



simon
community
Northern Ireland

annual report 2022-2023



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Sean, past Simon Community client, now Homeless Activist

SIMON COMMUNITY NORTHERN IRELAND LEGAL AND ADMINISTRATIVE INFORMATION

TRUSTEES

Ms T Brennan
Mr C Donaghy
Mr J Johnston
Mr M O'Kane
Mr J O'Neill
Ms A Braden
Ms A McGregor (Appointed 14 November 2022)
Mr D Templeton (Appointed 14 November 2022)

SECRETARY

Mr J Johnston

CHARITY NUMBER COMPANY NUMBER

NIC102724
NI017466

PRINCIPAL ADDRESS

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Belfast
BT1 4gF

REGISTERED OFFICE

4th Floor
Arthur Place
24-26 Arthur Street
Belfast
BT1 4gF

BANKERS

Danske Bank
Donegall Square West
Belfast
BT1 6JS

SOLICITORS

Agnew, Address, Higgins & Co
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Belfast
BT1 2BG
Worthingtons
24-38 Gordon Street
Belfast
BT1 2LG



FOREWORD

Chair of the Board of Directors, Joe O'Neill Opening Statement

I have had a long association with Simon Community and its work. This year, I was delighted and humbled to be asked by fellow Board members to become Chairman.

Throughout my tenure at Simon Community, during which I have been Chair of both its Audit & Risk Committee, and then its Strategy & Sustainability Committee, I have always been struck by the resilience of the organisation.

Despite ongoing public funding challenges, political hiatuses and growing demand for client support, Simon Community has not only survived but grown and developed. This survival instinct is a reflection of the organisation's ability to adapt and evolve.

Unfortunately, here in Northern Ireland some things are not evolving. The lack of a functioning Executive brings with it stalled progress on a number of key government policies and local issues. For Simon Community, Northern Ireland's largest homelessness charity, a lack of agreed Housing Supply Strategy has an immediate and significant impact on our work. Our clients are having to remain much longer in emergency accommodation because there are fewer and fewer housing options for them, particularly in social housing. The average stay of one of our clients in temporary accommodation is nearly a year, which is far too long. This has a direct knock-on effect on the availability of emergency accommodation for others. Northern Ireland desperately needs a functioning housing system - one that addresses the chronic shortage of housing. A shortage which is causing year-on-year rises in the number of people becoming homeless.

My priorities for Simon Community during my tenure are threefold. The first is to challenge and support the organisation to do more for the people who need us most. Secondly, I will help develop and deliver our strategic direction over the next 5 years to ensure we continue to evolve and adapt to meet the growing demand of people without a home. The third is to ensure that the Board has the right people with the right experience providing the right stewardship at the right time.

I look forward to working on these with the Board, senior staff, and all of those at Simon Community. I had the pleasure of hosting the Simon Community Staff Conference during my early tenure as Chairman. I greatly enjoyed speaking to 170 staff colleagues and hearing their views on the organisation. I thank them for the warm welcome that day and reiterate the commitment I gave them then - I will do my very best for the organisation and it is a commitment I will not break.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank all the wonderful staff and volunteers of Simon Community who are so committed to ending homelessness. Society owes them a debt of gratitude.

On a personal note, I would also like to thank my predecessor, former Simon Community Chairman, Iggy O'Doherty. Iggy's contribution over the years has been unmeasurable and he leaves an indelible lasting legacy.



Joe O'Neill

Chair of the Board of Directors

Chief Executive, Jim Dennison 2022-23 Overview

In the last 5 years, and particularly within the current reporting period of this report, Simon Community has offered more help and support to those who are homeless or at risk of becoming homeless than ever before.

We offer all of our support services because there is considerable – and growing – demand for them. Back then we predicted that more and more individuals and families would become homeless this year and sadly that prediction has come true. Even sadder is that we predict this will continue to grow: more people will become homeless in Northern Ireland over the coming months and years.

Whilst that increasing demand proves a real challenge for us, it also drives us. The philosopher Plato wrote ‘necessity is the mother of invention’ and I believe that this demand for services is a necessity and our response to it, our invention.

As well as continuing to operate our established services over the last year, against the current difficult economic backdrop, we have also developed and created new services like: our Move-on Coach service to help people transitioning from homeless to a sustainable tenancy; our Tenancy Deposit Service which has helped many people access a home which would have been financially impossible; and the Creating Homes venture which allows our Charity to offer people experiencing homelessness a safe and affordable home of their own.

Whilst we know that the demand for our services will increase, I believe that our Charity has the strengths and the future opportunity to work smarter and more creatively. We need to think about how we can prevent homelessness before it begins. We need to explore different ways to ensure that people who become homeless remain so for only the shortest period possible. And we need to put greater emphasis on how we end homelessness for good. I’m sure all of these will feature heavily in our new Strategic Plan 2024-2029.

Please do take some time to look at this report. All the different moving parts of our organisation are focused on a single ambition. That ambition is to end homelessness. Simon Community works with hundreds of people in need of our support every single day but we are absolutely committed to doing much more.

