Simon Communities of Ireland

Issue 13 Summer 2013

Simon Voices

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Simon Speaking

WE NEED YOU!

Don't be alone

Sitting at home

You do have choices

Come share your voices

Joining Simon Involvement and Action Group will mean having a say, discussing how you can have a voice and influence in Simon. It's about sharing information and finding out what is going on for other people in the different Communities. Importantly it's also about meeting new people and making new contacts and friendships. What is important to you is important to us.

We meet monthly in Dublin and we'd love to meet you.

For anyone coming from outside Dublin, travel expenses will be paid by your local Simon Community for travel that has been prearranged and on public transport.

We provide refreshments and lunch.

Simon

A Voice For All

Involvement and Action Group

Make an effort and get FREE credit

(That's €10.00 phone credit!)

WE WANT TO HEAR FROM YOU

Please send in your letters, short stories (about 500 words), poems, art work, photos, or news from your local Communities.

If we publish your entry we will send you €10.00 phone credit (any network) as a small thank you.

See your work in print.

Send your contribution to
Simon Involvement + Action Group (SIAG),
c/o Catri O'Kane,
Simon Communities of Ireland,
St Andrew's House,
28 – 30 Exchequer Street,
Dublin 2
Or email
catri.okane@simoncommunity.com

IN THIS ISSUE...

Moving on into Independent Living
Page 2

Music Night in Galway
Page 3

If We Can Do It, You Can Do It Recipes
Quick and easy breakfasts on page 4

Moving on into Independent Living

Does moving on to Independent Living solve your problems? Simon Involvement and Action Group recognises the importance of this issue and in our conversations, written below, we voiced some of the potential ups and downs and highs and lows of this move.

Are you worried about moving on?

"It's not necessarily going to be easy but it will be worthwhile"

"I was worried about moving on from the refuge, about leaving my support network, staff and the new friends I had made"

"I moved out and there was this silence, I missed the girls so much. But then I got involved, I took up art and gardening. Sometimes I do nothing, but that's dangerous. I've made some mistakes and its all learning. Recovery is important"

"When I was told that I could move into my own house I thought "they are trying to get rid of me"

Do you know what to expect?

"There are going to be challenges, have a plan and be prepared. Remember what went wrong last time and don't have too high expectations"

"It's a big change and a bigger challenge, and it's too easy to think 'there's no one here, I'll just have one [drink]"

"I was so used to living outside, in boats and different places that it was very strange when I began living indoors"

Who can I ask for help?

"Your key worker, social worker (if you/your children have one), and a CWO for financial support"

"When you move in first, one to one support for a while is important"

What kind of help is available?

"Practical, financial, and keyworker support. You might need practical support and emotional support"

What can I do to help myself?

"Socialise, form friendships - go to group meetings, participate, join job clubs, keep fit, take up a computer course, find out what is going on in the local community"

"I did a night course, and I started volunteering"

"Find things that are free"

"I joined the library"

"Get to know your neighbours, but also be in control of who comes into your place, how often and what people know about you"

"Have a plan before you move in about what you are going to do and how you will budget. Make it realistic and stick to it"

"It's about getting involved; it's about making meaningful use of my time"

"You can get all the things you need for your new home bit by bit"

"Get involved in the area; it can give you a sense of belonging"

"Get support and keep busy"

How hard is this going to be?

"It can be very hard, outside links will help you, but you have to ask"

"Sometimes I don't eat for days. I hardly ever cook in my house"

"Not everybody finds it lonely, but some do"

Who needs to know?

"Be careful who you tell where you live. Protect your new place"

What are the positives of moving out?

"You make the rules"

"Having your own freedom, not having to answer to anyone"

"You can paint your walls any colour you like, and can stay in your pyjamas all day if you want to!"

Competition

Be in with a chance to win a €50 voucher!

It's been a long (hot) summer so here are two anagrams of some of the things we do this time of year -

DIYOHAL NSU TBAHE

Send you answers to Simon Action and Involvement Group c/o Catri O'Kane, Simon Communities of Ireland, St. Andrews House, 28-30 Exchequer Street, Dublin 2

Or text your answer to 087 7993860

Or email catri.okane@simoncommunity.com

Closing date: 30th November 2013.

