their spirit and commitment that is at the root of everything we do. It is also important to acknowledge the trojan work of the SCI team and I want to thank all for their commitment and incredible hard work over the last year.

I would also like to acknowledge the people who use the services of the Simon communities all around the country; that so many people turn to Simon at a vulnerable time in their lives confirms the need to continue to provide high quality services and, to campaign for the right policies and structures to tackle homelessness in Ireland.

In the areas of fundraising, we focused on the corporate side in 2011, with the full support of the Board, and we are very grateful to all our funders who gave us incredible support throughout the year. These included CRH, EBS, Maxol, Denny and the RIAI (Royal Institute of Architects in Ireland)

We wish to also thank our statutory funders who supported our work over the course of this busy year. In particular, the Department of Environment, Community and Local Government and Leargas.

Simon is an extraordinary movement that has stepped up to meet the needs of some of the most vulnerable people in Ireland without judgement, fear or favour. In doing so, it has brought together people from all over Ireland – and the world - to recognise and reaffirm their shared humanity. It has been a privilege and a pleasure to work with Simon Community of Ireland - one of the most recognised and loved charities in Ireland.

> A COMBINATION OF FACTORS CAN TRIGGER HOMELESSNESS INCLUDING **JOB LOSS, FINANCIAL TROUBLES, POOR EDUCATION** OR **HEALTH** AND **POVERTY**...

Simon Week 2011, Cork – the launch of the Big Four O project. Artist, Robert Ballagh, with Kieran and Ray – two of the participant artists in the project.

MESSAGE FROM THE HEAD OF NATIONAL OFFICE

A WORD FROM **PATRICK QUINN,** HEAD OF NATIONAL OFFICE

AS WE ARE ALL TOO AWARE 2011 was another challenging year for this country with more people experiencing poverty, more people facing economic hardship, and more people uncertain about their future. Homelessness was a serious issue in Ireland before the downturn but the prolonged recession has intensified the problem; people have become more vulnerable and the risk of homelessness has increased. A combination of factors can trigger homelessness including job loss, financial troubles, poor education or health and poverty; these are all too familiar features of our current economic context.

There are many reasons why a person becomes homeless, and in Simon we deal with them all. Throughout 2011 the eight local Simon Communities in Ireland continued to provide innovative, high quality services responding effectively and meeting local needs, as we have done for over 40 years. Last year Simon worked with between 4,500 and 5,000 individuals and families throughout the country who experienced – or were at risk of – homelessness.

There has been very real progress in recent years tackling homelessness, particularly with the development of the National Homeless Strategy The Way Home and the National Implementation Plan. Much of this has been achieved through partnership working between the statutory and voluntary sector at a local, regional and national level. However, this is all under threat in the current budgetary context as our Communities face multifaceted cuts to funding and homeless risk factors increase. It is critical that we don't turn back the clock on the real progress that we have made together.

Government policy is working towards a housing led approach which we very much welcome; this aims to provide housing with support, as required, as the initial step in addressing all forms of homelessness. It is timely to create a greater synergy between general housing policy and approaches to address homelessness. A housing led approach is obviously predicated on the availability of appropriate housing. How this housing need will be met remains unclear but a range of options must be explored as a matter of urgency including Capital Advanced Loan Facility, the Social Housing Leasing initiative, RAS and social housing allocations and prioritisation. It is critical that health and social care support based on need is provided as part of any housing led approaches.

The Simon Communities reiterate our support and commitment to working with all of our partners (both statutory and voluntary), the structures and all of the key players in the implementation of the Homeless Strategy at a local, regional and national level as we work towards our shared goal of ending long term homelessness in Ireland. While the future remains uncertain Simon will continue to work with hope and optimism focusing on making a real and lasting difference to the lives of people who use our services around the country.

Top: Official Launch of Midland Simons Sli Nua Project in Athlone. Right to left – Cormac Lally, Chairperson Midlands Simon Community, Alan Shaw, Mayor of Athlone, Jan O'Sullivan, TD, Minister of State, Department of Environment, Community and Local Government with special responsibility for Housing and Planning, Mark Cooney, Board Member Midlands Simon Community.

Bottom: Volunteer recognition event held by Galway Simon as part of Simon Week 2011 attended by Galway City Mayor Hildegarde Naughton.

