



PRESS RELEASE

For Immediate Release

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Homelessness Affects Your Health

Memorial Service Reveals Average Age of Death is 40

Today (11.11.09) Dublin Simon Community held a Memorial Service to remember the 64 people who have passed away from their Community over the last two years. Of these, 62 were in services, one was a member of staff and one was a full-time volunteer. The average age of the 14 women and the 48 men who passed away in services was 40 years of age.

Dublin Simon CEO Sam McGuinness said "It is worrying that nearly 60% of those that have passed away in the last two years have been contacts of our Rough Sleeper Team. This means they are either living on the street or in crisis emergency accommodation. For this group of people, the average age of death was 38. Frightening when one considers life expectancy in a developed country like Ireland is 77 years of age".

The Memorial, which took place in the Unitarian Church in St. Stephens Green, welcomed the Community to mourn those who have passed. The 64 names were read by staff, volunteers and service users, and a candle was lit in their memory.

The short life expectancy and the complex health needs of people who experience homelessness were recently highlighted in a health audit carried out throughout Dublin Simon Community services. The early results display high levels of both the physical and mental health needs of people experiencing homelessness. Nearly 60% of those using Dublin Simon services have a serious diagnosed physical condition while over 20% have a diagnosed mental health condition.

According to Sam McGuinness, Dublin Simon CEO, "The main illnesses experienced by those we are working with are reflective of a homeless lifestyle. We especially have a high number of people with respiratory conditions which isn't helped, and is generally aggravated by nights spent out on cold, wet streets.

There are also a large number of people living with liver conditions and Hepatitis B and/or C. Both conditions are again a sign of the desperation of turning to drugs or alcohol when someone is experiencing vulnerability and desolation. Depression is the most diagnosed mental health condition among service users".

Joining Dublin Simon for the Memorial Service in the year of their 40th Anniversary were Pastor Bridget Spain, Reverend Darren McCallig and the Trinity College Chapel Choir.

For more information on Dublin Simon Community and any media queries please contact Lorna Cronnelly, Campaigns and Media Manager on 086 1724253 or lornacronnelly@dubsimon.ie

Note to Editors:

Dublin Simon Community Work with nearly 2000 people a year across 13 different services. These services range from Emergency and Rough Sleeper Team to Treatment, Supported Housing and Settlement Services.

The full results of the recent Dublin Simon Community Health Audit will be released next week.