As you continue reading, you will hear more about the impact of lots of hard work. That hard work is testament to the dedication and commitment of Simon Community staff, volunteers and supporters. I am always so humbled and impressed by everything they do for the people we seek to help. Their contribution, although perhaps unseen by many, is life-changing, and often live-saving. For that, I am truly grateful.



Chairman of the Board Joe O'Neill, Chief Executive Jim Dennison, former Chairman Iggy O'Doherty



Jim Dennison
Chief Executive

Transition of Leadership: Passing the Torch from Iggy O'Doherty to Joe O'Neill

Iggy O'Doherty, the former Chair of the Board of Directors,

"It has been a real privilege to chair the Board for the last 6 years. The commitment and selfless help from all staff and volunteers is exceptional. I am humbled to have had a role in working with so many people with a passion for ending homelessness."

WHAT WE DO

Vision Mission & Values

Simon Community is a charity founded in 1971. We have a vision of a society where everyone has a safe place to call home and our mission is clear: to end homelessness throughout Northern Ireland.

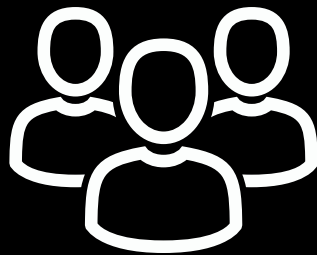
Working with our supporters and partners, we make a lasting impact on the lives of individuals and families who need our help, providing them with the opportunity for a brighter future. At the heart of our work are four core values that guide us:

- We are non-judgemental
- We exist to support our clients and meet their needs
- We are trustworthy and focused on ending homelessness
- We are dedicated to the people we support



**15,938 CALLS
FOR HELP**

on our 24/7 homeless support line



1,397 clients

*supported annually across our
**accommodation and
support services***



32

**TEMPORARY
accommodation**

& WRAPAROUND SUPPORT SERVICES
across Northern Ireland

HOW WE DO IT

introduction

Simon Community uses a multi-layered approach to address the complex issue of homelessness prevention and support through temporary and emergency accommodation services. Here's a brief description of what we do:

OUTREACH AND ENGAGEMENT:

We engage with vulnerable individuals and families in the community. We establish a presence through outreach programmes, and drop-in centres, offering immediate assistance and a point of contact for those in need.

HOUSING FIRST APPROACH:

We follow the "Housing First" model, which prioritises providing stable and permanent housing as the initial step. This approach recognises that without a stable home, it's challenging to address other underlying issues of homelessness, such as mental health or addiction.

WRAPAROUND SERVICES:

We offer a range of support services tailored to the unique needs of each individual or family. This may include mental health support, substance abuse treatment, job training, financial literacy education and access to healthcare. We aim to address the root causes of homelessness and empower our clients.

PREVENTION PROGRAMMES:

In order to end homelessness, we must prevent it from happening in the first place. To do this, we provide a range of services including a 24/7 call helpline, financial assistance, rent subsidies, and tenancy sustainment schemes to help people facing eviction or housing instability maintain their current housing.

COLLABORATION WITH PARTNERS:

We collaborate with the government, other voluntary organisations and local businesses to coordinate and share resources and expertise.

ADVOCACY AND EDUCATION:

We advocate for policies and practices that address the systemic issues contributing to homelessness. By raising awareness about homelessness in the community, we aim to change public perceptions and policies related to housing and poverty.

RESEARCH AND DATA COLLECTION:

We conduct research and analyse trends on homelessness in order to constantly improve what we are doing, and better understand the needs of our clients.





OUR SERVICES

Adult accommodation

Youth Accommodation

Housing First For Youth

Family Accommodation

Homeless Support Line

Play and Learning

Move on Coach

Drug and Alcohol

Tenancy Deposit

Women's Advocacy

Floating Support

Housing Solutions

Health and Wellbeing

Transition Project for Separated Children

Private Rental Homes – Creating Homes

KIRSTY & FAYE'S STORY

Kirsty became pregnant at 19, she was living in her family home sharing a bedroom with her two sisters. Her living circumstances were overwhelming and unsuitable for bringing up a child or for her own wellbeing.

Never setting foot in a hostel before, Kirsty was greeted by friendly staff, shown around her flat and left to settle in.

Kirsty expressed “In my mind, there was always a stigma associated with hostels and I felt that other people would think less of me as a young, pregnant female if they found out that I was moving into one.”

She found her first few days living in Simon Community’s family accommodation service lonely, whilst facing the daunting responsibilities of living on her own - budgeting, managing her own mental health and the building anticipation of becoming a mother.

Kirsty explained “I was only 19, pregnant and had never lived away from the family home before. It was the biggest change that I had ever experienced.”

Kirsty decided to share her mental health issues and anxieties about the upcoming birth with the Simon Community team, and she was provided the support of a weekly peri-natal mental health team.

“Just knowing that staff are there and that I can ask for help at any time, is really reassuring.” Kirsty noted.

After a few short months of getting on her feet, getting settled into her new flat and establishing a support system that worked for her, Kirsty welcomed her daughter Faye into the world.

She quickly became known as ‘the one with the newborn’ among the other mums in the hostel. Kirsty not only had staff and her support worker - but she also had the company of 23 other mums in the family hostel who were always checking in on her and offering advice and support.

