

GALWAY SIMON MARKS 40 YEARS



Some of the men supported by Galway Simon in the early 80s, pictured left from right is Denis Connolly, Paddy Maher, John Sweeney (RIP), Tom Moriarty (RIP), John 'Chicken' Cleary (RIP)

Supporter Newsletter 2019



Galway
Simon 40 Years
Community

Preventing homelessness | Restoring dignity | Rebuilding lives



Thank you!

In 1979 a small group of volunteers had the empathy, courage and vision to see beyond some of the language of the day - 'down

and outs', 'winos', 'socially handicapped' - to support those who were homeless in Galway City. They spent evenings making soup and sandwiches, before heading out on the nightly soup runs.

The ethos of the first volunteers was that they would not give up on any of those they were supporting. Their spirit of volunteering and ethos of providing support for as long as it is needed, continue to be core values of Galway Simon Community to this day.

A lot has moved on in the last forty years, the language of the seventies is no longer acceptable and there is wider empathy with the homelessness crisis. Services have been developed and there are more supports available to those facing homelessness.

Unfortunately, the early volunteers could neither have imagined nor foreseen that 40 years later, the demand for Galway Simon's services would be greater than ever before.

As the housing and homelessness crisis continues to deepen in Galway, our committed staff and volunteers are supporting more people than at any other time since the organisation was founded. It is only with the help of our loyal supporters that we are able to support vulnerable members of our society to close the door on homelessness.

On behalf of all of us here in Galway Simon Community, I would like to say a heartfelt thank you for your support through the years.

Ní heart go cur le chéile,

Yours sincerely,
Karen Golden, CEO

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Galway Simon Sowing the Seeds

The pioneering work of Galway Simon's volunteers

The seeds of Galway Simon Community were sown in early 1979 by three UCG students who decided to do something about homelessness on the streets of Galway.



Pictured sometime in 1989/90 is full-time volunteer Dan Collins and past client of Galway Simon Jim Timoney (RIP).

The first volunteers were Margaret Brehony, Cathy O'Grady and Conall Mac Riocard. Margaret and Cathy were both psychology students and they had volunteered with Cork Simon. Margaret was from Salthill and Cathy's family owned the Cottage Bar in Lower Salthill. Conall was doing an MA in philosophy and had worked with Liverpool Simon. The other volunteers in the early days included: Jackie O'Dowd, Evelyn McHugh, Anna Smith, John Leinster, Caitríona Clear, Miriam Connolly, Peter Butler, Paddy Noonan and Bill Harkins.

They first started doing a soup run nightly from midnight to 3am. They made all the soup and sandwiches at home and three of them would do the run together. As they got to know clients, they realised they had other problems and issues apart from homelessness.

Back then, regular protest marches were organised to make the authorities take

notice. The volunteers were skilled, idealistic, articulate and talented. They were always non-political.

The volunteers accepted the men for what they were. This established the ethos of never giving up on a person, which is still engrained within Galway Simon today.

In 1980, the volunteers asked Ivan McPhillips, then President of UCG's Students' Union, to raise funds for Simon. He was so impressed with the operation the volunteers were running, that he directed all the profits of that year's Rag Week to Simon. This was a significant contribution to the fledgling organisation.

The group of volunteers that founded Galway Simon were truly pioneers, standing in solidarity with the 'down and outs' of Galway. Little did they know the impact that their work would have in the decades that followed.



Pictured in the 80s at a Galway Simon project is George John Kelly (RIP); past full-time volunteer Martha Lavin (RIP); past client Jim 'Donegal Jim' Timoney (RIP) and current Galway Simon staff member Pat Branton.

A special thank you to Tom Kenny for the research carried out on the history of Galway Simon.



The Development of Galway Simon's Services

Late 1979

Galway Simon is founded and the soup run is established by the founding members and volunteers, including Anna Smith (RIP), pictured above with Paddy Curran (middle), and another gentleman (left, name unknown).

December 1981

Prefab buildings were procured and installed outside the Fairgreen grounds, providing a home for up to 10-15 men. This was Galway's first homeless shelter.

July 1983

Fairgreen shelter was opened after a number of years struggling to find permanent premises. It was run by Galway Simon volunteers and statutory agencies.

October 1983

Galway Simon's first residential house opened on the Dyke Road, and accommodated 6 men. It catered to older men with physical and mental illness.



The original Fairgreen prefabs where up to 15 men slept each night.

May 1987

The first Galway Simon charity shop opened on Dominick Street. The shop was later re-located to Sea Road where it is still open today.

