



Dublin
Simon
Community

Annual Review 2012



Making Home a Reality

We are extremely grateful for the ongoing generosity of Dublin Simon Community Supporters. Through donations, combined with the commitment of the business community, we are able to continue to prevent and address homelessness in Dublin, Kildare and Wicklow.

On behalf of people who rely on our services, thank you to all the thousands of donors and corporate supporters, to our volunteers and staff, to all who gave items to our shops and to those who participated in events and activities during 2012. Without your help we would not be able to survive and provide vital services to those who rely on us each day.



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**Dublin Simon Community's
Vision, Mission and Values**
2012-2015

VISION STATEMENT

Making home a reality.

MISSION STATEMENT

*Empower people to access and retain a home,
by providing housing, prevention and targeted interventions
through advocacy and partnership.*

OUR VALUES

Community

*We provide those associated with Dublin Simon
Community, a sense of involvement, inclusion and belonging.*

Respect & Empowerment

We are committed to:

*Showing respect to each other and
responsible conduct is expected from all in the community.
Creating an environment where volunteers, staff and those
who use our services, are empowered to improve their lives
and that of their communities.*

Excellence & Innovation

*We provide services that are cost effective,
to best standards and are constantly pioneering new
and innovative ways of providing our services.*

Accountability & Integrity

*We operate with transparency so that we are
accountable for actions, individually and collectively.
We are equitable and fair in all our dealings.*



“ Home is where,
when you have to
go there, they have
to take you in. ”

**CEO
WELCOME**

The need for accommodation and assistance for those with no place to go, and whose existence has become harsh and dangerous, is drastically increasing to crisis levels.

Our Soup Run and Rough Sleeper Team, who are out 365 nights of the year, have seen a very worrying increase in the numbers bedding down on our city centre streets. At a time when the official rough sleeper figure count in April 2013 was at 94 in one night, up 30% on 2012, there is a severe shortage of housing options, rent increases and rent allowance restrictions. People are now compelled to stay longer in poor emergency facilities or resort to sleeping in doorways and squats.

Simon is a place that people turn to. We are focused on providing supportive alternatives to people living in despair; while empowering them to access, secure and retain their own home. In 2012, one of our focuses was to provide accommodation for people who have completed our detox, recovery and aftercare programmes. Without suitable housing, some can have little option but to return to the chaotic environment of emergency accommodation, again increasing their risk of relapse.

We are diligently working with the resources at our disposal to do everything possible to respond to the ever growing demand for our services. In the face of continued economic uncertainty, and reducing state support, using our Property Development Fund we have created quality accommodation with support, to help people open the door to a home of their own and reach their highest level of independence.

Our "Homeless Snapshot" showed an increase in those who are homeless for more than five years, up from 40% to almost 60%. The events triggering their homelessness were family conflict, domestic violence, relationship

breakdown, alcohol, drug, mental or psychiatric issues. Frequently diagnosed physical health conditions were arthritis, blood pressure and asthma while mental health issues included depression, panic attacks and anxiety. This demonstrates that homelessness is not just about housing and while we are vigorously responding to the housing need, we are also cognisant of the fact that bricks and mortar alone will not solve homelessness.

In 2012 we focused on developing an organisational strategy that further enhanced service user participation and support, building on our sense of community and family. We launched the Simon Counselling service which provides counselling to adults who are homeless or at risk, enabling them to rebuild their self esteem and their lives. We also expanded our Learning & Development and Health & Wellbeing programmes for our residents and added extensive training, development, education and employability programmes to help people regain their usefulness and belonging.


As always, we are driven and inspired by the resilience, courage and spirit of our service users. We recognise their struggles by working closely with them every day and provide support to ensure that they don't return to homelessness. All of this work would not be possible without the sustained generosity of our individual donors, families, corporations, trusts and foundations, and the tireless work and devotion of our staff and volunteers.

With your help, we will continue to provide the support and housing that will help people sustain a home in their community.

We appreciate your support; we couldn't do it without you.

Sam

*Quote from Robert Frost.



“ Everyone helps out everyone in situations. If you don't see someone for a day or two you knock down and see if they are alright. It's a real community. Definitely. We're all good neighbours. ”

Jimmy Wynn
Permanent Supported
Housing Resident

CHAIRPERSON'S REPORT 2012



“ In a year of financial difficulty for many, Dublin Simon Community worked to respond to an increased demand for our services; providing accommodation, detox, outreach, education, and training to mention a few. We constantly strive to get the most effective alignment between our services and the needs of our service users. The level of engagement we achieve between our staff, volunteers and service users to identify and maintain that alignment is a unique strength of Dublin Simon, as a community of people, committed to ridding Ireland of the scourge of homelessness.