Kirsty said, “Having all these people around me and someone to talk to at any time made me feel as though I was part of a little community. I’m honestly really thankful to the staff in Conway Court Hostel for the support that they have given me. They’ve made me feel safe and secure and completely changed my perception of what a hostel is.”





HOW WE DO IT

Our Services 2022-2023 Impact & Overview



24/7

HOMELESS SUPPORT LINE

15,938 calls

where staff spent

40,054 minutes

supporting individuals in need.



20 ADULT & YOUTH

TEMPORARY

ACCOMMODATION

SERVICES

across Northern Ireland



45 FAMILIES
supported in our

FAMILY ACCOMMODATION SERVICE

HOW WE DO IT

Our Services 2022-2023 Impact & Overview

98

YOUNG PEOPLE UNDER 18

residing in Simon Community temporary accommodation services

PLAY AND LEARNING PROJECT

*thanks to the support of Children In
Need funding, Simon Community*

delivered 64

PLAY AND LEARNING SESSIONS IN 2022/23

HOUSING FIRST FOR YOUTH SERVICES

For some looked-after young people, residential or supported accommodation group living is not a viable option. Our Housing First for Youth service provides a solution by working with young people in community-based settings to provide the wraparound support needed to help them thrive within their community. Working in partnership with the Northern Trust, Belfast Trust and South Eastern Trust, this service delivers 24/7 support to young people in their own homes.

Meet Connel, Youth Outreach Services Manager

“The young people we support at Housing First For Youth are often so disadvantaged from a very young age, but their resilience is pretty remarkable. I’ve always considered it a privilege to be in a position whereby through doing my job, and doing it well, I can help give people the chance to improve their circumstances, to recover, and move forward in life so that their past difficulties and traumas don’t define their futures.”



TRANSITION PROJECT FOR SEPARATED CHILDREN

Northern Ireland has seen an increase in the number of young people (under the age of 18) seeking asylum and refuge. They are often traumatised by the experiences that have led them to seek asylum. The Transition Project is a culturally sensitive support service to help young people who find themselves in Northern Ireland and alone. The service works in partnership with the Belfast Trust and aims to support young refugees and asylum seekers to live in the community through emotional, practical and educational support.

HOW WE DO IT

Our Services 2022-2023 Impact & Overview

DRUG AND ALCOHOL SERVICE

Funded by the Public Health Agency Because substance use and dependency is on the rise across Northern Ireland, our Low Threshold Service provides anyone, 18 years and over living in the South Eastern Trust, with free and confidential support needed to manage substance use and take back control of their life.

THIS OUTREACH TEAM SUPPORTED **339** *clients from 2022 - 2023 to minimize alcohol and substance use.*



HEALTH AND WELLBEING SERVICE

Funded the The Big Lottery, the homelessness wellbeing practitioner team supports the most complex cases of homelessness by improving health, saving lives, and ending homelessness.

Our clients value this service because it's flexible, consistent and reliable. It's often described as 'bridging a gap' in the context of long and growing waiting lists for community addiction, mental health and other specialist counselling services.

'Knowing it's there helps you get through your week. It's reliable. You can talk whether it's ten minutes or half an hour, it's not rushed. The Wellbeing Practitioner listens and gives advice and I feel better.'

'I know that I have support. There is no pressure on you...if I take a notion for a drink I can phone or talk to the Wellbeing Practitioner and the notion is gone.'

DELIVERED
1685

SESSIONS DEDICATED TO PROMOTING WELL-BEING

WOMEN'S ADVOCACY SERVICE



Meet Maureen,

Simon's first Women's Advocate staff member

"The aim of this service is to help women feel safe and secure while accessing Simon Community Hostels, empowering and educating women to enable them to make positive decisions that will have an impact on their lives, and help break down any barriers that they may face as a woman at risk of homelessness."

ELLIE'S STORY

At the age of 17, Ellie's relationship with her mum broke down and she was asked to leave the family home. Ellie found herself sofa surfing between family members' houses and then living in a shared flat. However, her tenancy broke down due to environmental reasons and Ellie moved to the Simon Community's Foyer accommodation.

Upon arrival at the Foyer, Ellie was nervous as this was her first hostel and a totally different environment to what she was used to.

It was soon after arriving at the Foyer that Ellie was referred to the Women's Advocacy Project. By attending the group sessions carried out by Maureen, Ellie started to feel more relaxed around other clients, and she began to socialise.

"Full-time staff at the Foyer and Maureen, the Women's Advocate, have made me feel welcome and I find they are approachable, friendly people. They have supported me with all aspects such as accessing mental health services, getting my benefits correct, with food and housing and appointments."

Ellie didn't know Belfast very well, so staff helped narrow down housing areas that were suitable for her. After coming from shared accommodation, Ellie feels like she would be more ready to have her own home.

Ellie hopes to manage her mental health and to be able to move out into her own accommodation in the near future with a stable job that she enjoys. "I feel like accessing the Women's Advocacy service made me feel noticed as at the time I didn't realize I needed the help myself."

At Simon Community we respect everyone who comes to us for help. Our client's identity has been changed to protect her privacy.



