



# 2016 calendar

including an Annual Review for 2014



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**“It’s very simple.  
If you are homeless  
you need a home.”**

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## **Cover Image Caption:**

At the historic signing of the Memo of Agreement between Midlands Simon Community and Pathways to Housing (USA) **Minister Alan Kelly T.D.** Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government, **Dr Sam Tsemberis** (Founder and CEO of Pathways to Housing) and **Tess Murphy** (Chairperson of the Midlands Simon Community).



**“I will forever be grateful to  
Simon for the chance to rebuild  
myself and my life.”**

# Chairperson's Address

## Tess Murphy



This is my second report as Chairperson of Midlands Simon Community. It has once again been a year of significant challenge in which the level of allocated funding fell far short of the minimum required to provide a basic service to the most vulnerable in our community, those without a home of their own. There were times when we literally didn't know if we could continue as a sustainable organisation. When I think back to the end of last year where we were managing cash flow from month to month, there seemed to be no light at the end of the tunnel. So last year was a year of considerable challenge.

One thing that became increasingly evident was the challenge of covering the core costs of the organisation, the admin staff, light and heat, premises, finance, HR, the audit, IT and communication, all the essentials of a modern professional organisation. When our funding was cut to the bone our priority was to maintain our services to the most vulnerable, the people without a roof over their head. So very reluctantly we had to let valued staff members go, resulting in a cut in staff numbers in non-service areas. We have to acknowledge the outstanding work of the remaining staff, in particular the managers of our emergency and settlements services. Nevertheless, the loss of staff has had a severe impact on the organisation. The primary impact has been on our Chief Executive Officer who is now stretched across the organisation in a way that impacts on his ability to do the external communication work which is also essential to maintain awareness of the necessity of our services.

In addition to that we were also faced with the decision of the Midlands Joint Regional Consultative Homeless Forum to tender for the settlement service. This involved many hours of scarce resources on the part of our CEO Tony O'Riordan and Line Manager of the RSS Emma Keane in responding to the challenge of competing to win the tender.

However, it wasn't all doom and gloom. The first ray of light was the occasion of the signing of the Memo of Agreement with Dr Sam Tsemberis and his organisation Pathways to Housing and so the Midlands Simon Community was the first organisation in Europe to sign such an agreement and in the presence of the Minister, Alan Kelly.

Dr Sam Tsemberis is the foremost exponent of the "Housing First" approach to chronic homelessness and it was a privilege to sit in on one of his training sessions earlier this year.

Our shops are providing a valuable contribution to our cash flow and I wish to thank Joanne Murray (Shop Development Manager) and all the staff and volunteers in the shop.

I wish to acknowledge our staff in fundraising whose efforts throughout the year raise the necessary funds to maintain our services.

We cannot underestimate the challenges we face next year. We have managed to cut our operating deficit significantly, yet we are by no means out of the woods. We may still face cash flow issues that take diligent management.

On that brighter note I want to thank all of you Board Members for your courage and determination to keep going in the face of such monumental challenges. Particularly I want to thank our volunteers who fundraise, the Friends of Simon in Offaly and Laois. There were many occasions in the past year where it was their fundraising that kept the Midlands Simon Community afloat. I would like to acknowledge the support of all the ordinary people of the Midlands who contribute and all our fundraisers and the volunteers who help out, as well as the people who donate to our shops and those who buy our stock.

I want to thank our front Line Managers Emma Mannion (EAS Athlone), Ruth Keane (EAS Tullamore) and Emma Keane (RSS). We cannot underestimate the uncertainty and upheaval the staff have gone through in the past year due to cutbacks and restructuring. Basically they have been asked to do more with less: less funding, less staff and more people coming forward in need of our support.

We are very fortunate to have a CEO who believes passionately in the vision and approach of Midlands Simon Community to the issue of homelessness. He works tirelessly on all fronts, with staff, with the Board, with our funders and with the decision makers. We all appreciate his commitment to the work.



# Chairperson's Address Tess Murphy

*continued*

I wish to express our appreciation to the staff in the Four Local Authorities and the HSE and the members of the Management Committee of the Midlands Regional Joint Consultative Homeless Forum and our fellow service providers. I wish finally to acknowledge the support of the staff of the National Office of the Simon Communities of Ireland and the other Simon Communities in Cork, Dublin Dundalk, Mid West, North West and South East Simon Communities.

I am confident that with the quality and commitment of our Board and staff we can overcome our challenges and can continue to contribute to the elimination of homelessness in the Midlands.

**K T Murphy**

*Chairperson of the Board of Directors of the Midlands Simon Community*



# Foreword from CEO of the Midlands Simon Community



2014 was one of the most challenging years in the history of Midlands Simon Community. With state funding being reduced by 15% and an increase in demand for services, at times during the year the sustainability of the organisation came into question. The organisation had to go through unprecedented structural change which included reducing staff numbers through redundancies.

However, the organisation survived and services continued to reach out to those who were at risk of homelessness and those experiencing homelessness.

The reasons that the organisation has emerged from such challenges are set out below.