We continue to operate a housing focused approach to tackle long term homelessness. To do this we need access to appropriate buildings in order to increase people's ability to recreate a home. Providing people with supported housing options produces life-enhancing and sometimes life saving results, while being more cost-effective for our society in the medium and long run. In 2012 we focused on acquiring properties to increase our housing capacity. We also expanded our services, refurbished our existing facilities and looked at relocating some services into new premises.

Like many in the charity sector, we experienced a continued shortfall in statutory funding and we simply do not have the capacity to absorb further cuts. Our 2012 financial survival is due to a combination of our continued cost reduction programme and the ongoing generosity of Dublin Simon Supporters. With further budget cuts expected, causing continuous strain, we are now more reliant than ever on public donations and fundraising campaigns to bridge the funding gap and provide long-term solutions to homelessness. Across our community we constantly search for more

innovative and engaging initiatives to attract volunteers, supporters and donations to ensure our capacity to maintain and develop both the quality and range of our services to our service users. This is one of our key areas of strength.

2012 saw Dublin Simon Community undertake extensive consultations to create a Strategic Plan involving stakeholders, board, staff, management, volunteers and those who use our services. The consultation led to board approval and the roll out of the ambitious three year plan across the organisation, giving us an opportunity to be more responsive and innovative for the period ahead. There is a shared and powerful sense of energy for and commitment to this exciting plan across our community that should give us all great confidence in our ability to make it happen and increase our ability to be even more effective in our efforts to eliminate homelessness.

Niall Saul
CHAIRPERSON



CSO Figures on Homelessness

CSO figures on homelessness announced that 3,800 people were homeless on Census night, 10th April 2011, with 59 men and women sleeping rough. Dublin Simon would view this as the absolute minimum figure as the count does not include people considered the "hidden homeless" who are couch surfing, staying in squats or hospitals, internet cafes or temporary B&Bs.

Business Journalist Quiz

The Annual Business Journalist Quiz took place on 26th April in the Radisson Blu hotel. This table quiz ran in association with Diageo Ireland, Corporate Reputations and Smith & Williamson. It was hosted by RTÉ's Brian Dobson and invigilated by Justice Peter Kelly. RTÉ emerged as the winners and more than €50,000 was raised for Dublin Simon Community.

The Shortest Night

Dublin Simon Community was delighted to be chosen by Sound Training Centre as the partner for their charity album in 2012. 'The Shortest Night' was released on 21st June to coincide with the longest day of the year. The album of Motown covers was a culmination of efforts by the students of the Centre and featured many acts including Pugwash, Neil Hannon, Gavin James and The Villagers. The album was launched with an in-store performance in Tower Records and a gig in the Button Factory.

Wicklow Town

'The Warrens' on Kilmartin Hill was purchased by Wicklow County Council and in April it was announced that the property would be used for temporary accommodation for men and women, to be run by the Simon Community. Work on the property will commence in 2013.

Garden Project in Sean MacDermott Street

Revamping the garden space at Dublin Simon's High Supported Housing on Sean MacDermott was chosen by Localise and the students of Larkin Community College as their community project. The

garden will be designed by celebrity gardener Diarmuid Gavin in partnership with the US Embassy in Dublin, working in tandem with Localise, an NGO which focuses on encouraging young people to actively give back to their community. Work will take place in 2013.

Rowan Ward Closure

The Rowan Ward in Cherry Orchard Hospital in Ballyfermot was closed towards the end of 2012. The ward had previously provided respite services for patients with HIV but following a decision made by the HSE this ward was to be closed and some of the patients transferred to Dublin Simons facility on Ushers Island.

Simon Week 2012

Simon Week 2012 involved the 'Take a Step for Simon' campaign which invited the public to make an activity pledge for their local Simon Community. These could range from volunteering, to writing to a TD about homeless issues or holding a fundraising event. For Dublin Simon, the Fun Run on 4th October concluded the week's events.

The Irish Times Charity Partnership

The Simon Community was delighted to be chosen as the Irish Times charity partner for the New Year 2013. The Irish Times donated 20c from every newspaper sold on Friday 23rd November to launch the partnership, with all proceeds to the Simon House of Cards Appeal, helping over 5,000 people in Ireland experiencing homelessness.

Christmas Eve Busk

The annual Christmas Eve Busk took place again on Grafton Street. Bono, Glen Hansard, Lisa Hannigan, Sinéad O'Connor and several others who sang for several hours to raise funds for the Simon Community and the Peter McVerry Trust.



Donal became homeless following a psychiatric admission while completing college exams.

"Life itself was cruel in small ways and it was these "small ways" which broke me."

With a long history of mental illness, Donal went from rough sleeping to shelters for almost 20 years.

"I left Ireland in 1997 as all I could see for myself was a life on the streets. After 10 years in England of not much work, living in shelters and alcohol dependence, I was exacerbated and returned home to the help of Simon."

Donal now lives in our supported housing accommodation, Canal Road.

