PRESS RELEASE

For Immediate Release

Dublin Simon Community Insists Action Plan to End the Need to Sleep Rough by 2010 in Crisis

CEO Questions Viability of New National Strategy on Homelessness

HSE Funding Freeze Already Affecting Vital Services for the Homeless

In response to last nights Prime Time report into funding in the homeless sector, Dublin Simon Community insists that the Action Plan to end rough sleeping by 2010, signed by statuary and voluntary agencies will not be met unless there is an urgent response to this funding crisis.

According to Sam McGuinness, CEC of the Dublin Simon Community, "due to this funding freeze and a decrease in the cost of living funding, we, and other Homeless sector NGOs, will be unable to sustain and implement services vital for the completion of this Action Plan unless immediate action is taken to find a solution. We cannot standby and see the most vulnerable of our city suffer even more hardships due to the inadequacies of the HSE".

With funding not designated for 2008, The Dublin Simon Community can already confirm that the 3% cost of living cut across the board has led to an immediate direct shortfall of €83,000 for the Dublin Simon Community.

Dublin Simon Community currently runs projects which are underfunded by the HSE. This shortfall is made up by public donations, without which these vital services could not, and would not, operate. Examples include our Addiction Services and Emergency Shelter. The Dublin Simon Addiction Services (Detox, Rehab and Aftercare), are the only such facilities for people over 18 experiencing homelessness in Ireland and are in constant demand. frozen funds from the HSE ensure that our Alcohol Detox Service will have a shortfall of close to an €100,000 this year. Our Emergency Shelter's shortfall in funding will reach an additional €300,000.

"For every €1 needed to maintain our services only 50 cent is received through state funding. We now have to ask the public for the remaining 50 cent, to help us in our struggle end homelessness," says Sam McGuinness. "It is no secret that this problem is not going to go away, if anything it is on the rise. In the month of February last year our Dublin Simon Rough Sleeper Team encountered 201 people. In the same month this year they met with 318 people experiencing some form of homelessness on the streets. This is a shocking figure – 117, or a 58% increase, in the number of people making contact with the Rough Sleeper Team over a one year period. We cannot standby and watch this happen. The government needs to be called to action."

The most recent official rough sleeper count found 111 individuals sleeping rough on one night in the city. Though Dublin Simon believe this to be the absolute minimum, it is also a considerable increase on the previous count which took place last November and found 104 individuals sleeping rough.

The Dublin Simon Community questions the viability the new Strategy on Homelessness due to be published in May. "If the government cannot ensure the adequate mechanisms and resources are in place for the Key to the Door Action Plan for Dublin city, the viability of a new National Strategy on Homelessness is very questionable," according to Dublin Simon CEO Sam McGuinness.

Additional Information:

- This year Dublin Simon submitted 12 requests for development funding for new projects which our research shows are vital if government policy to end long-term homelessness is to be fulfilled. The HSE has no plans to fund or support these.

- The Dublin Simon Community provides 14 services for those experiencing homelessness in Dublin and works with over 140 volunteers. Services are provided throughout the continuum of care and range from the Soup Run and Rough Sleeper Team, who are on the streets 365 days of the year, to; Emergency Accommodation; Addiction Services; Housing for those with special support needs; Resettlement and Tenancy Sustainment.

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