HOW WE DO IT

Our Services 2022-2023 Impact & Overview

MOVE ON COACH SERVICE

14

Move On Coach Volunteers Supported

client transitions to independent living in 2022 - 2023

After years of living in temporary accommodation, I was nervous about moving into my own tenancy. When my Move On Coach came along she was amazing, and I don't think I could have moved without her support. I have settled in well and am delighted to have my own place. The Move on Coach Service is invaluable to anyone who is moving on.

Andy, past Simon Community client

”

TENANCY DEPOSIT SERVICE

111

111 households supported into private rent in 2022/23 through our Tenancy Sustainment Scheme. The support of this service includes providing funding for a housing deposit, property searches, landlord discussions, applying for housing benefits, help with moving, private rental assessments, arranging property viewings, applying for discretionary support and signposting to additional services.



HOW WE DO IT

Our Services 2022-2023 Impact & Overview

CREATING HOMES

Creating Homes was launched in 2022 as part of Simon Community's 50th anniversary. It is an ambitious plan which will see the charity buy or manage 50 homes to offer as long term rental properties to those experiencing long-term homelessness, in a bid to address the chronic shortage of social housing and the lack of affordable housing options available. The initiative recently saw the keys of its eighth house handed over to a new tenant. There have been two further sales agreed on properties in Ballymena and Derry, bringing the total number of houses acquired under the initiative to 10 in 2022-23.





SIMON COMMUNITY NI IS PLEASED TO OFFICIALLY ANNOUNCE JP CORRY AND MARCON AS CORPORATE PARTNERS FOR ITS CREATING HOMES INITIATIVE.

Pictured at the completion of its most recent house are (l-r): Simon Community Corporate Partnerships Manager Brian Shanks, JP Corry HR Manager Laura Wray, JP Corry Operations Director Chris Collins, Simon Community Chief Executive Jim Dennison, Marcon Procurement Manager, Laura Moore and Marcon Business Systems and Innovation Manager Colleen Scullion.

Laura Wray, JP Corry HR Manager, said the decision to increase their commitment by supporting Creating Homes was an easy one,

“Creating Homes is part of our shared value that everyone deserves a safe place to call home. We have been pleased to partner with the Simon Community over the past two years and expanding our commitment aligns with our fundamental operation of providing the equipment and materials for the creation, restoration and renovation of buildings to improve people’s quality of life and personal wellbeing. This is an exciting initiative and one we are proud to be a part of.”

Antrim-based Marcon has provided a robust building solution incorporating refurbishment, interior fit-out and specialist joinery across the UK and Ireland since 2004. Mark O’Connor, Marcon Director commented, “We pride ourselves on being a responsible business and it is important that we contribute to places in which we work and support our local communities. We hope to be able to bring our specific expertise to the Creating Homes initiative, investing in the long-term sustainability of communities.”

“We are delighted to welcome JP Corry and Marcon as new corporate supporters to our Creating Homes initiative and recently invited them to view the latest house we have refurbished so that they can see the standard of accommodation we are providing, and the impact of their support.”

Simon Community NI Chief Executive, Jim Dennison

**ALL I WANT IS A TABLE WITH 4 CHAIRS,
IT’S THE LITTLE THINGS I LOOK
FORWARD TO LIKE HAVING COMPANY
OVER FOR A CUPPA**

Holly, Creating Homes Client

”

ADDRESSING OUR COMMUNITY

Staff and Volunteers



At Simon Community, we recognise that our staff and volunteers are the backbone of our organisation. Their dedication, compassion, and tireless efforts drive our work forward, providing essential support and services to those experiencing homelessness.

Through employee investment including comprehensive healthcare benefits, ongoing training programmes, and initiatives aimed at promoting health and wellbeing (such as the improvement of staff spaces and the creation of the wellbeing champion group), we want to keep our team strong, motivated, and ready to make a meaningful difference in the lives of others.

In March 2023, Simon Community was able to deliver our first staff conference since 2020. We brought together 170 dedicated staff members at the prestigious Belfast Harbour Commissioner's Office, generously provided by our Board Chair, Joe O'Neill.

Recognising the importance of celebrating dedication and commitment, the conference honoured numerous Simon Community staff with Milestone Service Awards, highlighting their unwavering support over the years. Additionally, the event offered an array of wellbeing-focused breakout sessions and advice touchpoints, reinforcing our commitment to the health and wellbeing of our remarkable team.

We regularly ask for feedback from our staff teams about their employee experience at work, and we know that 88% of the staff respondents told us that they were proud to work for Simon Community, 75% told us that Simon Community takes positive action to support their Health and Wellbeing and 76% would recommend Simon Community to others as a place to work.

As well as our dedicated staff, and thanks to our incredible community of supporters and partners, we have been able to support 1,397 lives, providing shelter, and a chance for a brighter future to those facing homelessness. By working together, we are getting one step closer to a society where everyone in Northern Ireland has a place to call home.



ADDRESSING OUR COMMUNITY

Fundraising & Communications

MEET OUR CORPORATE PARTNERS

We couldn't do it without you!



At Galgorm Collection, we have made it our mission to create a positive impact within our local community. For the past 12 years, we have proudly partnered with Simon Community NI, whose dedication to addressing homelessness in Northern Ireland is invaluable. In an industry synonymous with luxury and comfort, we understand the importance of extending our reach to those affected by homelessness in our locality.