"To say something of my experience of homelessness, I would tell you that I never craved money or possessions much anyway. What always motivated me was a willingness to understand my environment and to find a place within it, regardless of personal success or failure in the end."

"With Simon I value feeling settled. The stability I have really is the best thing. It allows me to give time to my writing and in the coming years I hope to write a play."

OUT is written by Donal Moran.

OUT

by Donal Moran

I

Many years ago, as a student, I was preoccupied with the condition of homelessness. One particular man caught my attention from time to time; how he got through each day and night and, somehow, survived was a complete mystery. Being rather cynical and sceptical concerning good will, in general, it seemed, to me, heroic that people in this predicament would just keep going.

Over the years, faith in human nature or a God above has not been one of my strengths, yet the bravery of the poor; marginalised and severely traumatised has been an inspiration. The will to soldier on, no matter what, is a complete legacy; humour and wit often being the gifts bequeathed.

For some time now, having had personal experience of homelessness, it is hard to exaggerate the importance of a room and, thereby, a renewed place in the community: knowing what pain and isolation are, the feeling is so much sweeter; it becomes possible to live in the moment again and to savour the very simple pleasures of life. A walk in the park, a coffee with a friend or a swim in the sea seem so much more than just things to do; the acts of so doing have purpose and, being not merely mechanical, these such acts are lived.

Most people who have been homeless are inevitably damaged, just as the majority of the population at large have baggage anyway, therefore a mutual understanding of crisis is not in any way untenable. Even the wealthiest of people have problems and they too, of course, can lose it all. We all need food and shelter and herein wise man meets fool. Nobody is above the basic needs of life and if we each individually think of ourselves as unique, – while it may well be so – what is more primordial is the feeling of being bonded to one another.

2

Being accused of indulging the "feel good" factor – which I have been, from time to time – is quite ironic, given that this is often followed by such inferences that real pleasure is of a higher order and is complex, subtle and reserved for special sensitivities. A knowing exchange of gazes is for the culturally commissioned who do no business with philistines.

Life is neither art nor fashion, it is no beautiful thing, for so many, and it is, in fact, quite rudimentary. Living is neither 'in' nor 'out', it is here and now, it was yesterday and will be tomorrow. Living is life, a life which would ideally enhance and include all; there would be no 'out' and no need for 'in'. The real, itself, divides, but when problems are confronted, we glimpse the ideal.

PARTICIPATION AND DEVELOPMENT

The Participation and Development services continued to address the personal development, education, training and employment needs of people using our services. Investing in clients' learning and development facilitates pathways out of homelessness and social exclusion and thus 'Making Home a Reality' for them in the future. In 2012, a total of 230 individual participants engaged in Learning and Development activities and projects, an increase of 34 people from 2011. The Service User Development Group had 23 members in the year with approximately 70 people attending the two Speak Outs organised by the service.

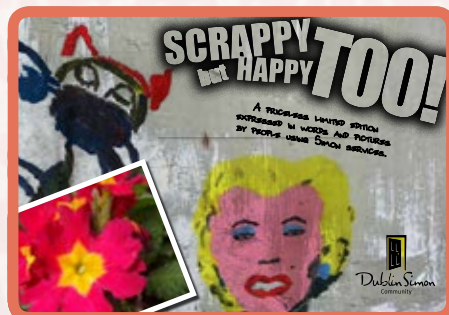
Learning and Development

Meaningful activities are central to providing structure, purpose, wellbeing, intellectual stimulation, self-esteem, socialisation and independence in the lives of people using our services. In addition to established courses such as Literacy, Computers, Creative Writing and Art, three new courses were introduced in 2012: Drama, Personal Development and Life Coaching. The latter two specifically focused on occupational life-skills to prepare people to access progression routes into education, training, employment and volunteering.

We held our second Recognition Ceremony in August to celebrate participation and achievements in the Get SMART Meaningful Activities Programme. Our guest speaker, Michael Power, former Chairperson of the National Adult Literacy Agency, shared his hugely inspiring personal story of the challenges he faced overcoming literacy difficulties and his return to education. 95 individuals received Certificates of Participation and eight people received Certificates of Achievement.

In August, we also launched **'Scrappy but Happy Too!'** a second collection of artwork and creative writing from people using Dublin Simon services. Our guest speaker, Siobhán McKenna spoke of her own journey overcoming adversity to becoming a highly successful writer. Siobhán won the TV3 'Write a Bestseller' award in 2011 with 'The Lingerie Designer'.

We published spring, summer and winter issues of The Simon SUN, a newsletter for people using our services to share their stories, creativity, interests and achievements.



Service User Participation

As part of the Service User Participation (SUP) service, the Service User Development Group (SUDG) met monthly to plan, develop and report on current and new initiatives. In 2012, 23 individuals attended the SUDG with 10 being new members. Two SUDG members joined the national Simon Involvement and Action Group to exchange information and ideas. Two Speak Outs took place, one in April debating the term 'service user' with coverage of the Service Users' Say report, and another in November on the theme of homelessness prevention. Approximately 35 clients attended each Speak Out.