2003

First long-term house for women opened. It provides a safe place for women to stay, and to work towards putting homelessness behind them.



2009

New charity furniture shop opened in Briarhill selling furniture, men & women's clothes, footwear, headwear, accessories, books, home decor. The shop is still there today.

2012

The Resource Centre in Ballinasloe drop-in service was set up to tackle the issue of rural homelessness and street drinking in Ballinasloe. It offers people at risk of homelessness practical support to address a variety of challenges.

2016

Youth Service opens, offering residential and community support services to help prevent young adults aged 18-25 from falling into the cycle of homelessness.

2018

Dedicated Women & Family Service established to work with women and



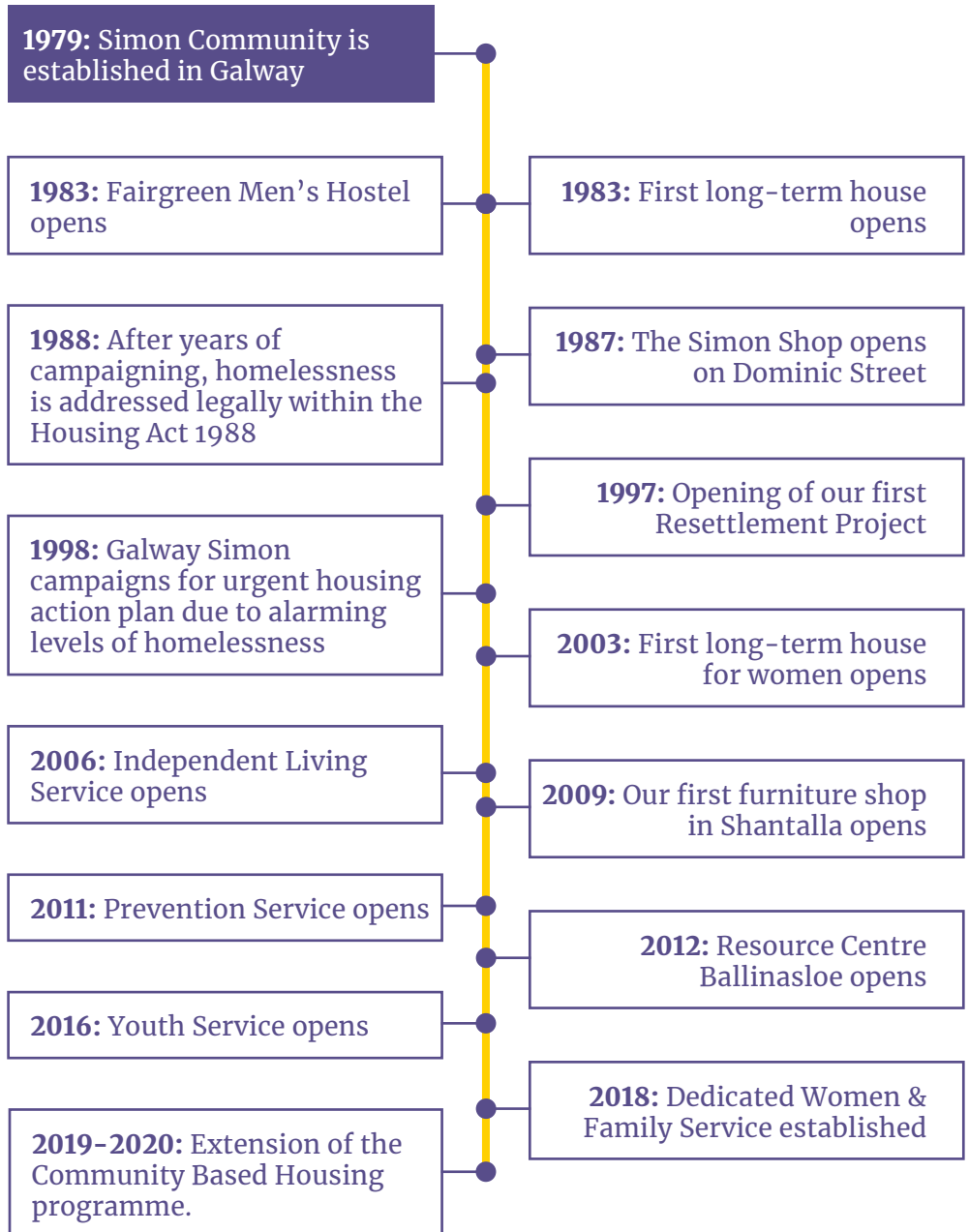
The original 'Simon Shop', which is now located on Sea Road.

families who are homeless or at risk of homelessness. The service focuses on preventing women and families from going through the trauma of homelessness.