## **Board of Directors Providing Oversight and Governance**

The Midlands Simon Community is fortunate that it has a Board of Directors comprised of a range of skills and relevant experience that give their time generously and on a voluntary basis. The Board were required to make very difficult decisions during the year. They chose to prioritise and protect front line services and that any of the cost saving measures shouldn't impact on the quality and scale of work in supporting people affected by homelessness.

## **Committed and Dedicated Work Force**

The Midlands Simon Community not only wishes to offer support, but in doing so it believes that that support is most effective when offered in a specific way. Treating the people we support with dignity, respect and compassion creates the environment that allows positive change to happen in people's lives. Staff in the Midlands Simon Community have always gone the extra mile and they do so because of their belief in the organisation and their dedication to their work. The Midlands Simon Community is fortunate that our staff in Services, Housing, Community Nursing, Fundraising, Administration and Shops are all aligned and committed to the vision and ethos of supporting people to move out of homelessness.

## **A Community Owned Organisation with a Strong Volunteer Base**

The Midlands Simon Community has over 100 volunteers that give their time each week to volunteer in Services, Friends of Simon Groups, Fundraising and Shops. The Midlands Simon Community was founded by volunteers and is a volunteer and community owned organisation. Their active participation in the work of the Midlands Simon Community communicates an important message that people care about the issue of homelessness. Homelessness is an unacceptable reality in society and our donors and supporters wish to see an end to homelessness. Their generosity has meant that in difficult times we have been able to reach out to people who often had nowhere else to turn to. In particular, the Friends of Simon in Laois and Offaly came to our aid in 2014 and without this support we could not have maintained our level of service delivery.

## **Leadership and Support from the Local Authorities and the HSE**

The level of inter-agency cooperation in the Midlands has meant that the maximum benefit has been generated from the resources that are available. The four Local Authorities of Laois, Longford, Offaly and Westmeath, together with the HSE, have always stepped up to the plate in terms of exercising their statutory responsibility. The Midlands Region has an active and effective Regional Joint Consultative Homeless Forum and it was one of the first regions in the state to have an active Homeless Action Team in each county.

## **Service User Support and Midlands Simon Community Forum**

The Midlands Simon Community is fortunate to have an active Forum that is made up of past and present Service Users. This group meets regularly and assists in keeping the soul and purpose of the organisation fresh and renewed. The peer support offered through

# Foreword from CEO

*continued*

this group is invaluable and their contribution to the Simon Community of Ireland through their involvement in the National Service Users Body is extremely beneficial to the workings of that group.

## **Housing First: A Model that reflects the Ethos and Values of the Midlands Simon Community**

In last year's Annual Report we outlined that in association with Athlone Institute of Technology, the Midlands Simon Community organised the first ever Housing First Conference in the state. Dr Sam Tsemberis, founder and CEO of Pathways to Housing and internationally recognised as the lead international expert on Housing First, delivered the key note address. Fortunately the organisation was able to progress this partnership with Dr Tsemberis and the Midlands Simon Community became the first Service Provider in Europe to sign a Memo of Agreement with Pathways to Housing and Dr Tsemberis. This agreement will support the Midlands Simon Community to equip itself with the skills and capacity to implement this model. The values and methodology of "Housing First" best capture the essence of the Midlands Simon Community. The Midlands Simon Community works from the belief that the only way to solve homelessness is through a compassionate response that supports people into a home of their own, as opposed to the traditional model of service delivery that places people in large scale hostels or shelters.

## **Partnership and Inter-agency working**

Midlands Simon Community is also fortunate to have multiple positive working relationships with organisations in the community and voluntary sector. This, together with support from bodies such as the Midland Regional Drug and Alcohol Task Force has allowed Midlands Simon Community to sustain its work.

Midlands Simon Community is also affiliated to

the Simon Communities of Ireland and on behalf of the organisation I wish to acknowledge the support of the National Office of the Simon Communities of Ireland in the areas of National Advocacy, Best Practice and National Fundraising. I would also like to acknowledge the seven other local Simon Communities in Cork, Dublin, Dundalk, Galway, the Mid West, the North West and the South East for their on-going support.

## **Concluding Words**

So 2014 saw Midlands Simon Community having to strive to ensure its very survival. Difficult decisions and sacrifices were made that led to the sustainability of the organisation.

The organisation now stands at an important milestone in that Midlands Simon Community has been 10 years delivering services in September 2015.

Homelessness impacts severely on individuals, couples and families, but it is the responsibility of all of us in society to respond to the issue. Midlands Simon Community has been able to develop because of the commitment of Board Members, Staff and Volunteers and all those mentioned above. For that, on behalf of all in the Midlands Simon Community I express our deepest gratitude.

## **Tony O'Riordan**

*Chief Executive Officer, Midlands Simon Community*





# Services Provided by Midlands Simon Community

Midlands Simon Community works with people at risk of and experiencing homelessness across the Midlands Counties of Laois, Longford, Offaly and Westmeath. The organisation provides a continuum of services from emergency accommodation through to supporting people to settle into a home of their own.