Four SUDG members completed Group Facilitation Skills training with another two co-facilitating Dublin Simon Community Strategy focus groups. SUDG members presented an interactive drama at the Community Day on the theme I am a citizen, language is power.

The Spokesperson Panel was established with four people, to speak at internal and external events and to the media, via the Campaigns and Media Manager. As part of this, two panel members received Media Skills training with Near FM.

Other achievements in 2012 included:

- Six people commenced Service User Volunteer Placements across Dublin Simon services.
- A pilot of Lending4Change (a Start Your Own Business programme) took place in January with two clients.
- Visiting the European Parliament in Brussels and meeting Gay Mitchell to discuss homelessness.
- Participating in Peer Research with people who use our services regarding the effectiveness of the Outcomes Star measurement tool in care planning.
- Completing the pilot six week Adventure Activity Programme.
- Winning the Simon Cup Soccer Tournament a second year in a row.
- Organising the Service User Christmas Lunch in the National College of Ireland, followed by a raffle, singing and Bollywood dancers.

Health and Wellbeing

The Health and Wellbeing Service was established at the end of November 2012. The service aims to promote and encourage healthy practices in the fields of exercise, nutrition and relaxation amongst those who use the services of Dublin Simon Community.

The main services offered are:

- Personal Training Sessions
- Boxing Classes
- Relaxation Groups
- Health Groups



The Health and Wellbeing Service will also be involved in supporting client participation in the Community Day, the Simon Fun Run as well as the respective Health and Wellbeing Weeks for staff and for clients. This service, will also co-ordinate the Dublin Simon football team to compete in the annual Simon Cup in August 2013.

VOLUNTEERING

Volunteers are at the core of the Dublin Simon Community's work. They work alongside professional staff to deliver vital services to people experiencing homelessness, offering support as they move towards securing a home of their own. In 2012 we had 41 Full-Time Volunteers within the organisation with placements in our Housing, Specialist and Support services. Our Part-Time Volunteers enable us to provide invaluable services such as the Soup Run, Social Club and Social Programmes in the Residential and Treatment services. With 185 Part-Time Volunteers throughout 2012, the Soup Run ran 365 days of the year co-ordinating with the Outreach team and Volunteer Office. The Social Club operated twice a week linking in with the Volunteer Office. Over 4000 people volunteered their time to take part in our various fundraising activities during 2012.

Dublin Institute of Technology – Volunteer Graduation Ceremony 2012

In May 2012, volunteers from Simon Communities in Galway, Cork and Dublin graduated from the Certificate in Volunteering in D.I.T. Aungier Street. The course is based on reflective practice and the tutors deliver interactive sessions on topics such as mental health, homelessness and addiction, boundaries, personal development and self care. This adds quality to service delivery and the positive experiences of volunteers and Simon Community clients.

“ I am consistently impressed by the dedication Simon volunteers bring to the course each year. Their enthusiasm for learning new skills and increasing their knowledge base shows their commitment to delivering a quality service to Simon clients, providing the support needed in order to move out of homelessness, into a place of their own. ”

Sharon Feeney
Programme Director and Chair of a Continuing Professional Development programme in Volunteering, DIT



Volunteer-Led Services

The **Soup Run** operates seven days per week, 365 nights of the year. In 2012 Part-Time Volunteers helped distribute an average of 310 sandwiches and 126 hot beverages per week, approximately 22,700 sandwiches and hot drinks in the year. The teams initiated 4,323 individual contacts, with the highest monthly contacts made in September with a total of 671 contacts recorded. Volunteers were also offered more training opportunities in 2012 including Sharps Training, First Aid, Manual Handling and Fire Safety.

The **Social Club** is held in Capel Street every Monday and Wednesday. An assessment was completed on the people who access the Social Club in November 2012 and showed that the majority of attendees wanted some support in computer training and in developing social skills. Classes for increasing self confidence by trying new activities and experiencing new learning opportunities will be developed in 2013.



HOUSING

Rough Sleeper Team: Regional Contact and Outreach Service

2012 saw a steady increase in the numbers of people verified to be rough sleeping. This is evident with the teams' Early Morning Street counts that take place bi-weekly in the early hours of Tuesday and Thursday mornings. With the cold snap, the Regional Contact and Outreach Service (RCOS) played an integral role in the provision of the 2012-2013 Cold Weather Initiative. An average of 356 accessed the service per month, a total of 4271 per year.

On a daily basis, the team refer rough sleepers into the allocated beds in hostels throughout Dublin. This provides an essential opportunity to link persons into mainstream services and to further develop relations with external agencies such as the Central Placement Service and the County Councils.