2019-2020

Galway Simon plan to acquire 25 homes to enable those facing or experiencing homelessness to journey back to a place where they can live inclusively and with dignity in their local community.

40 Years of Work...



The Changing Face of Homelessness



**Karen Feeney,
Head of Client
Services,
reflects on how
homelessness has
changed in the past
12 years, as we now
help people from all walks of life.**

I joined Galway Simon Community in 2007 and have since worked directly with people in need of homeless services. As newly appointed Head of Client Services, for me it's a moment to reflect on the past 12 years. I have seen a dramatic increase in the numbers of people needing our services and a significant change in the circumstances they find themselves in, causing them to face the threat of homelessness.

From the beginning, Galway Simon has worked with the most vulnerable people in our community.

We still work with extremely vulnerable people; young people who don't have a support network to rely on; people whose traumatic childhoods affect them later in life; people whose chronic vulnerability and loneliness only becomes apparent when they have no suitable home to return to on discharge from hospital; people whose addiction has cost them everything, and they have nowhere to go on leaving treatment.

However, in the last 5 years there has been a marked change in the type of people who come to us for support. The face of

homelessness has changed, as we now see an increasing number of people entering into emergency accommodation.

We now help people just like you and I, people who lived ordinary lives until they suddenly found out that their landlord was increasing their rent or selling their home. These people have children with homework to do and sports teams to play on, dental appointments to keep and birthday parties to plan. Some may have gotten bad news from the doctor, lost their job or gone through a relationship breakdown. They have pets, job interviews, school reunions, weddings and funerals to go to.

These people are just living ordinary lives until suddenly; their lives are turned upside down.

For 40 years Galway Simon has worked with the most vulnerable people in society for whom there has not been a strong enough safety net and it is still the hallmark of what we do. Today it is a huge challenge that so many people need our help. When volunteers formed Galway Simon Community 40 years ago, little did they know that their efforts would grow into an organisation that would go on to support thousands of people in our community in the decades that followed.

Thanks to supporters like you, we are able to continue to help those who are facing homelessness. On behalf of them and our team in Galway Simon, we cannot thank you enough for all of your support.

Helen and Her Family Start a New Life, Thanks to You

You may recall Helen Murphy* and her family, as we told you their story last Christmas. Three years ago, Helen and her family were first faced with the threat of homelessness.

That was when their third child was born at just 31 weeks, two whole months early. They were forced to dip into their rent for the things that their small, sick baby needed.

In the weeks that followed, going between their new baby in hospital and their two children at home, they fell into rent arrears. When asked how she felt getting the final call from their landlord, Helen said:

“You’re worried about the children, especially with 2 special needs children. How are you going to get money? How are you going to keep a roof over their head? You

can’t sleep at night you are so worried.”



When they were faced with eviction, thankfully, they reached out to Galway Simon. From that point, we did everything we could to help them to stay in their home.



Unfortunately, at Christmastime, they were confronted with the news that their landlord was selling their house, forcing them to move out. After spending ten years in that home, they were devastated. The uncertainty of where they would live was incredibly stressful.

“At Christmas, we found out our landlord was selling the house and we were devastated. Anyone who has autistic children knows how important it is for [them to have] their own space.”

With your support, we were able to provide a safe and secure home for Helen and her family in May 2019. Their new home meets their specific needs and it has given them the stability they so badly needed.



Because of this, there has been a remarkable improvement in their children's health. When asked how does it feel when you close the door of your own home, Helen took a deep breath and said “It feels safe. It just feels so safe knowing that the house is ours. The security for the girls, it's unreal”.

On behalf of Helen, her family and Galway Simon, we extend a heartfelt thank you for supporting our Christmas appeal and helping us to find them a safe and secure place to call home.

**To protect identities, the names used have been changed, however Helen's story is very much real.*



Pictured with Helen's door in Dublin are (right to left) Karen Golden, CEO Galway Simon and Sam McGuinness, CEO Dublin Simon, Nadine Kiernan and Katie Donohoe of Dublin Simon.

While locally Galway Simon Community is marking 40 years, across Ireland the Simon Community movement is marking 50 years, having been established in Dublin in 1969.

To commemorate the tens of thousands of individuals that the organisation has helped to close the door on homelessness since the 60s, some of those who have been supported by Simon over the years have bravely come forward to share their experience of overcoming homelessness. Through their stories they would like to give hope to the 10,172* people across the country who are currently trapped in emergency homeless services.