Congratulations to our last lucky winner!

Speak Outs

"Speak Outs" give Clients of Dublin Simon a voice to ask anything they want regarding services or any other matter they think is relevant.

The topics arise from the services and then are spoken about at the monthly Client Action Group meeting and one topic is then chosen to be the subject of the evening.

There is always a huge attendance of clients and staff from many different services and food and refreshments are provided.

At the last Speak Out the topic was **"Ending Homelessness by 2016, the Housing Led Approach. What does Government Policy on Homelessness mean to you?"**

This was facilitated by Marion Mac Neela and the speakers who attended to help answer these questions were Pat Greene Dublin Simon Community Head of Strategy & Development and

Niamh Randall Simon's Head of Policy and Communication.

A client is chosen beforehand to welcome all and explains about Client Involvement, this means that people using Dublin Simon Community have a right to have their say, enjoy choice and control and to share in decision making about their services. The Client Action Group and the Speak Outs are all part of Client Involvement.

Various actions have come about as a result of feedback through Speak outs and client consultation e.g. Volunteer Programme, Spokesperson Panel, and Debates around the term Service User.

The facilitator explains to the large group about the groundrules and then gives everyone an ice breaker to help get to know the people they are sitting next to, and then explains what the evenings discussions are about.

We can ask questions as individuals or as smaller groups. It can get very lively but the point is clients have the chance to be heard no matter what they want to talk about.

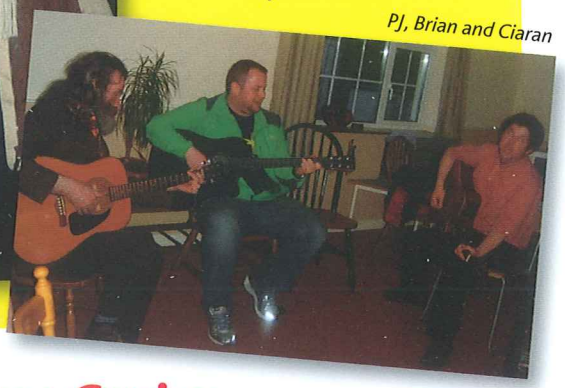
A presentation is then given on the subject matter and the floor is open to the audience which results in active and interactive participation.

ABS

Music Night

Síle

On May 18th Galway Simon Action Group held a music night at Abbey House, one of Galway Simon's residential services. The musicians and singers were brilliant and everybody joined in the singing and raised the roof! Another music night will be held in September.



PJ, Brian and Ciaran

Dublin Bay Cruise on a Summer's Day

Sunshine has that unique ability to put a smile on everyone's face which is why when we get sunshine here in Ireland the whole country seems to get out and about.

A crowd of us from Dublin Simon met up on our monthly Saturday Social and went on a cruise, not a more perfect day could we have wished for, with the sun splitting the trees which uplifted everyone's spirits.

The cruise must be a popular pastime as it was standing room only, the seats all having been taken but what a view was had by us all and no one complained about standing for so long.

The sea and the sky were brilliant blue and a calm 90 minute crossing from Dun Laoghaire to Howth awaited us with a recording of the short history regarding our journey played on a tannoy.

Every face travelling on that boat was relaxed; we took in the sights and the peaceful but hypnotic sound of the sea, the squalling gulls looking for food. It was just a wonderful trip.

We soon arrived at our end point, Howth and were greeted by the resident seal or sea lion, (we are not quite sure!) who posed readily for some photographs. Then we headed to the nearest cafe for teas and coffees and enjoyed the picnic we brought with us in the large park. As we chatted, we laughed, we always do when the company is so good and friendships are cemented during these Saturday Socials.

We ended our day trip by throwing a ball to one another; a simple pleasure that had us roaring with laughter and separated the wheat from the chaff as catching that hard ball was painful on the hands.

We all got the Dart home and the sun was still shining and our faces were still smiling.