There have been many successful client referrals into supported and independent accommodation. RCOS continues to offer a means for clients to engage with addiction treatment services, usually being the first point of contact towards alcohol detox or methadone stabilisation programmes.

Needle Exchange

With HSE Safer Injecting Training, the team has become adept at providing harm reduction advice with the already established Emergency Needle Exchange service and made 2245 exchanges in the year.

Mobile Health Clinic

With the increase in numbers of homeless persons accessing the primary healthcare service, the Mobile Health Clinic was extended to two nights the end of 2012. The service saw 4192 people accessing the service in 2012.

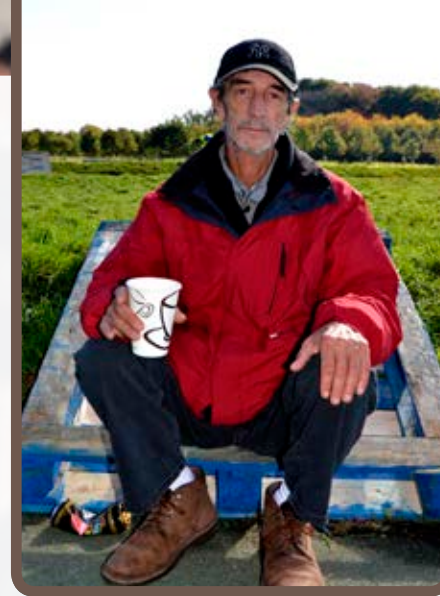
Supported Temporary Accommodation

Dublin Simon Community provide low threshold, 24-hour temporary emergency accommodation (TEA) for men and women who are homeless in Dublin. Our emergency services were accessed by 865 people in 2012.

Working closely with SafetyNet the nurse-led health service was reintroduced to our Harcourt Street Service to improve the project's ability to respond proactively to the physical health needs of the residents and ensure their needs were being met in an integrated manner. A flu vaccination programme was rolled out in the autumn with great success. In response to the presenting needs of residents the number of couples accommodated was doubled from one to two. The overall capacity of the service was increased from 30 to 31 residents. Several efforts were also made to improve the physical environment for residents with numerous areas refurbished as part of Room to Improve projects.

In line with the 2013-2016 Dublin Simon Strategy a number of staff began the project of reviewing and researching the best model of service delivery for TEAs and similar projects. This research is examining best practice models in both Ireland and other countries to ensure the best possible method of service delivery into the future.

In August, Island house expanded its service to operate on a 24 hour basis, further enhancing the level of care and support provided to existing and new residents, with a total of 152 people accessing the service. New initiatives were also introduced, such as health and wellbeing and harm reduction workshops, which played a key role in fostering greater levels of self care and self esteem within our residents. As part of the reconfiguration of homeless services, Island house was closed down in November 2012 to allow for the building to be refurbished and re-established as a specialist Respite/Stabilisation unit. Suitable accommodation was sourced for residents in order to avoid any likelihood of rough sleeping as a result of the facility closing. We would like to take this opportunity to acknowledge the great work and effort undertaken by all members of the Island House staff team in providing an ultra low threshold service since the shelter opened in 2008.



Permanent Supported Housing

Dublin Simon provides four supported housing units with varying levels of support depending on the individual needs of residents.

Our medium supported housing services on Canal Road and Dorset Street provide accommodation and support to 35 residents with a total of 42 people accessing the services in 2012. There are a range of services and activities provided onsite that address both individual and group needs. Residents meet with their assigned key worker weekly to identify goals and areas for development to assist and motivate the resident to sustain their home or move to independent accommodation. These include personal and professional development through one-to-one sessions and on site classes which aim to improve existing skills while also developing new ones.

In 2012 our Dorset St service converted an office in order to provide a multipurpose room. This enabled us to provide an on-site counselling service to our residents. The resident groups also wrote, directed and performed their own production of "Christmas On the Streets", inviting staff, friends, family and neighbours to their performance held in Canal Road. The funds raised through this event contributed to the residents' holiday to Kippure, Co. Wicklow in May of this year.

The service actively engaged with groups in our community who have supported us in providing social outings and new experiences for our residents, linking in with opportunities through the Learning and Development service.

Our high supported housing is provided at our services on Sean MacDermott Street and North Circular Road. Both provide accommodation for 44 men and women, and in 2012 50 people accessed this service. Beds in both high support services are in huge demand as long-term homelessness can lead to a vast array of health issues.

SPECIALIST SERVICES

Detox

Our residential alcohol detoxification unit has a capacity of 11 beds. It is a low threshold service targeted specifically at people who are homeless. The three week programme and the detoxification process are medically supervised by visiting GPs who attend the unit daily. The Detox Team consists of a nurse manager, nursing staff that provides 24 cover, three full time volunteers and a project worker. The service was accessed by 150 people during 2012. Capacity was reduced from 11 beds to seven from July to December to accommodate the temporary placement of a new Respite/Stabilisation unit in the building. Overall, completion rates for the year improved by 10% to 70%.