**Table 1:** The following is an outline of the people we supported in 2014:

COUNTY	No. of cases worked with in the RSS	People supported by the Community Liaison Nurse Service	People admitted into the Emergency Accommodation
Laois	44	55	n/a
Longford	29	94	n/a
Offaly	81	59	35
Westmeath	105	114	14
<b>Total</b>	<b>259</b>	<b>322</b>	<b>49</b>



Attending Housing First Seminar in Laois County Council were Mr Joe Whelan (Community Services Manager with the HSE) and Mr Kieran Butler (Representing the Management Committee of the MRJCHF)

# Services Provided by Midlands Simon Community

*continued*

Table 1 indicates the level of the demand on services provided by the Midlands Simon Community and the increase in demand. To demonstrate the increase in demand it should be noted that the number of people supported by the Community Liaison Nurse Service increased from 195 in 2013 to 322 in 2014.

While the numbers accessing the emergency accommodation decreased from 53 to 49 from 2013 to 2014, this is reflective of the fact that Service Users had to stay for longer periods in the service because of the lack of suitable move on accommodation for them and thus people stayed longer in emergency accommodation in 2014 than in 2013.

## **Focus on Quality**

The Midlands Simon Community has always been attentive to attaining the highest standards of service delivery. To this end, Ruth Keane (Line Manager EAS Tullamore) represented the Midlands Simon Community on the National Quality and Standards Working Group of the Simon Communities of Ireland. While the Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government is at the development stage of producing National Standards for Homeless Services, Ruth's participation in this has allowed Midlands Simon Community to be at the forefront in maintaining the highest standards of service delivery.

## **Midland Regional Joint Consultative Homeless Forum**

The Midlands Region is fortunate to have the above body that meets regularly to co-ordinate and monitor service delivery within the region. The Management Committee is made up of Laois, Longford, Offaly and Westmeath Local Authorities, the HSE and the Irish Prison Service.

## **MRDATF**

The Midland Regional Drug and Alcohol Task Force has provided valuable advice and guidance to the Midlands Simon Community over the last 12 months. In particular the Task Forces support of the training carried out by Dr Sam Tsemberis was a major resource to front line staff.

## **Partners**

The Midlands Simon Community continues to have an effective working relationship with Athlone Institute of Technology as evidenced through the Graduate Programme and the active Simon Students Society.

The organisation would also like to acknowledge the support of Dr Ronni Greenwood from UL for her expertise in designing and measuring "Housing First" interventions. Finally, we would like to acknowledge the contribution that Dr Fergus Heffernan (Director of CHH Services) has made by enhancing our staff supervision and advising on staff development and the well being programmes in the organisation.



# Regional Support Service (Homelessness)

The above service, formerly known as the Regional Settlement Service was put out for public tender by the Management Committee of the Midlands Regional Joint Consultative Homeless Forum in 2015. The Midlands Simon Community was successful in tendering to operate this service and the new service will be known as the Regional Support Service for Homelessness. For the purposes of this annual report, the majority of the report will outline the work of the Regional Settlement Service and the concluding part of this section of the annual report will outline how the new service will be delivered.

## Background to the Regional Settlement Service

The RSS was the first service that the Midland Simon Community established in 2005. The service in its design and structure departed from the traditional models of services delivery which was based on building large scale hostels and shelters to combat homelessness. The Midlands Simon Community viewed this approach as being ineffective and costly and it did not deliver the solution that the Service User was asking for, i.e. a home of their own. The pilot stage of the service was evaluated by Joan O'Flynn in 2007 and this led to the expansion of the service with the service moving from two settlement workers to four settlement workers. The service was governed by a protocol agreed by the Four Local Authorities and the HSE and this was the first such protocol in the state for the operation of a homeless service.

## Service Reviews

In 2011 the Service was reviewed by the Local Authorities and the HSE in their "Review of

Homeless Services in the Midlands Region".

This review, conducted by Murtagh and Partners, confirmed the positive outcomes that the service was delivering on. The service was reviewed again in 2013 by Murtagh and Partners, and this review concluded that the RSS was one of the most cost effective and efficient homeless services in the State.

## Request to Tender

In accordance with procurement guidelines, Westmeath Local Authority co-ordinated a competitive tendering process to select the service provider to operate the service. Midlands Simon Community submitted a tender application and was successful.

## New Service

The new service will now work under a new contract and SLA. The service is now required to work with cases referred by the Local Authority across a wider continuum, including:

- Cases that require an emergency response
- Cases that need a preventative response
- Cases that require tenancy sustainment for 6 months

This service has also been asked to use a "Housing First" response to work with people that present with complex needs and have a history of repeat homelessness.

On-going development of the RSS is supported and funded by the Laois, Longford, Offaly and Westmeath Local Authorities and the HSE. The RSS works to the direction and guidance of these agencies as laid out in the contract/SLA to operate the service.