LOOKING BACK AT 2011

THE SIMON COMMUNITIES PROVIDED a range of effective services throughout Ireland embracing a housing led approach including:

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

VOLUNTEERS play a significant role within the Simon Communities. In 2011 over 2,300 volunteers contributed hugely to a range of projects which ran across the country. 70 full time volunteers gained training and experience as part of the Certificate in Volunteering accredited by DIT. The skills and learning's from the year long course and work placement will benefit these students in their future career paths.

Prior to the **ELECTION 2011** the five main political parties; Fine Gael, Fianna Fáil, Sinn Féin, the Labour Party and the Green Party signed the Simon Election Pledge, pledging that if elected to Government that they would ensure that tackling homelessness would be a top priority.

SIMON WEEK 2011 in its 4th year was yet again very successful. The National Health Snapshot Survey was launched during Simon Week at a national conference attended by many key stakeholders highlighting the relationship between homelessness and complex health needs; this issue is always at the fore of our lobbying and campaigning message. We had an excellent turn out at our political briefing event with many TD's and Senators participating and hearing firsthand about homelessness in their constituency and the challenge of meeting increased demands with limited budgets and resources.

We were delighted that in 2011, people who use our services and attend **'SIMON INVOLVEMENT AND ACTION GROUP'** requested training in Facilitation Skills with a view to establishing and running their own service user groups. A comprehensive 6 day training module was designed and delivered and, as demonstrated in the evaluation process, was very much valued by the participants, who have gone on to use their skills in a variety of ways. Developing quality training programmes for people who use our services is an area we hope to develop further in the future.

2011 HIGHLIGHTS

Photo: Bernie with Dublin Simon resident Sandra

226
LONG TERM ACCOMMODATION UNITS PROVIDED

130
EMERGENCY BEDS PROVIDED

45
TRANSITIONAL ACCOMMODATION/ SEMI PERMANENT UNITS

OVER
10,000
MEALS SERVED

2,300
PART-TIME VOLUNTEERS

OPEN
8 Simon SHOPS

Breaking the cycle of homelessness - supporting people to move out of homelessness

- Tenancy Sustainment and Settlement services and Support to Live Independently (SLI) services helped people to make the move out of homelessness.
- 45 transitional accommodation /semi permanent supported accommodation units were provided.
- 226 long term supported accommodation and high support housing units were provided.
- Access to specialist treatment and support services including health care, drugs counselling, community alcohol detoxification, 11 residential detoxification and 17 rehabilitation places.
- All of our Communities offered education, training and employment services.

Making contact and offering people a place of welcome, warmth and safety

- Day Centres, Soup Runs and Rough Sleeper Teams provided by some of our Communities are often the first point of contact for people sleeping rough.
- Over the course of the year over 10,000 meals were provided.
- 130 emergency beds were provided 365 days of the year.

Preventing people falling into homelessness all around the country

- Tenancy Sustainment and Settlement services.
- Housing advice and information services.

Supporting the Work of Our Communities

- In addition, almost 2,300 volunteers supported the work of their local Simon Community (including 119 full time volunteers).
- 8 Simon shops around Ireland generated much needed income for Simon Community services. We thank everyone who supports our shops.
- Our work was supported by thousands of individual donors and many generous corporate supporters.

National Health Snapshot Study 2011

603 people who use Simon projects and services all around the country participated in this study in 2011. Of those who participated 75% of participants were male and 25% of them were female. The average age was 43 years. The findings make for interesting and informative reading:

- 83% of people reported being homeless for more than 6 months. 54% reported being homeless for more than 3 years and 39% reported being homeless for 5 years or more (long term homelessness according to the Irish government is 6 months plus).
- 65% of people were experiencing at least one diagnosed physical health condition.
- 47% were experiencing at least one diagnosed mental health condition.
- And 46% of people were experiencing a combination of one or more diagnosed physical and mental health condition.
- People reported alcohol use (50%), drug use (31%), self harm (19%) and attempted suicide in the last six months (17%).
- In addition, 12% of participants reported an intellectual disability.

CAMPAIGNING AND POLICY

IT IS WIDELY ACKNOWLEDGED that structural issues such as poverty and social exclusion lie at the root of homelessness therefore it is only by addressing the structures, causes and the consequence that homeless can be tackled effectively. Homeless policy in Ireland is working towards a 'Housing led' approach which aims to provide housing, with support as required, as the initial step in addressing all forms of homelessness. This must be pursued as a matter of urgency. Housing is an important part of the solution, but homelessness is about more than housing; it is also about physical and mental health, it is about drug and alcohol use, and it is sometimes about many related needs (complex needs). Therefore, appropriate housing support and health and social care support based on need must be provided, and for those who need more intensive support, high support housing must be an option.