In February 2012, the service participated in an initiative to enable new community clients, mainly from the Polish community, to return home. The target group consisted of approximately 60 Polish citizens who were sleeping rough in Dublin city. Representatives from Dublin City Council Homeless Services, De Paul Ireland, Crosscare, Mendicity, Dublin Simon Detox Unit and Barka, a Polish Organisation who were facilitating the return home, made up the committee. The role of our service was to provide detox facilities for those who wanted to address their drinking addiction before repatriation. The nurse manager sat on the Steering Group which met monthly. 14 clients in total of the 54 successfully repatriated attended Detox.

Additional move on options for clients completing Detox were explored and links were established with PACE (Probationary Services) and Crosscare on Amiens Street.

The team actively participated in the development of the new three year strategy. The year ended with a busy Christmas period where clients who were rough sleeping were prioritised for admission over Christmas.

Rehab and Aftercare

Our residential Rehabilitation unit programme is a low threshold service, targeted specifically at people who are homeless. The six month Rehabilitation programme is supervised 24 hours a day by specifically trained staff in the field of addictions. 80 people accessed the service in 2012. Capacity was reduced from 20 beds to 17 from July to December to accommodate the temporary placement of a new respite stabilisation unit in the building.

The Residential Aftercare programme provided six beds for six/nine month durations. In 2012 56 people accessed our Aftercare service which provides residential and non-residential low threshold post-treatment support programmes. People using the service attend peer support groups and meet with the aftercare addiction support workers to continue building on the progress made in rehab in order to sustain a positive lifestyle that does not include alcohol.

Additional service provision changes were made and the introduction of lower threshold readmission, to recent relapse and lapse clients back into the programme, was implemented. This ensured clients who were already participating in the rehabilitation programme, did not have to go back to Central Placement Service and or rough sleeping but rather, would temporarily lapse, re-enter the programme and continue with their recovery.

In conjunction with this we lowered the threshold regarding the admission and assessment of clients presenting with Benzodiazepam issues and prison referrals. There has been a significant change in our client group regarding poly drug misuse and this would reflect our focus for 2013; in relation to a full recovery model and poly drug misuse.

Support to Live Independently (SLI)

Our SLI service worked with 338 people in 2012. This figure is made up of single men, single women and families with children who were residing in homeless accommodation and who are moving from homeless services into their own homes. This transition for people can often be challenging and the SLI service provides practical and emotional support to people at that time. Each person or family is provided with a dedicated and professional SLI staff member who will support people in setting up their new home and for a further 3-9 months to access services in their community or support them with some of the difficulties that may have contributed to them becoming homeless in the first place. Through our partnership work with the four Dublin Local Authorities the service aims to be available to all people leaving homelessness whether that is because they are moving into local authority accommodation or because they have sourced private rented accommodation. 2012 saw further integration of the service into the four local authorities and we look forward to 2013 when a thorough evaluation of the service is completed. In 2012 69% of all cases were successfully closed with all support plan goals being met.



“ One of the most important things that I have learned while working in the Support to Live Independently service is that anybody can be affected by homelessness and that everyone deserves to have a place they can call home. ”

Paul Donegan

Dublin Simon Community Full-Time Volunteer



Visiting Tenancy Support Service

A key objective in the new government policy on homelessness announced in 2013 is prevention of homelessness and this is also a key component of the 'Pathway to Home' model. In 2012 a service was set up to work with people identified as being at risk of homelessness. Originally called the 'Homelessness Prevention Service' it has a new title now called Visiting Tenancy Support service to reflect the fact it often supports people at a very early stage to prevent a risk of homelessness developing in the first place. The service worked with 33 people in the year and provided visiting support staff deployed in the five Dublin City Council areas. Referrals are received from all agencies in the community, the local authority and any person themselves who feels their tenancy is at risk. The service meets the person to assess their situation and agrees with them the best course of action. The team also visit people in their homes to provide direct support on issues such as tackling financial problems and rent arrears as well as linking them in with community services that will further support them. In 2012 the team started a thorough promotional campaign to make people aware of the service and integrate the service into the local communities. In 2012 50% of cases were successfully closed.

Respite/Stabilisation

In early 2012 the Health Services Executive brought a proposal to Dublin Simon Community regarding the possibility of moving the HIV Respite Unit from Rowan Unit in Cherry Orchard Hospital to a community primary care setting at the Dublin Simon Community Ushers Island Complex. Discussions ensued and carried on throughout the summer months culminating in the opening of an eight bed HIV Respite/Stabilisation unit on 3rd September. The clients from Rowan were moved under the Pathway to Home with Ministerial approval. This low-threshold residential unit aims to support clients living with HIV to stabilise their illicit substance use while also accessing treatment for their HIV and other medical conditions. Clients are admitted for a three to eight week programme, where the unit is staffed 24/7 by qualified nursing staff and visiting primary care GP's Monday-Friday. Residents have access to on site counselling, a key worker and full time volunteers. Referrals are also made to existing mainstream primary care services. Clients participate in group work and have access to learning, participation, health and wellbeing and client involvement services. Since this unit opened in September, 23 clients were admitted by the end of 2012.