# Emergency Accommodation Service - Athlone

This service is the only provider of emergency accommodation to single men over the ages of 18 in Westmeath. The service has six emergency beds (4 allocated to single men and 2 to single women). The service is open 24/7, with referrals made via the Local Authority and the PASS.

## Staffing

This service has a staff or volunteer presence 24/7. Due to funding cut backs in 2014 the service had to reduce the cover and at some stages there is only one person present in the service. This is an issue that is under constant review by management to ensure the effective management of the service and the safety of staff, volunteers and residents.

## HAT Westmeath

The Line Manager of the EAS Athlone participates in the Westmeath Homeless Action Team. The HAT, which is convened and chaired by Westmeath Local Authority provides for the inter-agency co-ordination and management of the needs of Service Users and aims to support the progression of the Service User out of homelessness.

## Low Threshold Service

The Midlands Simon Community doesn't place multiple barriers in the way of Service Users so as to prevent them accessing the EAS Athlone. The service recognises that many people that present as homeless will have addiction and mental health support needs and to insist on Service Users being at a certain stage in their recovery or being at a certain stage in their treatment prior to being admitted into the service is counter-productive to ending homelessness. The experience of the Midlands Simon Community is to admit people into the service and then once they have the security and stability of a bed for the night, this in turn supports their recovery from homelessness and provides a secure base from which to address their other support needs.

## Interventions

The EAS Athlone firstly responds to the crisis emergency accommodation needs of people who are homeless. The service provides a safe, comfortable and welcoming response to each Service User. The service provides an ensuite room for each Service User, which offers dignity and respect to someone traumatised by the experience of not having a home. There is a culture of "Housing First" and "Settlement" in the service, where from the moment of someone's admission to the service there is a focus on supporting the person to find and progress to having a home of their own.

Staff are trained in key working, which is a professional and skilled intervention, supporting the Service User to develop their own personal care plan. Service Users are also supported to develop the necessary skills that will help them to successfully manage their new tenancy once they move on from the service.

## Housing with Support - Slí Nua Athlone

This innovative service is supported by Westmeath County Council, HSE and the DOEHLG. It provides seven one bed apartments which offer a long term home to people with a long term experience of homelessness and/or housing instability.

The service is managed by the EAS Athlone with the staff from the EAS offering key working and visiting supports to ensure that people successfully progress out of homelessness and into the security of a home of their own.

The seven one bed apartments are leased on a 10 year lease at 20% below the market rent, thus there is an advantage to the exchequer in providing value for money and not having to make a capital investment, while at the same time demonstrating significant progress towards moving people with a long term experience of homelessness out of homelessness for good.

# Emergency Accommodation Service - Tullamore

This service is the **only** provider of emergency accommodation to single men and **women** over the ages of 18 in Co Offaly. The service has six emergency beds (4 allocated to single men and 2 to single women). The service is open 24/7 with referrals made via the Local Authority and PASS. The service works in partnership with Tullamore Housing Association from whom it leases the 6 units of accommodation.

## Staffing

This service has a staff or volunteer presence 24/7. Due to cut backs in funding in 2014, the service had to reduce the cover so that at some stages there is only one person present in the service. This is an issue that is under constant review by Management to ensure the effective management of the service and the safety of staff, volunteers and residents.

## HAT Offaly

The Line Manager of the EAS Tullamore participates in the Offaly Homeless Action Team. The HAT, which is convened and chaired by Offaly Local Authority provides for the inter-agency co-ordination and management of the needs of Service Users and aims to support the progression of the Service User out of homelessness.

## Low Threshold Service

The Midlands Simon Community doesn't place multiple barriers in the way of Service Users so as to prevent them accessing the EAS Tullamore. The service recognises that many people that present as homeless will have addiction and mental health support needs and to insist on Service Users being at a certain stage in their recovery or being at a certain stage in their treatment prior to being admitted into the service is counter-productive to ending homelessness. The experience of the Midlands Simon Community is to admit people into the service and then once they have the security of a bed for the night and stability, this in turn supports their recovery from homelessness and provides a secure base from which to address their other support needs.

## Partnership with Offaly Rights of the Elderly, Clontarf Road Residents and Tullamore Housing Association

The above groups meet on a quarterly basis with the Midlands Simon Community to provide a forum for the constructive addressing of mutual concerns relating to the safety and upkeep of the areas in close proximity to Tullamore Housing Association, Offaly Rights of the Elderly, Clontarf Residents Association and the Midlands Simon Community's Emergency Accommodation Service. The Garda Síochána and Offaly Local Authority also attend these meetings.

## Offaly Local Authority Housing and Cultural Strategic Policy Committee

The purpose of the above group is to formulate, review and develop a policy on behalf of the Local Authority. The CEO of the Midlands Simon Community is one of the social inclusion representatives on this body.

## Interventions

The EAS Tullamore firstly responds to the crisis emergency accommodation needs of people who are homeless. The service provides a safe, comfortable and welcoming response to each Service User. The service offers each person a room of their own and the warmth and empathy offered to each Service User are hallmarks of the service. There is a culture of "Housing First" and "Settlement" in the service where from the moment of someone's admission to the service there is a focus on supporting the person to find and progress to having a home of their own.

