

Christine Moloney,
Chair, Cork Simon Community.
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CORK SIMON COMMUNITY IN 2023

A resilient and creative community of so many like-minded people throughout Cork & Kerry has seen us through yet another challenging year, and it's that real sense of community that inspires us to look to the future with confidence and purpose.

I was honoured to be elected Chair of Cork Simon Community's Board of Directors in January 2023. Homelessness was already increasing before the cost-of-living crisis took hold. But as the year progressed, it became clear that the need for our services was growing to unprecedented levels. The housing crisis continued to intensify. We met more people sleeping rough and we accommodated more people in our emergency accommodation than ever before.

The challenges right across the organisation were formidable. Thanks to the experience and skills of every member of the Board of Directors - all volunteers, we were able to negotiate those challenges skilfully and effectively. We benefitted from three new voluntary members joining our Board, bringing with them fresh thinking and insights. We worked collaboratively with our statutory partners to address some of the systemic and financial challenges we faced. A sincere thank you to the local authorities in the region and HSE for their openness, understanding and guidance.

Witnessing our hard-working teams working in harmony right across the organisation - in services, administration and support functions, elicits an enormous sense of pride. Their compassion, creativity and enthusiasm in making sure we respond to everyone turning to us for help as best we can bring our values and principles to life every day.

Standing with them is our small army of volunteers - from Ireland and around the world. As volunteers on Cork Simon's Board of Directors, we recognise the unique qualities they bring. They keep the spirit alive of those first volunteers who established Cork Simon over fifty years ago. They are the very embodiment of how much Cork cares about the men and women experiencing homelessness.

And Cork really does care about homelessness. That's clear from our thousands of supporters and donors who demonstrated their belief in us and the people we support by organising and participating in fundraising events, giving so generously, especially when times are tough for everyone, and showing a real commitment to playing their part in helping to make Cork a better place for everyone. Thank you so much.

This is what makes Cork Simon a community. We are determined as a Board to respect and honour that commitment by being transparent, efficient and accountable. I started my term as Chair by commissioning an independent governance review. The findings were positive and we're working through the recommendations aimed at enhancing our resilience and durability. We revised our Board committee structure to facilitate better oversight and decision-making. And we embarked on a Board recruitment programme to complement and augment the vast experience and skills among existing voluntary members.

A sincere thank you to my fellow Board volunteers who met the challenges we faced in 2023 with determination and resolve. Thanks to my predecessor, Anthony O'Donovan, for his leadership and expertise. And thank you to our CEO, Dermot Kavanagh who kept us all on track to end the year in a much better place.

Most of all, thank you for standing with us through the toughest of years. Because of you we were able to be there for every man and woman turning to us for help; we can plan in creative and innovative ways for meeting the needs of an increasing number of people being pushed into homelessness; we can continue to believe in people, believe that everyone who calls Cork home should have a home. Cork at its very best.