Counselling Service

In January 2012 Dublin Simon Community established the Counselling Service. The team comprises of eight volunteer counsellors, who are working towards their accreditation and who are managed and supervised by a Counselling Co-ordinator. The service is providing professional counselling to adults who are homeless or at risk of becoming homeless and received 66 referrals during 2012.

For many people who use our services, homelessness has been a pattern in their life. The service is designed to help people to address the issues that have contributed to their becoming homeless, so that they can take the necessary steps to resolve these issues and move on with their lives. Those accessing the service may need support with issues such as addiction, bereavement, social isolation, depression, abuse and mental or physical issues. Dublin Simon Counselling Service is free of charge, easily accessible and without waiting lists. Referrals are received only from within Dublin Simon Community services.

“ Homelessness is much more than the absence of four walls. Just because you have four walls doesn't mean you're not homeless. Homelessness is when you don't have the family support, the friend circle. That's when you're homeless. ”

Glenn Gannon
Previously accessed Simon services

AREA DEVELOPMENT

Since 2010 we have established the Simon Community Homeless Support service in Kildare, Wicklow and Meath. The purpose of this service is to conduct assessments, provide support plans and move-on options to enable people to overcome homelessness and secure a home of their own. This service is funded solely by the generosity of Simon supporters in these counties and, in relation to the provision of the service in Meath, involves partnership with our colleagues in Dundalk Simon Community.

Who we worked with

During 2012 the Simon Community Homeless Support Service engaged with 171 people who were homeless in Wicklow and Kildare.

- 103 people with 22 children in Wicklow and 46 in Kildare.
- During the year a minimum of 25 people (16 in Wicklow and nine in Kildare) were recorded as rough sleeping when presented to the Homeless Service.
- The main age profile was between 25 and 40 years of age.
- Presentation to our services and drop-in clinics were mainly based in the urban areas of Wicklow town, Bray, Rathdrum in Wicklow and Newbridge, Athy, The Curragh, Kilcullen and Naas in Kildare.

Future Developments

Since establishing a strategic partnership with Wicklow County Council in identifying the need for a 24-hour on site emergency accommodation with move-on options, the Council purchased in the spring, two end of terraced houses for the provision of this service. At the end of year the buildings were being internally refurbished while waiting for the outcome of a planning appeal. The Service in 2013 will provide holistic support such as:

- Food, care, warmth and access to hygiene facilities for the homeless population of Wicklow County.
- A safe environment where residents can rebuild their lives and begin their journey out of homelessness.
- Professional assessment, housing and personal support plans.
- Resettlement to long-term independent accommodation.
- Life skills and tenancy sustainment programmes as well as personal care and managing finances.

During the year we engaged with the local community, businesses, residents, community groups and elected officials to explain the service and its ability to move people out of homelessness through sourcing private rented accommodation. We also carried our initial recruitment for staff for the new service which will continue into 2013. An office space was established in Wicklow town as a base for the existing Simon Community Visiting Support team, including the addition of one full time homeless support worker. This led to an expansion of service provision to west Wicklow towns such as Baltinglass and Blessington.



“The difference between supported housing and sheltered accommodation is that people get Responsibility. When we give them responsibility they tend to relish in it. They can close their own hall doors. We've built, I suppose, a good community profile.”

Liz Clarke
Supported Housing Manager

We further expanded our Kildare Homeless Support Service with one additional staff member and sourced key working/one to one working space with ARAS Addiction Services in Newbridge and Celbridge. This has provided a platform from which to develop a multi-disciplinary, case management style approach to working with individuals with a range of complex needs.

Work continued with and developed links with a number of local agencies such as:

- Bray Homeless forum and Bray Area Partnership
- Bray Town Council and Wicklow Town Council
- Newcastle Hospital Social Work Department
- Bray "Sa Bhaile" Homeless Service
- Arklow Community Addiction Team
- Youth of Peace Hostel (Teach Iosa), Athy
- ARAS Addiction services in Newbridge and Celbridge
- Vincent De Paul Hostel (Michael Garry House), Newbridge
- HSE Outreach services in Kildare
- Tus Nua Mental Health Centre, Kildare
- Local Community welfare offices
- Citizens information centres through Wicklow and Kildare

The Simon Community Homeless Support Services in the counties are solely funded through our generous donor base that exists in each County.