Our devoted team of employees wholeheartedly embraces this partnership, actively participating in a range of fundraising events. These include the Belfast City Marathon, Dragon Boat Race, and One Big Sleepout, demonstrating their firm commitment to making a difference. Additionally, our annual 'Dream and Donate' campaign, held across our hotel properties throughout December, offers each overnight guest the opportunity to contribute £1 to Simon Community NI. This simple act transforms their stay into a chance to give back.

Over the years, our partnership has not only contributed to providing vital resources for those in need but has also cultivated a culture of empathy within our organisation and among our guests. We remain committed in our dedication to working with Simon Community NI and look forward to collectively creating a more compassionate and inclusive community for all.

Colin Johnston
Managing Director
Galgorm Collection

MUSIC AGAINST HOMELESSNESS: GIG RAISED £10K FOR SIMON COMMUNITY IN NORTHERN IRELAND

Headline act Brian Kennedy said: “No one chooses to be homeless and we put the fundraising concert together to raise much-needed funds and awareness.”

The show was vital in highlighting the growing problem of homelessness amid the cost of living crisis according to Simon Community chief executive Jim Dennison.

He said: “In our 50th year we are seeing levels of homelessness increase as the cost of living pushes everyday people to make disturbing choices between heating their homes or feeding their families. Now more than ever we need to raise greater awareness on the issues of homelessness, poverty, and their related health consequences.”



OVER 120 PEOPLE PARTICIPATED IN OUR 5TH ANNUAL ONE BIG SLEEP OUT AT STORMONT ESTATE IN OCTOBER 2022, WHICH WAS KINDLY SPONSORED BY OUTSIDEIN AND RAISED OVER £30K.

With the help of many corporate supporters and participants, we raised vital funds to assist our clients and those in need. Although the Sleep Out cannot replicate the real emotional and physical difficulties of truly experiencing homelessness, the event brought together individuals, businesses, and community groups to experience some of the realities of having no safe and warm place to sleep while helping to raise much-needed funds and awareness for the charity's homelessness services.



Twenty-four-year-old Courtney from Belfast became homeless with her daughter following a family breakdown.

Courtney stayed at our Family Temporary Accommodation Service for six months where she learned to budget, dividing her money into envelopes to cover weekly costs of heating, food, child needs, etc.

When she moved into a flat of her own she had no extra money to furnish it, but thanks to help from her Simon Community support worker she was successful in receiving a discretionary support grant which enabled her to get some furniture and kitchen items.

But even with that help, the cost of living squeeze means her weekly envelope budgeting does not cover her outgoings the way it used to.

“It used to be £10 in the meter would last a couple of days, but now it needs to be topped up every day. It’s the same with food, I buy the same things every week but that cost has almost doubled.”

Courtney’s young daughter has additional needs but Courtney finds it impossible to pay for extra activities outside the house to keep her occupied:

“Outings are just out of the question, recently we went to the Armagh Planetarium on a trip organised by the Simon Community, which I would never have been able to afford – the transport or the entrance fee. We had a brilliant day, my daughter just loved it and it was such a break from the norm. It was actually very emotional for us.”

Courtney says she feels the cost of living crisis is going to get worse and it causes her constant anxiety.

Simon Community was there for Courtney when she first became homeless and we are still there with her, offering support, sharing the burden and helping Courtney and her daughter navigate a life which can be challenging and uncertain.

Our client's identity has been changed to protect her privacy.





COURTNEY'S STORY

in support of our community fundraising mailings

ADDRESSING OUR COMMUNITY

Fundraising & Communications



Corporate partner Smarts Agency

worked with Simon Community to deliver our Christmas advent calendar campaign to reach influencers and stakeholders through impactful stats and simple donation ideas

BBC Radio Ulster

put out an ask for corporate partners to join Creating Homes initiative through a broadcast appeal with Development and Housing Solutions teams!



Paul McCann is the Area Development Manager with the Simon Community.



HOMELESS CONNECTS AWARDS!

Our teams in Derry attended the Homeless Connect Awards for Homeless Awareness Week 2022. The award ceremony was hosted in the Guildhall Derry by the Mayor Sandra Duffy and the Northern Ireland Housing Executive. Our Derry team had a successful evening celebrating the win of 5 individual awards and a team award!

Winner of Supporting Females with Addictions, Rosie McMullan, has been described by her clients as open and honest, never judgemental, encouraging and helpful. One of her clients said: "Rosie does not think she is better than me and works through my addiction and sees I am a normal person aside from it."

Paul Breslin, runner up for Supporting Men with Addictions, has clients saying he "is always encouraging... he is the reason I get up most days" another client simply says "he helps to keep me calm and talks to me like I mean something." Paul's clients would say he is non-judgmental, calming and always encouraging.

Winner of Going Over and Above in Homeless Services, Joanne Leonard, has been described to always have a big smile on her face and has time for everyone. Her clients mention that she is honest and compassionate and always makes time for a chat and a cuppa. One client even refers to Joanne as Super Woman: "Joanne is a real-life super woman and the world needs more of her as she does so much and never looks for any thanks."