A physical door was installed on a Dublin Street in early August, where Helen shared her family's story with the general public, highlighting the stress and upheaval she experienced while facing homelessness. Her door was closed on homelessness on 30th

**According to Government figures for June 2019*

May 2019, when her family were supported with a safe tenancy with thanks to the help of Galway Simon's supporters.

This street installation will make its way to Galway in the coming months, where you can read more about Helen's story and how her family's life has changed as they closed their door on homelessness for good.

Thanks to you, we have been closing doors on homelessness locally for 40 years. We hope we can rely on your continued support in the years to come.

**THIS DOOR
ON UPHEAVAL & STRESS
WAS FIRST CLOSED BY
HELEN AND SIMON
ON 30-05-2019**

The Growing Crisis of Emergency

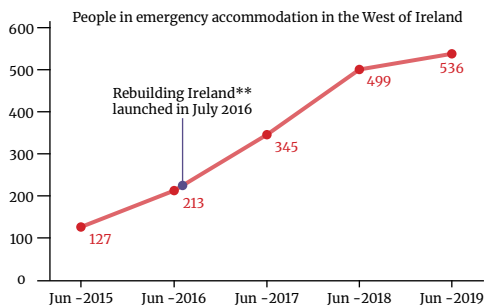
Accommodation

Without a doubt, the lack of social and affordable housing is the single biggest challenge that we are facing right now in trying to prevent homelessness. Figures released in April* found a staggering €3 million was spent on emergency accommodation in 2018 here in Galway.

Galway Simon's Prevention Service works to prevent people facing homelessness from entering emergency accommodation. This is a critical part of what we do, as prevention ultimately reduces the human and economic costs associated with homelessness.

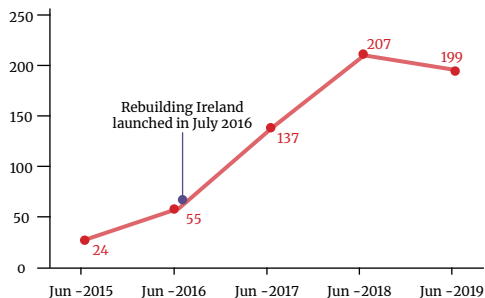
Emphasis is needed on Homeless Prevention Services...

The Growing Emergency Accommodation Crisis



142% increase
since Rebuilding Ireland
was launched

Child Homelessness in the West



188% increase
since Rebuilding Ireland
was launched

*According to an article published by RTE in April 2019

**Rebuilding Ireland is the Government of Ireland's action plan to tackle the country's housing shortage by 2021.

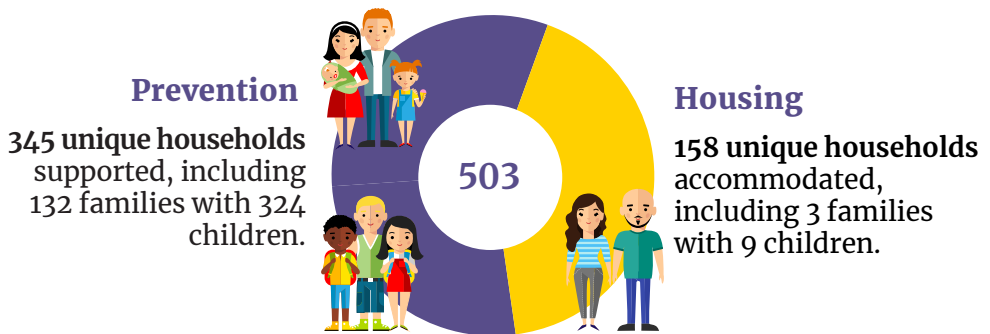
Your Support in Numbers

Our services are needed now more than ever and it's with the support of people like you in our community, that we've been able to continue making a difference in people's lives.

In the first seven months of 2019 alone, we have supported 503 unique households who were experiencing, or at risk of, homelessness.

The Impact of Your Support

January - July 2019



Demand for our services continues to rise

135 families supported

January - July 2019

60%

Increase on the same period last year.