Staff are trained in key working which is a professional and skilled intervention supporting the Service User to develop their own personal care plan. Service Users are also supported to develop the necessary skills that will help them to successfully manage their new tenancy once they move on from the service.



# A European First: “Housing First” Partnership with Pathways to Housing (USA)

The Midlands Simon Community became the first Provider of Homeless Services in Europe to sign a Memo of Agreement with the Lead International expert on homelessness Dr Sam Tsemberis and his organisation Pathways to Housing (USA).

## **Why is having a Memo of Agreement with Pathways to Housing (USA) important for the Midlands Simon Community?**

The Midlands Simon Community from its very beginning moved away from the traditional and ineffective models of services delivery namely large scale shelters and hostels. Instead the Midland Simon Community wanted to focus on ending homelessness for individuals, couples and families. To do that the organisation wanted to help people not just to get a bed for the night but instead to support people to have a home for life. However, to do that and to deliver on it consistently, the Midlands Simon Community needed to develop a best practice model and to that end a review of international best practice led it to the work of Dr Sam Tsemberis. Dr Tsemberis is CEO and Founder of Pathways to Housing and they developed an evidence based model which has successfully moved people even those with chronic addiction and mental health needs to move out of homeless. There is an extensive

body of research that demonstrates that if followed the model leads to a 85% success rate for people successfully moving out of homelessness. In 2013 the Midlands Simon Community organised the first ever “Housing First” conference in the state in conjunction with Athlone Institute of Technology, and this was Dr Tsemberis first time addressing and Irish Audience and from that the relationship with Dr Tsemberis and his organisation grew and developed leading to the signing of the Memo of Agreement. Midlands Simon Community would like to thank PO Keenan (Board Member) and Tom Donohue (RBK Auditors) who from their own resources met with Dr Tsemberis in New York to progress the agreement.

## **The Signing of Memo of Agreement:**

The Midlands Simon Community wishes to express our sincere appreciation to the Minister for the Environment, Heritage and Local Government Alan Kelly TD for officiating at the signing of the Memo of Agreement. His presence and outline of the importance of “Housing First” in front of an audience drawn from Policy Makers, Front Line Practitioners and Supporters provided important recognition and validation for the process.



# A European First: “Housing First” Partnership with Pathways to Housing (USA)

*continued*

## **What does the Memo of Agreement consist of?**

Dr Tsemberis has personally taken on to mentor and train the staff of the Midlands Simon Community and the staff of the Midlands Simon Community became the first Front Line staff in Europe to be trained by Dr Tsemberis in the methodologies associated with “Housing First”. Dr Tsemberis has also agreed to act as Clinical Consultant to the work of the Midlands Simon Community.

## **What is “Housing First” and what difference will it make?**

“Housing First” as developed by Pathways to Housing USA, aims to support people to move into their own accommodation without having to go through a range of unnecessary steps, such as having to stay in shelters or transitional type accommodation. It also doesn’t require people to be sober or compliant with treatment prior to being offered accommodation, but the paradox is that once people are offered accommodation their recovery from homelessness becomes almost evitable.

## **First Regional “Housing First” Seminar in County Laois**

Laois Local Authority hosted the first ever Regional “Housing First” Seminar in the State, the seminar allowed for the presentation of the core themes and concepts associated with “Housing First” and allowed for them to be debate with a local and regional audience of front line professionals, policy makers and public representatives. The conference was also addressed by:

- Councillor John Joe Fennelly, Cathaoirleach of Laois County Council
- Kieran Butler, Representing the Management Committee of the Midlands Regional Joint Homelessness Consultative Forum
- Niamh Randall, Head of Policy with the Simon Communities of Ireland
- Tony O’Riordan, CEO of the Midlands Simon Community

The keynote address was delivered by Dr Sam Tsemberis.

The Midlands Simon Community would like to thank Laois County Council for hosting the Seminar and to the Midland Regional Drug and Alcohol Task force for funding the training with Pathways to Housing (USA).



# Community Liaison Nurse for Homelessness Service

The HSE fund two vital posts that respond to the healthcare needs of people that are homeless in the region. One of the CLN's covers the Laois/Offaly area and the other CLN covers Longford/Westmeath area. The presence of these services recognises that people who present as being homeless often present with complex and multiple health needs. The CLN service also acts as a conduit between the person in homeless services and health services.

The service saw an increase in demand for its service in 2014. Worked with 322 people compared to 195 people in 2013.

The Midlands Simon Community wishes to acknowledge the HSE and their support in creating and funding these posts.

## Community/GP/Pharmacy/Liaison Nurse

Midlands Simon Community acts as the host organisation for this service. This project develops links between HSE, CADS (Community Alcohol and Drugs Service), Community General Practitioners and Pharmacists participating in the Shared Care Programme. This service also assesses Service User's suitability for transfer into the Shared Care Programme and to provide ongoing support and advice to Community General Practitioners and Pharmacists. The existence of this post has made a tangible difference to supporting people with addictions to move out of homelessness and the Midlands Simon Community wishes to acknowledge the HSE, CADs and the Midland Regional Drug and Alcohol Task Force for their support in managing and funding this post.