New team member Trevor Holmes was the winner of the Inclusivity Programmes. He has been achieving some really great work through including and embracing all people irrespective of race, gender, disability, medical or other needs.

"There is no I in Team and I am very fortunate, blessed and lucky to work with some of the most kind, caring and considerate people who do an amazing job, addressing and supporting clients with not only issues with homeless but an array of complexities. I am very proud to work for Simon Community NI and we together as a team will keep working hard, advocating for those with no voice and providing a service to all who come through our doors." states Project Manager Joanne Leonard

TEDx
Stormont
x = independently organized TED event

250, 1 IN 160 AND 3.

Through his Tedx Talk at Stormont, Simon Community NI Chief Executive, Jim Dennison explains why these numbers are so critical to the story of homelessness, and why you should think again when it comes to homelessness in Northern Ireland.



ADDRESSING OUR COMMUNITY

Research & Development

Mental

Health &

Homelessness

simon
community
Northern Ireland

&

DEPAUL
Homelessness has no place

NI is reported to have the highest prevalence of mental health problems in the UK and we were keen to understand more about the impact of mental health on homelessness.

Simon Community and Depaul officially launched a new 'Mental Health and Homelessness' report at an event held in February 2023 at Belfast City Hall. The launch was attended by Northern Ireland Mental Health Champion Professor Siobhan O'Neill and Lord Mayor of Belfast City Council Christina Black, together with over 50 representatives from across the homelessness and mental health sectors, as well as political representatives.

A survey of 170 people experiencing homelessness, carried out as part of the research, found almost 70 percent had a mental health condition, with an overwhelming majority (84 percent) reporting they had received their diagnosis before becoming homeless.

Simon Community Chief Executive Jim Dennison said the report calls for a greater mental health focus on tackling the catastrophic impact of homelessness, "Homelessness is both stigmatising and isolating and can be a cause and consequence of mental illness. We need to ensure we have the right measures in place to support people who are struggling. We need a legal basis that pushes statutory bodies with responsibility for housing, health and social care, justice and education to cooperate and find more effective solutions. We also need a focus on homelessness written into the Mental Health Strategy."

Northern Ireland Mental Health Champion Professor Siobhan O'Neill said, "It is essential that people can access the right support at the right time. There needs to be a specific action plan for people experiencing homelessness within the Mental Health Strategy. Support within the Department of Health should also be streamlined to provide timely interventions for people experiencing homelessness with additional issues. Referral pathways also need to be improved to enable swift access, with person-centred and trauma-informed care at the heart of service delivery."





Developed survey - via Microsoft Forms, informed by a range of key stakeholders

Surveys shared with clients (18+) in Simon Community NI temporary accommodation and Depaul Services

Mix of open & closed questions

170 responses: 146 from Simon Community NI and 24 from Depaul

NI is reported to have highest prevalence of mental health problems in UK

1 in 5 adults experiencing at least 1 mental health disorder at anyone time

Psychiatric morbidity in NI 25% higher than other parts UK

NI child & young people population had 25% higher rates of anxiety and depression than other UK nations

Poor mental health in NI related to legacy of violence and socio economic factors



LOOKING FORWARD

Priorities for 2023-24

Strategic Planning

With the end of our current strategic period in 2023, our immediate priority is to develop a new strategic plan for the next five years. This plan will outline our vision and goals as we navigate the ongoing housing crisis and address homelessness and related issues in our communities. Our strategic plan will serve as a guiding framework for our organisation, ensuring that we remain focused on our mission and equipped to adapt to the evolving challenges.



LOOKING FORWARD

Risk

Simon Community's projects make a huge impact on those families and individuals who access our work, but they are not without risks. Here's a concise overview of key risks and recommendations for mitigation:

1. Funding and Resource Risks:

- Financial Sustainability: Secure diverse funding sources.
- Resource Allocation: Implement strict oversight for efficient resource use.

2. Affordable Housing Expansion Risk:

- Property Market Fluctuations: Monitor market trends and adapt strategies.
- Regulatory Challenges: Work with legal experts to navigate regulations.

3. Corporate Partnership Risks:

- Partnership Alignment: Select partners aligned with the mission.
- Dependency Risk: Diversify partnership sources.

4. Employee Health and Wellbeing Risks:

- Burnout and Stress: Implement wellness programmes.
- Mental Health Stigma: Promote mental health openness.

5. Project Execution Risks:

- Project Delays: Develop contingency plans.
- Quality Control: Establish rigorous quality standards.
- Mitigating these risks through diversification, adaptation, and effective management will enhance project success while minimizing setbacks. Continuous monitoring and adjustment are key.





RISK MANAGEMENT

The Corporate Risk Register is reviewed by the Senior Management Team to assess their departmental risks monthly at the Strategic SMT meeting. The top 10 risks (or risks with an amber scoring) are reviewed by Audit & Risk Committee and the Board on a quarterly basis.

In 2021, a five year internal audit plan was presented to the Audit & Risk Committee, identifying key areas of focus in the coming years.

During the year, in addition to the follow up review, the following internal audits have been for 2022-23;

- Health & Safety
- Quality Management

Business Continuity Planning

The organisation has in place a Business Continuity Plan it can refer to in the event of a significant business interruption. A test exercise is completed annually, and any lesson learned fed into the business continuity planning process and a revised plan produced. This ensures the plan remains live and relevant for all staff involved.