Great craic, great people, great weather. What more could you ask for? **ABS**

Simon Involvement and Action Group trip to meet Galway Simon Clients and Services

On July 19th members of Simon Involvement and Action Group accepted the very kind invite from Galway Simon to travel down and meet the services they provide for their clients.

Travelling with Catri on the 9.30am train from Heuston Station the two hour plus journey went quickly thanks to great company and beautiful scenic views from the windows.

The warmest of welcomes awaited us at Galway Station thanks to Trish, Michael and Marion. David who works with Galway Simon very kindly became our chauffeur for the day and took us to our first port of call at Knockrea House which is a long term residence providing six bedrooms and an apartment that was built for the lovely and affable Dennis who regaled us with his knowledge of Dublin Simon, having been a client for 16 years in Ireland's capital. He is such a talented man and crafts ships and aeroplanes with his own hands. After a chat with the nurse and clients and a welcome cup of tea it was time to say goodbye and move on to our next stop.

Abbey House is a re settlement facility which has ten bedrooms. The team work tirelessly advocating for permanent housing for their clients but it can prove difficult due to the lack of one bedroom accommodation in the Galway area and the reduction of rent allowance available. Abbey House is a lovely house that has a calm and peaceful atmosphere within it and this is where Galway Simon usually hold their social events - their last music night went down a storm.

We all went for lunch in the Westwood Hotel, a lovely place with the friendliest of people and met up with Sile. It was a roasting hot day so was lovely to sit and relax and have a good talk with our Galway friends.

Our last stop within Galway Simon services was an invite to sit in on their Client Action Group in the Annex. This was a privilege and we all got to share our different group set ups, including what we do at Dublin Simon. We shared with our Galway friends the Dublin Simon 'Client Brochures' and copies of our Newsletters and the experience of being a volunteer in Dublin Simon. Our Galway friends were interested in finding out more about the Saturday Social events that Dublin Simon provides. We ended our session facilitated by Marion with thoughts of our time together; the lovely Trish said it was exciting to be at the train station to meet us and that it felt like waiting on family to arrive and that was agreed by us all. That is what any Simon service does for clients; make you feel like you are part of a family and long may that feeling last.

As an afterthought we agreed that it had been worth the long journey and the education learned on visiting Galway Simon Services, we felt that the long term, the re settlement and the woman's facility blended into to their neighbourhood, no one would ever know these were Simon communities, they looked like every other house they were next to.

Our next trip is to visit Athlone Simon. **ABS**

Two Easy and Healthy Breakfasts

If we can do it – you can do it recipes

Porridge

1 cup of porridge oats
2-2½ cups milk or water

Method

1. Put the oats into a small saucepan and add the water/milk
2. Bring to the boil and then let it simmer on a low/medium heat for about 6 minutes, keep stirring with a wooden spoon
3. Serve with a little milk and some of your favourite toppings. We like honey/sugar/ chopped fresh fruit/cinnamon.

P.S. Remember to soak the saucepan in cold water to make it easier to clean as soon as you have served the porridge!

Brown Toast and Banana

2 slices of brown bread
A little butter or your usual spread
1 ripe banana cut into slices

Method

1. Toast the bread
2. Spread over the butter
3. Cover with the banana

What could be easier?!

Simon Voices Needs You!

We want to hear from you. Please send your personal stories, opinions, poems, pictures or news to Catri O'Kane, Simon Communities of Ireland, St Andrew's House, 28-30 Exchequer Street, Dublin 2 or email to catri.okane@simoncommunity.com

We may not be able to publish everything we receive. Thank you to everybody who has sent in a contribution. Sorry if it has not been included in this issue. **See page one for FREE phone credit offer for all published entries.**

Where have they Gone ?

Where have all the hard men gone,
The ones that drank from night till morn.
All day sessions no problem then,
Nights of lock up in the Penn.
Early house for seven am, And on the Beg
Till sick again.
Pints of scrumpy, Pints of plain,
Talking crap delegating blame.
The wife's a bitch, The dog's a hoor,
The squat's a tip, The jacks a sewer.
Where have all the hard men gone,
Most are dead, But some live on.
Some got jail, And some got fired
But as for me,
I just retired..

By Mick C