

PRESS RELEASE

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Political Parties Pledge to Tackle Homelessness

The five main political parties in the State - Fine Gael, Labour, Fianna Fáil, the Green Party and Sinn Fein - have all signed the Simon Pledge

The Simon Communities throughout Ireland, as part of their election campaign to ensure political parties commit to tackling homelessness if successful in the upcoming elections, have asked political parties to sign an election pledge. To date the five main parties in the State which include Fine Gael, Labour, Fianna Fáil, the Green Party and Sinn Fein have all signed up to the pledge stating:

'... 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.'

Niamh Randall, National Research and Policy Manager of the Simon Communities of Ireland said: "It is very reassuring that all five main political parties have pledged to tackle homelessness if elected to government. We must not lose traction on the progress we've made over the last few years and with the right people in government Simon genuinely believes long-term homelessness and the need to sleep rough can be eliminated from Irish society".

Recent findings show that 58% of people are either very, or extremely, concerned of being at risk of becoming homeless because of difficulties in fulfilling payments/mortgages.

According to Ms Randall "Findings such as these highlight that homelessness, and the fear of becoming homeless, is a growing concern for people and one which our new government will have to tackle as a top priority. We must believe in people and put the right policies and structures in place. By working together the new government could make positive inroads in alleviating people's concerns".

The survey findings also showed that 70% of people were concerned with an increase in the number of people becoming homeless while 9 out of 10 people were concerned with the effects of homelessness on people's health.

The Simon Communities have asked all parties, if elected to government, to make homelessness a top priority in the new Programme for Government by including plans for:

- The full implementation of The Way Home – A Strategy to Address Adult Homelessness in Ireland 2008 -2013 and the National Implementation Plan.

- A range of appropriate housing options for people who are homeless including local authority, voluntary and high support housing and private rented accommodation.
- Introduction of dedicated funding through the Department of Environment, Heritage and Local Government to support people to move out of homelessness.
- Introduction of dedicated funding from the Department of Health and Children/HSE for health and care support needs for people who are homeless

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Notes to Editor

The Simon Communities throughout Ireland provide the best possible care, accommodation and support for people experiencing homelessness and those at risk. Together, with people who are homeless, Simon tackles the root causes, promotes innovative responses and urges the government to fulfill their commitments. Simon delivers support and service to between 4,500 and 5,000 individuals and families who experience - or are at risk of - homelessness on an annual basis.

The Simon Communities of Ireland is an affiliation of local Communities in Cork, Dublin, Dundalk, Galway, the Midlands, the Mid West, the North West and the South East. In addition, the National Office performs a coordinating role in campaigning in the areas of housing/homeless policy and the wider poverty and social inclusion agenda; best practice in service delivery and working with people who are homeless; and in the area of full time volunteering promoting excellence and providing accredited training.

About the Survey Findings:

The above survey was carried out by NFP Synergy using a combination of telephone and online research. The results are based on a nationally representative sample of 1,000 adults aged 16+ in the Republic of Ireland. Online fieldwork took place between 15th November and 9th December 2010. Telephone fieldwork took place between 12th November and 15th December 2010. For further information on this study please contact Lorna Cronnelly as above.