STRUCTURE, GOVERNANCE & MANAGEMENT

Reference Details

“The Simon Community Board of Trustees is a dedicated and influential group of individuals responsible for overseeing the operations and strategic direction of the Simon Community, a renowned charitable organisation committed to addressing homelessness and social exclusion. Comprising a diverse range of professionals, community leaders, and experts in various fields, the Board of Trustees plays a vital role in shaping the organisation's policies, ensuring financial accountability, and guiding its mission to provide shelter, support, and advocacy for individuals experiencing homelessness. Their commitment to the cause and collective expertise make them a driving force behind the Simon Community's efforts to create a more inclusive and compassionate society.

“In extending a heartfelt welcome to our new board members, Darwin and Anne, and expressing deep gratitude to departing members, Andy and Rodney, we embrace the evolving journey of the Simon Community Trust. With their collective wisdom and dedication, we look forward to a promising future.”

Jim Dennison, Chief Executive Simon Community



Simon Community Northern Ireland is a company limited by guarantee and does not have a share capital. It is governed by a Memorandum and Articles of Association and the liability of each member is limited to an amount not exceeding £1. The company is a registered charity with the Charity Commission for Northern Ireland, registration number, NIC102724.

The trustees, who are also the directors for the purpose of company law, and who served during the year and up to the date of signature of the financial statements were:

Mr I O'Doherty (resigned as Chair of the Board of Directors 14 November 2022)

Mr J O'Neill (appointed as Chair of the Board of Directors 14 November 2022)

Ms T Brennan

Mr C Donaghy

Mr A Freeburn (resigned on 14 November 2022)

Mr J Johnston

Mr R Morton (resigned on 14 November 2022)

Mr M O'Kane

Ms A Braden

Ms A McGregor (appointed on 14 November 2022)

Mr D Templeton (appointed on 14 November 2022)

Simon Community Northern Ireland has an induction programme for new Trustees and as part of which they:

- receive a copy of the Trustees' Handbook;
- are advised of their legal responsibilities and requirements in regard to the code of conduct and declaration of interests; and
- receive briefings from the SMT on strategic and operational challenges and

The Trustees have ultimate legal and financial responsibility for the affairs of Simon Community Northern Ireland, although the management of the organisation is delegated to the staff, through the Chief Executive.

The Trustees of the company at 31 March 2023, all of whom have been Trustees for the whole of the year ended on that date, unless otherwise stated, are listed above. Trustees appointed to the Board of Directors may serve for a maximum of three consecutive fixed terms, and on the expiry of the third fixed term shall not be eligible for re-election. All Trustees give their time voluntarily and receive no benefits from Simon Community Northern Ireland. New Trustees are recruited to the Board of Directors by identification of skills needed. The recruitment of new Trustees is the responsibility of the Board of Directors who meet at least four times a year as appropriate.

There are three sub-committees of the Board of Directors. The committees report on progress of delivering the strategic and operational plans and make recommendations relating to them to the Board of Directors.



STRUCTURE, GOVERNANCE & MANAGEMENT

Reference Details

AUDIT AND RISK COMMITTEE

The purpose of the Audit and Risk Committee is to assist the Board of Directors to: establish effective risk management processes for all aspects of the organisation's undertakings; identify significant gaps in controls/assurance in relation to the delivery of the organisation's strategic plan; oversee legal and contractual compliance; review the internal and external audit functions; and to support the Board of Directors, and CEO on all aspects of governance in the organisation. The Audit and Risk Committee met on four occasions during the year. Membership consists of the Company Secretary and three other Board Members. Andrew Freeburn was appointed Chair of the Committee on 21 October 2019.

Strategy and Sustainability Committee

The purpose of the Strategy and Sustainability Committee is to work with the Senior Management Team to prepare and review strategic issues concerning the delivery of the Strategic Plan of the organisation in advance of the meetings of the Board of Directors. The Strategy & Sustainability Committee met on four occasions during the year. Membership consists of the Board Chair and four other Board Members. Joe O'Neill was appointed as the Chair on 22 July 2019.

Quality Assurance and Improvement Committee

The purpose of the Quality Assurance and Improvement Committee is to work with the Executive to enhance quality of client services (including engagement) as well as staff care and development. The Quality Assurance & Improvement Committee met on four occasions during the year. Membership consists of the Board Chair, the Company Secretary and three other Board members. Jason Johnston, Company Secretary, is the Chair of this Committee.



SIMON COMMUNITY SENIOR MANAGEMENT TEAM



JIM DENNISON CIHCM CHIEF EXECUTIVE



ANDREA MCCOOKE DIRECTOR OF HR AND ORGANISATIONAL DEVELOPMENT



ÁINE ROBINSON FCA DIRECTOR OF FINANCE & BUSINESS SUPPORT



KIRSTEN HEWITT DIRECTOR OF HOMELESSNESS SERVICES

FINANCIAL REVIEW

The financial statements are presented in the standard format required by the Statement of Recommended Practice Accounting and Reporting by Charities (FRS102) and cover the activities of Simon Community Northern Ireland and its subsidiary charity, Simon Community Creating Homes. The Statement of Financial Activities (SOFA) shows the gross income from all sources and the split of activity between restricted and unrestricted funds.