# Service User's Forum

The Forum is made up of past and present individuals who have been supported by the Midlands Simon Community. They have several functions; they provide peer support to each other, they organise meaningful activities and they also act as an important representative body for Service Users. In doing so, they provide a formal structure where Midlands Simon Community can listen to the feedback on services, from people with direct experience of these services.

Over the last 12 months the Forum has organised:

- Simon Soccer Tournament
- Golf Outing
- Visit to Galway Simon Community
- Remembrance Night
- Christmas Party

The Forum has also participated in the National Service Users Group within the Simon Communities of Ireland.



# Fundraising and Friends of Simon

Midlands Simon Community receives significant support from the Government/State Agencies (approximately 50% of overall income). The deficit required for the organisation to continue to provide essential services to those experiencing homelessness across the Midlands region is made up through our own fundraising activities, donations, corporate giving, schools campaign and major support from community groups such as the Laois Friends of Simon and the Offaly Friends of Simon. Midlands Simon Community is very dependent on fundraising, both the organisations own efforts and the goodwill of all our supporters, in order to continue to provide these essential services.

Midlands Simon Community's Fundraising and Communications team co-ordinates a calendar of diverse fundraising events and activities throughout the year. These events are the organisations main way of raising regular and sustainable funds for our services. In-house fundraising encapsulates a large number of activities, many on going, which include:

- Annual Nollaig na mBan Ladies Luncheon;
- Corporate Sleep out for Simon;
- Community Based Fundraising;
- AIT Simon Society;
- Direct Mail Campaign;
- Sing for Simon;
- Collection Boxes.

Laois Friends of Simon and Offaly Friends of Simon are our primary groups of volunteers who support our services in their local areas, and the funds raised by these groups contribute greatly to maintaining our Front Line Services. In 2014 alone, Laois Friends of Simon were responsible for bringing in over €50,000, while Offaly Friends of Simon brought in over €30,000. Midlands Simon Community are extremely grateful to both groups for the fundraising work carried out on the organisations behalf.

Communication campaigns also play a vital role in ensuring the public are always aware of the issues impacting Midlands Simon Community and those at risk of and/or currently experiencing homelessness. Midlands Simon Community has run a number of communication pieces to advocate for those in our Services and be the voice of the homeless in the Midlands region, who might not otherwise be heard. These include numerous radio interviews on local and national radio stations and political briefings with locally elected Oireachtas members.

The Fundraising and Communications team have worked tirelessly to highlight the plight of those in need of Midlands Simon Community's services. Our interactive website, [www.midlandssimon.com](http://www.midlandssimon.com), alongside active social media accounts, educate the public on the plight of homelessness in the Midlands of Ireland.

## Midlands Simon Shops

Midlands Simon Shops provide a vital source of income for the organisation, while also helping to build awareness of Midlands Simon Community and the issue of homelessness in the Midlands region. Our Midlands Simon Shops are located in:

- Athlone, Co Westmeath – Opened January 2007
- Tullamore, Co Offaly – Opened November 2013
- Portlaoise, Co Laois – Opened January 2014

Midlands Simon Shops take pride in the fantastic selection of high quality clothes, accessories and shoes that they carry, while also stocking a wide range of homewares, DVD's, books and toys.

Midlands Simon Shops stand by the testament that ethical shopping and excellent quality can go hand in hand. Support of these shops, through donations and purchases, provides another way for local people to show solidarity with those experiencing homelessness throughout the year.

Midlands Simon Shops also provide an opportunity for people to volunteer by either working in the shops or by assisting to source stock and goods to sell in the shops. The shops have been very successful and provide a very valuable source of funds, with an income of €266,631 in 2014.

# Governance, Quality Standards and Compliance

The Board of Directors of Midlands Simon Community is committed to maintaining the highest standards of governance in the management and operation of the organisation. The Boards' composition reflects a broad range of relevant skills and experience which is essential for the effective oversight and governance of the organisation.

## Board Members

Tess Murphy (Chairperson)

Molly Buckley (Treasurer)

Mark Cooney

Brian Cowen

Mary Doyle

Tom Keady

P O Keenan

Cormac Lally (Vice Chairperson)

Peter Melinn

Bernadette O'Mahony

Linda Reidy

Mary Doyle has recently been appointed as company secretary to the Board of Directors.

The Board of Directors would like to acknowledge the resignation of Leo Wright from the Board and to thank him for his years of service. The last 12 months also saw the sad passing of George Lambden (RIP), since his retirement as Director of Services from Westmeath County Council. George was a member of the Board of Directors where his skills and experience enriched the work of the Board. We offer our sympathies to George's family and to his former colleagues in Westmeath Local Authority. May he rest in peace.