North West Simon Annual Street Sleeps as part of Simon Week 2011.

We seek to influence the approach of Government and key policy and decision makers via our campaigning and policy activities. The Simon Communities of Ireland are represented in all major national policy fora and at key stakeholder meetings including the *National Homeless Consultative Committee* (NHCC), the *Data Subgroup of the NHCC* and regular *Bi Lateral Meetings* with the Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government. We lobby key stakeholders involved in shaping national homeless policy and other policy areas which impact on the lives of people who are homeless e.g. health policy, and drug and alcohol policy. We support these activities by making submissions where appropriate opportunities arise.

In addition, we also participate in a range of partnerships and networks with other organisations that share our aims e.g. *MakeRoom Alliance* - together with St Vincent de Paul, Focus Ireland and Threshold; *Mental Health Reform, Community Platform*; the *Advocacy Initiative*; the *European Anti Poverty Network* (EAPN); and *FEANTSA - the European Federation of National Organisations Working with the Homeless*. We are committed to evidence informed policy making and base our campaigning on the most reliable evidence and information available.

KEY CAMPAIGNING MOMENTS

Political Parties Pledge to Tackle Homelessness prior to election 2011. Pictured after signing the pledge at Cork Simon Community was Fine Gael leader Enda Kenny, TD now An Taoiseach with Cork candidates from left, Jonathan O'Brien and Chris O'Leary, Sinn Fein, Dan Boyle, Green Party, Ciaran Lynch, Labour and Simon Coveney, Fine Gael.

There were a number of key campaigning moments during 2011:

- **Pre Election Campaign:** Prior to the Election 2011 the five main political parties; Fine Gael, Fianna Fáil, Sinn Féin, the Labour Party and the Green Party signed the Simon Election Pledge, pledging that if elected to Government that they would ensure that tackling homelessness would be a top priority. The pledge states the following: *We pledge that if elected to Government we will ensure that tackling homelessness will be one of our top priorities. We believe in people and pledge to work with all organizations to ensure that housing, healthcare and other supports are available to everyone at risk of or experiencing homelessness.*

- **Programme for Government 2011:** We liaised with Fine Gael and the Labour Party and the key negotiators on the Programme for Government to ensure homelessness was identified as a priority.

- **Key stakeholder meetings:** Over the course of 2011 meetings were attended with key stakeholders and decision makers including; Mr Willie Penrose, TD Minister of State for Housing & Planning and his officials at the Department of Environment, Community and Local Government, the Health Service Executive and members of the opposition.

- **Research:** We progressed research funded through the Age and Opportunity *Get Vocal Programme* looking at the needs of older people who are homeless as they age, and are faced with the issues of serious ill health and dying.

- **National Health Snapshot Study 2011:** This year we repeated our *National Health Snapshot Study* which included over 600 people who were using Simon services around the country during the week in question.

- **Review of the Homeless Strategy:** We made a submission to the Review of the Homeless Strategy in August 2011 focussing on the following areas: Availability of appropriate housing; housing with supports and high support housing; health and social care supports; need for timelines and key performance indicators; arrangements for monitoring and implementation.

- **Simon Week 2011:** In October 2011 our annual week of campaigning and awareness raising – *Simon Week* – took place involving a wide range of activities and events taking place nationally and at local level. This was a collective multimedia campaign incorporating TV, radio and online advertising. This was a hugely successful initiative.

- **Homelessness and Health: Making the Link:** As part of Simon Week 2011 we organised a national conference on homelessness and health. This event included a range of expert speakers including Joe Doyle (HSE), Dr Austin O'Carroll, SafetyNet, Orla Barry, Mental Health Reform and Professor Suzanne Fitzpatrick, Heriot Watt University, Edinburgh.

Simon Week 2011: RTE's Bryan Dobson and Head of National Office Patrick Quinn at the Homelessness and Health: Making the Link Conference.

- **Simon Week Political Briefing:** As part of Simon Week 2011 a successful political briefing event was held in Leinster House. Almost 50 members of both houses of the Oireachtas attended and were updated on the work of the Simon Communities around Ireland and the challenges facing people who are homeless and at risk of homelessness in the current budgetary context.

- **Oireachtas Committee Meetings:** We were part of a delegation which included St Vincent de Paul, Focus Ireland and Threshold who were invited to meet with the Joint Oireachtas Committee on the Environment, Transport, Culture and the Gaeltacht.