FUNDRAISING & COMMUNICATIONS

Commitment to Standards of Fundraising Practice

In 2012 Dublin Simon Community signed up to The Statement of Guiding Principles for Fundraising. The statement exists to improve fundraising practice, promote high levels of accountability and transparency by organisations fundraising from the public and provide clarity and assurances to donors and prospective donors about the organisations they support. Dublin Simon Community is fully committed to achieving the standards contained within the Statement of Guiding Principles for Fundraising as outlined in our Public Compliance Statement and our Donor Charter, available on www.dubsimon.ie.

Some of this year's highlights

The **Flora Women's Mini Marathon** took place on Monday the 4th of June. Dublin Simon Community had over 160 participants running and raising sponsorship for us. We were delighted to have Brooks Hotel, Drury Street sponsor the event by generously donating our top prize and hosting our exclusive after party. We would like to say a huge thank you to all the families and friends who ran for us.

Thank you to everyone who took part in the **Namibian Desert Challenge**. Organised by the Simon Hiker Committee, made up of volunteers, the team trekked through the wilderness in some of Namibia's least populated and most scenic areas in the week long trek from the 7th to 15th September 2012 to raise funds for Dublin Simon services.

The **29th Annual Dublin Simon Fun Run** took place on 6th October in the Phoenix Park. Over 3,000 people, ranging from toddlers, to school goers, buggy runners, amateur and professional runners alike took part in our "Silly Run for a Serious Cause" making it the most successful Fun Run to date.

In 2012, Dublin Simon implemented a family element to the Fun Run, creating a Kids Race Zone for children under 12. An entertainment area was created at the finish line including a kids craft area, magic show, live music, balloon artist, food court, cup cake decorating, face painting, raffles and spot prizes. Many thanks to everyone who attended and to the over 200 volunteers who helped organise traffic junctions, start and finish lines, kid's races and amusements.

Sing for Simon 2012 was a great success as it brought together over 100 groups and choirs and over 200 volunteers who sang Christmas carols in numerous shopping centres and other places around Dublin. Sing for Simon kicked off on 2nd December in Meeting House Square with attendees gathering to sing along to our exclusive karaoke video featuring Zig and Zag, RTÉ Newsroom and many more. Thank you to all our supporters that attended, to Meeting House Square for hosting and to 98fm, 7up and Brooks Hotel for sponsoring the event. The 5th annual 24 Hour Carolathon took place on Grafton Street on 21st-22nd December. The Dublin Gay Men's Chorus Choir beautifully started the event joined by the elegant Cinderella in costume from the Gaiety Theatre Panto and Lucan Gospel Choir again gave a spectacular finale. Thank you to all those who sang, shook buckets and enjoyed Sing for Simon during the Christmas period, we couldn't have done it without you.

Our Direct Mail Campaigns at spring and Christmas had a very generous response and we are extremely grateful to those who continue to support us in these difficult times.



Corporate Fundraising

The **2012 Simon House of Cards Appeal** was a huge success, and with the much needed support from over 270 businesses, achieved its target of raising over €500,000 for Simon Communities across the country. The campaign also introduced a very special new feature: the 'Simon House of Light' projection show at Powerscourt Townhouse Centre. Christmas shoppers were stopped in their tracks as Santa flew in with a sleigh full of presents as Christmas tunes and spirit filled busy South William Street. We would like to thank each company for taking part and helping make a difference to over 5,000 people experiencing homelessness in Ireland. A special thank you goes to The Irish Times, Irish International and The Powerscourt Townhouse Centre whose critical help, generous support and leadership make this appeal possible.

The **Food for Simon** programme continued to be a great cost-saving initiative for Dublin Simon in 2012. Thank you to programme patron, Michael Carey, all of the participating companies and service suppliers whose continued support by donating their products and services free of charge makes this programme such a success.

Throughout 2012 our **Workplace Fundraising, Share your Skills, Room to Improve** and **Stock the Shops** programmes went from strength to strength with volunteers from businesses taking time out to make a difference to our services.

Our Campaigns and Media team continued to grow in 2012 with Dublin Simon Community featuring in almost 300 print articles, broadcast features and interviews throughout the year. Some key events which the media covered over the year include:

- Business Journalist Quiz
- Garden project in Sean MacDermott Street
- Dublin Simon Annual Review 2011
- Simon House of Light
- Scrappy But Happy Too
- Charity album 'The Shortest Night'
- Sing for Simon

We would like to sincerely thank those media outlets who chose to highlight the ongoing work of the Dublin Simon Community and give a voice to people experiencing homelessness. Dublin Simon would also like to thank the many staff, volunteers and people using our services who have represented Simon throughout 2012. These stories help us to demonstrate our success as we continue our work to move people out of homelessness and into a home of their own.



“ Once you have the key and can lock that door, it’s a lovely experience. I remember the first and second night, that’s what I kept on doing. Just putting the key in the door, closing it and locking the door and saying, “I’m safe now, this is my place. ”

Neil Byrne

*Previous supported housing resident,
now moved on to independent living.*



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