The Board met ten times during the year, and the AGM was held on the 22nd of October 2014 in accordance with statutory requirements as defined in the Companies Act. Midlands Simon Community also held an Annual Community Meeting on the 16th of October 2014 which was a forum for Volunteers, Service Users, Staff and Board Members to meet and review the year.

The Board has appointed four sub-committees to assist it in its duties, namely:

- Executive;
- Finance;
- Human Resources;
- Internal Audit Sub-Committee.

Midland Simon Community is also signed up to external codes of practice to further support best practice in the performance of its activities. These include:

- Statement of Guiding Principles for Fundraising;
- Code of Governance for Approved Housing Bodies;
- The Governance Code for Community, Volunteer and Charitable Organisations;
- Charities Regulator;
- The Lobbying Act.

Midlands Simon Community is proud to be compliant with the above codes of governance and strongly believes that they will help to bring greater transparency and accountability and ensure greater public confidence in the charity sector.

To further advance and promote best practice the Board of Directors appointed Declan O'Connor to the post of Governance and Compliance Officer. The Midlands Simon Community doesn't see Governance and Compliance as an end itself, rather as means to ensure that value for money, accountability, transparency and quality standards are to the forefront of the work of the organisation and to also ensure that people who experience homelessness receive a quality service.

# Financial Accounts

In 2014, Midlands Simon Community generated just over €1.3 million of income. The vast majority of our funding (49%) came from State funding which is provided by Local Authorities and the Department of Environment, Community and Local Government. 19% of our funding came from our three Simon Shops while 29% of income was sourced from donations or contributions from our supporters and the general public, whether through our fundraising efforts or events organised by the public.

The cost of the work done by Midlands Simon Community in 2014 was just over €1.4 million, meaning there was a deficit of €31,285. While this deficit has decreased by €90,000 from 2013, it still places a difficult challenge on our Front Line Services with increasing demand for homeless services.

We would like to thank everyone, corporate, statutory and individual supporters, who have contributed to the work of Midlands Simon Community. We continue to strive to give the best possible value for money and make a lasting difference to those in need of our services, for as long as they require our help and support.

Full audited accounts are available on request from the Midlands Simon Community Office and from our website at [www.midlandssimon.com](http://www.midlandssimon.com)

## Breakdown of Finances

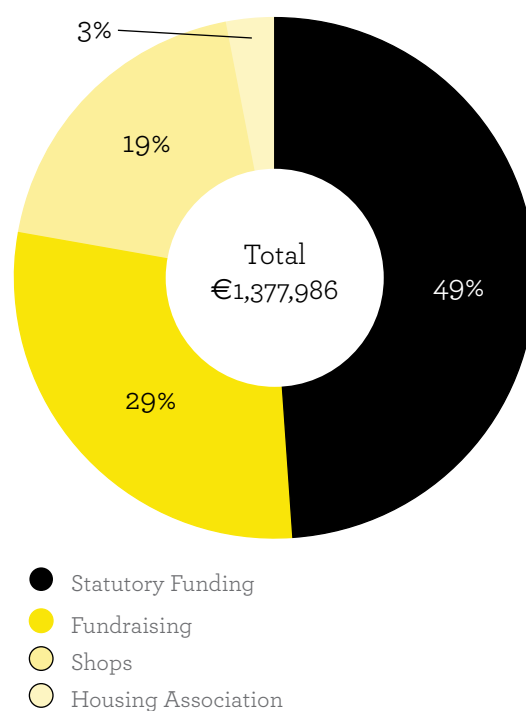
### INCOME

ITEM	AMOUNT	%
Statutory Funding	€679,388	49%
Fundraising	€391,044	29%
Shops	€266,631	19%
Housing Association	€40,923	3%
<b>Total</b>	<b>€1,377,986</b>	<b>100%</b>

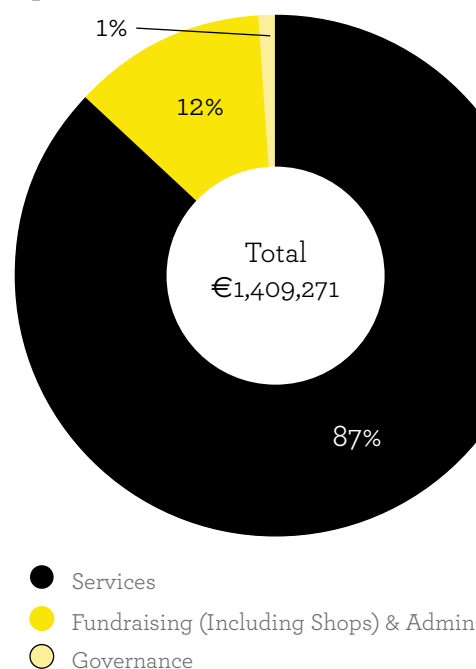
### EXPENDITURE

ITEM	AMOUNT	%
Services	€1,228,959	87%
Fundraising (including Shops) & Admin	€171,210	12%
Governance	€9,102	1%
<b>Total</b>	<b>€1,409,271</b>	<b>100%</b>