- **MakeRoom:** We continued to work with our partners in the MakeRoom Alliance over the course of this year focusing on the Election 2011 in particular.

NATIONAL FUNDRAISING SUCCESS

WE WOULD LIKE TO TAKE this opportunity to thank all of those who supported us in 2011 and continue to do so, particularly in this difficult financial climate. Simon can only continue to make such a difference to the lives of those experiencing homelessness or at risk of homelessness with the generosity of individuals and companies throughout Ireland.

Our Individual Supporters

Without our committed supporters we would not be in a position to continue providing necessary services across the country. We would like to thank these individuals who have helped in whatever way they could to support the work of Simon.

Our Corporate Supporters

We very much rely on the assistance of corporate supporters and partners in a wide range of areas. The Simon Communities of Ireland would like to sincerely thank each company that donated to us in 2011 as well as their employees who got involved in various activities. We hope this wonderful support can continue in the future as we work through the challenges we face today.

Mid West Simon's Classical Busking Limerick 'Sing out with String'.

In particular we would like to thank:

CRH: Simon is extremely grateful to CRH Ireland for its strategic Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) support. We would like to extend a huge thank you to everyone in the company for making this partnership so successful and, in turn, generating the massive sum of €2,927,980 Thank you for supporting us for the past four years.

Denny: Simon is delighted to have been working with Denny over the past three years. As well as raising funds, the Denny/Simon initiative increased awareness of both the work Simon does as well as the issues relating to homelessness to specific audiences. Denny has supported Tenancy Sustainment services in each of the eight Simon Communities in the Republic of Ireland and the Simon Community in Northern Ireland.

EBS: EBS has continued its work with the Simon Communities of Ireland to support 20 of our full-time volunteers on their unique training programme. This initiative built on a seven year partnership between EBS and the Simon Communities of Ireland. Since commencement of its CSR programme Positive Impact in 2004, EBS has established a strong and proactive working relationship with Simon.

Maxol: In 2011, Maxol selected Simon as their charity partner throughout the 32 counties. We are delighted with Maxol's support and look forward to developing this partnership into the future. We are thankful to all of the service station owners for their contributions.

Simon Open Door in association with the **Royal Institute of Architects of Ireland(RIAI):** In May 2011, the RIAI and the Simon Communities of Ireland launched the seventh annual nationwide Simon Open Door campaign. We would like to thank the RIAI most sincerely for all the hard work they have put into this campaign and we also extend our gratitude to all the architects who have given their time freely to Simon over the years. We would also like to thank everyone who participated helping us make Open Door 2011 so successful.

Tesco: Simon is delighted to be supported by Tesco in 2011 particularly for their ongoing online Tesco Clubcard initiative. We are looking forward to continuing this relationship in the coming years.

BEST PRACTICE AND TRAINING COORDINATOR

> I **WILL** USE THESE SKILLS
>
> Facilitation Training Participant

The role of the Best Practice and Training Coordinator is to support the local Communities to deliver the best possible provision to people who use our services. The core work includes policy development; developing and delivering training; organising and delivering seminars and workshops on practice issues; auditing services and researching and disseminating best practice initiatives.

An important area of this work is promoting and supporting service user participation. One of the highlights in this area in 2011 was the development and delivery of training on Facilitation Skills to people who use our services. This was a comprehensive 6 day course, which, when evaluated, showed how valuable it was for the participants.

During the year Simon Action and Involvement Group (national service user led group) published two bumper editions of Simon Voices and also celebrated its 6th Anniversary.

Delivering training on the Outcomes Star has continued, giving Communities clear evidence of the changes that happen to people as a result of using our services. Keyworkers and service users alike have been enthusiastic about this tool and speak about the way it enhances key working by putting the service user in control and defining for themselves in which areas of their lives they wish to bring about change.

Over the year a number of review and planning days were facilitated in various projects with the participation of staff, service users and volunteers.

In addition, work with one of the Communities to support the development of a Human Rights Based Organisation continues. A Human Rights based approach expressly applies the International Human Rights framework to its work, and promotes empowerment, participation and the non-discrimination of vulnerable groups and accountability.

The Simon Communities understand that the voice of the service users must be at the centre of the discussion about what best practice means in our services.

> I FOUND THE COURSE BRILLIANT; IT HAS GIVEN ME **SKILLS** AND **CONFIDENCE** IN MANY DIFFERENT WAYS
>
> Facilitation Training Participant

FULL TIME VOLUNTEERS 2011

In 2011, the Simon Communities welcomed more than 70 full time volunteers, all living and working in our communities assisting in the delivery of a wide range of services. All the volunteers attended our induction training held in Dublin. We hosted 5 separate training weeks giving all the volunteers the opportunity to meet each other and learn not only about the work they would be doing, but also about each of the eight local Simon Communities across the country.