Given the nature and location of Simon Community Northern Ireland operations, the charity is not significantly exposed to price risk or foreign exchange risk. Regarding liquidity risk, cash flow is actively managed to ensure the company has sufficient available funds for operations and planned expansions.

Interest rate risk is not currently relevant in relation to funding requirements. Regarding credit risk, exposure to individual clients is reviewed.

Simon Community Northern Ireland annually reviews its reserves policy and the level of unrestricted reserves. In this context, unrestricted reserves are the total funds freely available to spend on any of the Charity's purposes. This definition excludes restricted funds and funds designated for essential future spending, although holding such funds may influence the Charity's reserve policy.

The Trustees have adopted a risk-based approach to the assessment of the appropriate level of freely available reserves. This approach is based on an understanding of income streams and their risk profile, the degree of commitment to expenditure and the overall risk environment in which the charity operates.

The unrestricted reserves balance at 31 March 2023 was £4,176,308 of which £2,699,435 was freely available for the Charity's purposes. In 2021, an assessment of the level of free reserves that would be required to:

- maintain a quality service provision during any possible wind-up of the organisation;
- allow the orderly transition of services; and
- pay any financial liabilities,

was calculated at £898k. The Board approved the placement of these 'required' reserves in an investment portfolio that could be accessed relatively quickly should a 'doomsday' scenario arise. During the year, the investment was withdrawn due to underperformance and is included within the free reserves balance as at 31st March 2023.

In addition to the above, within its unrestricted reserves, the Charity has designated funds of £1,268,237 related to capital grants, cyclical maintenance fund for the upkeep of client accommodation sites as well as designated funds towards capital projects and the purchase of properties to provide a home for clients who are ready to move into their own private rented property.

STATUTORY DISCLOSURES

Remuneration of Key Management and Personnel

All staff remuneration is matched to the appropriate grade on Simon Community Northern Ireland's pay scale in advance of employment. Simon Community Northern Ireland had historically used the National Joint Council (NJC) scale for setting pay and remuneration. However, in recent years it has been impossible to continue to match the annual increments agreed by NJC and Simon Community Northern Ireland were either unable to award an annual increment or awarded a lower percentage within available financial resources. Simon Community periodically benchmarks its remuneration of posts against similar roles in the sector and wider labour market. Unless agreed in advance of employment in exceptional circumstances, staff are appointed at the bottom of the scale with a step up to the next point on 1 April annually and only on completion of a successful probationary period.

Employee involvement

The charity's policy is to consult its workforce through partnership meetings with trade unions, team meetings and corporate briefings on matters likely to affect employees' interests. Communication updates are issued to employees on a regular basis, which seek to achieve a common awareness on the part of all employees of the financial and economic factors affecting the organisations performance.

Disabled persons

Applications for employment by disabled persons are always fully considered, bearing in mind the aptitudes of the applicant concerned. All reasonable adjustments are made during the recruitment process. In the event of members of staff becoming disabled, every effort is made to ensure reasonable adjustments are made so that their employment within the charity continues and that the appropriate training is arranged. It is the policy of the charity that the training, career development and promotion of disabled persons should, as far as possible, be identical to that of other employees.

Statement of trustees' responsibilities

The trustees, who are also the directors of Simon Community Northern Ireland for the purpose of company law, are responsible for preparing the Trustees' Report and the group financial statements in accordance with applicable law and United Kingdom Accounting Standards (United Kingdom Generally Accepted Accounting Practice).

Company Law requires the trustees to prepare financial statements for each financial year which give a true and fair view of the state of affairs of the group and parent charity and of the incoming resources and application of resources, including the income and expenditure, of the group for that year.

In preparing these financial statements, the trustees are required to:

- select suitable accounting policies and then apply them consistently;
- observe the methods and principles in the Charities SORP;
- make judgements and estimates that are reasonable and prudent;
- state whether applicable UK Accounting Standards have been followed, subject to any material departures disclosed and explained in the financial statements; and
- prepare the financial statements on the going concern basis unless it is inappropriate to presume that the charity will continue in operation.

The trustees are responsible for keeping adequate accounting records that disclose with reasonable accuracy at any time the financial position of the group and charity and enable them to ensure that the financial statements comply with the Companies Act 2006. They are also responsible for safeguarding the assets of the charity and hence for taking reasonable steps for the prevention and detection of fraud and other irregularities.

In accordance with the company's articles, a resolution proposing that GMcG BELFAST be reappointed as auditor of the company will be put at a General Meeting.

Disclosure of information to auditor.

Each of the trustees has confirmed that there is no information of which they are aware which is relevant to the audit, but of which the auditor is unaware. They have further confirmed that they have taken appropriate steps to identify such relevant information and to establish that the auditor is aware of such information.

The trustees' report, including the strategic report, was approved by the Board of Trustees.

Mr J Johnston
Trustee



Dated:

13/11/23





to learn more about simon community visit
simoncommunity.org



Charity No. NIC102724 - Company No. 17466
Simon Community NI is registered with the
Information Commissioner's Office
Reg No: Z7128367