### Income:



### Expenditure:





# 2016



**Minister Alan Kelly TD**, Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government speaking at the launch of the Memo of Agreement between Midlands Simon Community the Lead International organisation on homelessness, Pathways to Housing (USA)

## JANUARY

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4	5	6	7	8	9	10
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### DECEMBER '15

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### FEBRUARY '16

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# 2016

**P O Keenan** (Board Member) and **Tony O’Riordan** (CEO Midlands Simon Community) at the Midlands Simon Community Annual Community Meeting. PO was awarded a ‘Person of the Year’ award in Athlone for his work **with Midlands Simon Community and other charities.**

## FEBRUARY

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### JANUARY '16

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### MARCH '16

**M T W T F S S**

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At the "Housing First" Seminar, hosted by Laois County Council are **Tony O'Riordan** (CEO Midlands Simon Community), **Cllr John Joe Fennelly** (Cathaoirleach of Laois County Council) and **Cormac Lally** (Vice Chairperson Midlands Simon Community).

## MARCH

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### FEBRUARY '16

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### APRIL '16

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# 2016



**Brian Fagan** leading his annual Sleep Out for Midlands Simon Community in Mullingar.

## APRIL

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### MARCH '16

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### MAY '16

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# 2016

**Minister Paudie Coffey TD** during his visit to the Slí Nua Project in Athlone.  
Included are **Emma Mannion** (Manager of EAS Athlone) **Ruth Keane** (Manager of EAS Tullamore) **Linda Reidy** (Board Member) **Minister Paudie Coffey TD**, **Deputy Gabriele McFadden TD**, **Mark Cooney** (Board Member) and **Laura Carley** (EAS Athlone and Slí Nua Project Worker).

## MAY

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APRIL '16

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JUNE '16

**M T W T F S S**

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Midlands  
**Simon**  
Community

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# 2016



**Tess Murphy** (Chairperson of Midlands Simon Community) and **Cathy Kelly** (Best selling Author). Cathy was our guest speaker at the Nollaig na mBan Ladies Luncheon in Glasson Country House Hotel.

## JUNE

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### MAY '16

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### JULY '16

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# 2016

Regional Case Workers in attendance at the Midlands Simon Community Annual Community Meeting: **Orla Connaughton**, **Kenneth Fitzpatrick** and **Mairead Cummane**.

## JULY

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JUNE '16

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AUGUST '16

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In attendance at the Midlands Simon Community Annual Community Meeting, **Mary Hyland** and **Chris Walshe**.

2016

# AUGUST

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JULY '16

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SEPTEMBER '16

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# 2016

Volunteer Board Members of the Midlands Simon Community, (front row) **P O Keenan**, **Tess Murphy** (Chairperson), **Peter Melinn**. Back row: **Cormac Lally** (Vice Chairperson), **Linda Reidy**, **Molly Buckley** (Treasurer), **Brian Cowen** and **Mary Doyle**. Missing from photo are **Mark Cooney**, **Bernadette O'Mahoney** and **Tom Keady**.

## SEPTEMBER

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### AUGUST '16

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### OCTOBER '16

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Participants at the Annual Sleep Out for Midlands Simon Community, held in Birr Castle, Co Offaly.

# 2016

## OCTOBER

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### SEPTEMBER '16

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### NOVEMBER '16

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Midlands Simon Community Shop.

# NOVEMBER

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## OCTOBER '16

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## DECEMBER '16

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2016

## "Housing First" Seminar

Thursday 22nd January 2015

Board Members and Staff with Lead International expert on homelessness **Dr Sam Tsemberis** (Founder and CEO of Pathways to Housing USA) at the Regional Seminar on "Housing First" in the offices of Laois County Council, Portlaoise, Co Laois.

## DECEMBER

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### NOVEMBER '16

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### JANUARY '17

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# Timeline of Milestones



2003 to  
2015

2003	February 2003: First Meeting of the Board of Directors of Midlands Simon Community
2004	Midlands Simon Community was established
2005	September 2005: RSS opened
2005	October 2005: Midlands Simon Shop Athlone opened
2006	January 2006: Laois Friends of Simon was established
2006	January 2006: Offaly Friends of Simon was established
2008	December 2008: Emergency Accommodation Service Athlone opened
2011	March 2011: Slí Nua Project opened
2012	June 2012: Emergency Accommodation Service Tullamore opened
2012	October 2012: Memorandum signed between Athlone IT and Midlands Simon Community
2013	October 2013: Midlands Simon Community and Athlone IT host the first 'Housing First' Conference in Ireland
2013	October 2013: Launch of informative and interactive website, <a href="http://www.midlandssimon.com">www.midlandssimon.com</a>
2013	November 2013: Midlands Simon Shop Tullamore opened
2014	January 2014: Midlands Simon Community Shop in Portlaoise opened
2015	January 2015: Signing of Memo of Agreement with Lead International expert Dr Sam Tsemberis and Pathways to Housing USA
2015	September 2015: 10 years of Midlands Simon Community operating homeless services
2015	September 2015: New Regional Support Service (Homelessness) commences



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