Photo: Fionn Bennett posing for South East Simon community when they did a bucket collection in New Ross early this year.

During the year we welcomed volunteers from Australia, Brazil, Canada, Croatia, France, Germany, India, Italy, Latvia, New Zealand, Mexico, Nigeria, Romania, Spain, Ukraine, UK, USA and Ireland.

We also hosted eleven full time volunteers from the European Voluntary Service (EVS). A programme sponsored by the European Union giving young people the opportunity to volunteer for up to one year internationally on projects run by approved organisations. We welcome the support we have received from this programme and aim to continue involving EVS volunteers in our communities.

This year we also saw 62 volunteers graduate from our accredited Full Time Volunteers Certificate programme in partnership with the Dublin Institute of Technology (DIT). The programme continues to develop and we acknowledge the great work that both the DIT staff and the staff of the local Simon Communities have put into this throughout the year. We look forward to working with more full time volunteers and welcome the fresh thinking and diversity they bring to our work.

OVER 70 FULL TIME VOLUNTEERS WERE WELCOMED BY THE SIMON COMMUNITIES TO LIVE AND WORK IN OUR COMMUNITIES AND ASSIST IN THE DELIVERY OF SERVICE

FINANCIAL OVERVIEW

IN 2011, the Simon Communities of Ireland generated over €1.7 million of income. The vast majority of our funding (85.5%) is sourced from donations or contributions from the general public or our corporate partners. Our public funding remains essential as it supports a number of key activities delivered by the office.

The cost of the work of the Simon Communities of Ireland National Office in 2011 was just over €1.9 million. Included in expenditure is €773,474 which was distributed to our local Communities to help with their operational costs.

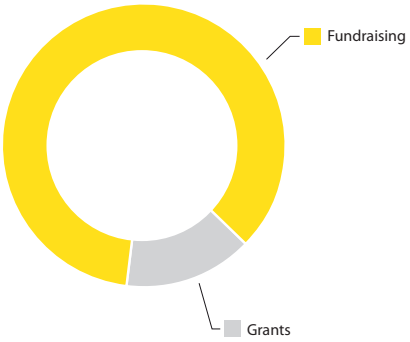
We would like to thank everyone – corporate, statutory and individual supporters – who contributed to Simon. We continue to strive to give the best possible value-for-money and make a lasting difference to the lives of the people with whom we work. Full audited accounts are available on request from the Simon Communities of Ireland office.

Income	
Fundraising	€1,490,850
Grants	€252,237
Total	€1,743,087

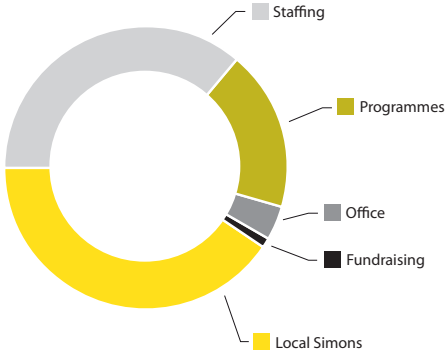
Expenditure	
Staffing	€693,096
Programmes	€350,359
Office	€76,813
Fundraising	€19,324
Local Simons	€773,474
Total	€1,913,066

Surplus / Deficit	**- €169,979**

INCOME



EXPENDITURE



HOW YOU CAN HELP

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

DONATE ONLINE

Log onto 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 Laser card, call our fundraising team on (01) 6711606 with your Credit or Laser card details and your transaction will be handled in the strictest of confidence.

LEAVE SIMON A LEGACY

For further details on how to name the Simon Communities of Ireland as a beneficiary in your will contact the Fundraising Team as above.

NATIONAL CORPORATE PARTNERSHIPS

The Simon Communities of Ireland work with a number of national corporate partners and there are endless ways your company can help and get involved. You can contact us on (01) 671 1606 to discuss tailoring projects and initiatives to match your company's interests and objectives.

TAX EFFECTIVE GIVING

If you are a PAYE taxpayer, did you know that a donation of at least €250.00 could be worth an extra 72% to us? Simon can claim tax back on donations over €250.00 under current government legislation and the scheme is completely confidential. Donations from companies or self assessed tax payers also qualify the donor for tax relief.

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