503 households supported

January - July 2019

26%

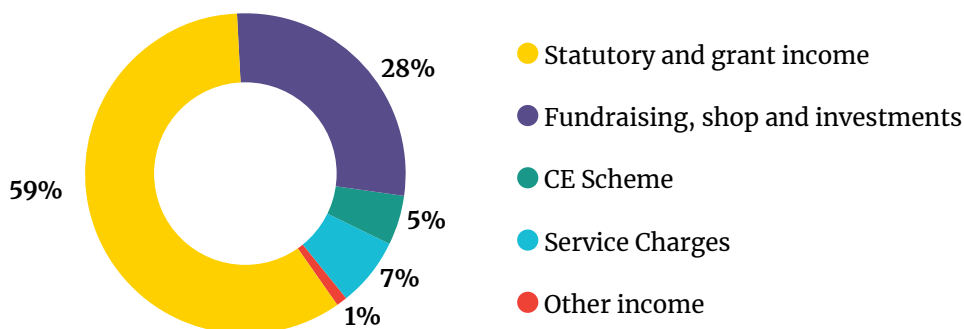
Increase on the same period last year.

Our Commitment to Transparency

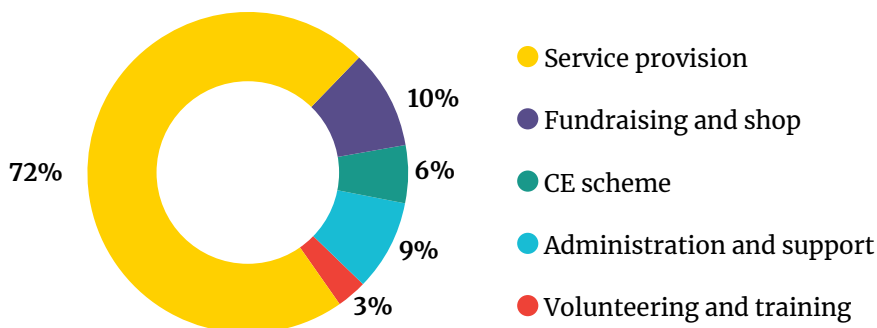
At Galway Simon Community, we strive to be transparent and accountable at all times. We believe that our supporters should be informed about the work we do and its impact, but most importantly, about how we spend the money we receive.

To learn more about the work we do and its impact, you can download our financial statements at galwaysimon.ie/financial-statements.

2018 Income



2018 Expenditure



Governance

We are compliant with the Irish Charity Voluntary Governance Code, the Statement of Recommended Practices (SORP) and the Statement of Guiding Principles for Fundraising. For more information about how we are governed, visit our website: galwaysimon.ie/charity-governance-code.

Upcoming Events



Church Gate Collections

Saturday, 21st

and Sunday 22nd September

Our annual Church Gate Collections take place in parishes throughout Galway City and County. If you could spare an hour or two to help us collect in your local area, we would love to hear from you.



Sleep Out for Simon 2019

Friday, 4th October

The Sleep Out will take place this year in Tuam, Loughrea, Shop St and in our brand new location, Salthill Village. 100% of funds raised will support our Homeless Prevention Services. You can register to take part on our website.



Tech's Got Talent

Friday, 1st November

This variety show, presented by Hewlett Packard, ITAG, DXC & ISS is currently open for registration. If you would like to enter a performance act or buy a ticket, please visit our website.



The Knights before Christmas Concert

Saturday, 16th December

The A Capella Knights will host their annual fundraising concert in the Galway Cathedral. Tickets will be available to purchase on our website from October.

For more information on events or to volunteer contact: Amy on amy.lavelle@galwayssimon.ie or 091 381828.



A Legacy for Your Local Community

“Without [Galway Simon’s Resource Centre] I would not be where I am today. I never believed my life could change as much as it has”

– Padraig*

A gift in your will, big or small, will help Galway Simon Community to be there for people facing homelessness in Galway in the future. When writing your will, your family and friends will of course come first but you might consider including a gift to Galway Simon.

Everything we receive is put to good use, supporting a person’s right to security, dignity and wellbeing in their own home.

At Galway Simon, we believe that everyone should have a place to call home. We know that there will always be people in our community who will need our support.

If you’re thinking of including a gift to Galway Simon in your will and you’d like to talk to us about it, please contact Ruth Brennan on (091) 381828. Alternatively, you can write to:

Galway Simon Community
Unit 18, Tuam Road Centre
Tuam Road,
Galway,
H91 X2N4.

Registered Charity No. 20018962

**To protect his identity, Padraig’s name has been changed.*



Registered Charity No. 20018962

 @galwaysimon

 /galwaysimon

Unit 18 Tuam Road Centre, Tuam Road, Galway, H91 X2N4.
091 381828

info@galwaysimon.ie
www.galwaysimon.ie

Galway Simon Community is operating to the Charities Institute 'Triple Lock' standards and is compliant with the Irish Charity Voluntary Governance Code, the Statement of Recommended Practices (SORP) and the Statement of Guiding Principles for Fundraising.