

THE  
*Simon*  
COMMUNITY

# SIMON STAR

*Living and working with London's street homeless*

## First Guest Stays The Night At Simon House!



*Simon House*

Although not officially open, and despite the building work going on, our first guest stayed the night on Sunday 13 February. The church night shelters were full and with the temperature dropping to nearly freezing the volunteer workers staying at Simon House offered him

a bed for the night.

It has been a frustrating time at Simon House with delays and problems with the building work, fitting the kitchen, installing the washing machine, fixing the showers etc. Consequently we had been unable to open when we had wanted

to. The team have been making the most of this time using the opportunity to get more experience through helping out at some of the church night shelters as well as our regular outreach activities. They have also been undergoing an intensive training programme covering areas such as drugs, mental health issues, dealing with violence and aggression, benefits and first aid. We have also been working hard developing our policies, working practices and licence agreements for the house. It is expected that by the time you read this the house should be fully operational providing immediate accommodation for ten people.

The SIMON STAR is published by  
**The Simon Community**

*Living and working with London's street homeless*

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# New Local Government Thinking on Streetwork Signals Important Role for Simon



Following a change in policy and the move to 'building based' services by the professional outreach teams, the Simon Community is now poised to become the primary provider of streetwork services for homeless people in Westminster.

In the past streetwork was undertaken by voluntary organisations, anxious to help people who were sleeping rough but not using the drop-in centres that were available at the time. Following some intensive lobbying the Government recognised the need for such services and began financing this work.

For years there was a constant battle over contracts with different organisations such as the Salvation Army or St Botolphs providing services and then for one reason or another falling out of favour and having their funding cut. Being largely dependent on professional streetworkers they were often unable

to continue doing streetwork if and when their funding was cut.

Most recently Thamesreach Bondway has been the primary provider of outreach services for street homeless people in Westminster but now it has been directed to move towards 'building based' services. The thinking behind this is to encourage people to go into the Day Centres rather than expecting them to wait passively on the streets. Until now they had indeed been told to wait where they sleep so that they can be verified as actually sleeping rough before they can be given specific assistance and referred into particular accommodation. This did end up as almost encouraging some people to sleep out rather than being proactive and trying to sort themselves out. Getting people to make the most of the services which are available is clearly not an unreasonable approach. However we all know that these kind

of 'one size fits all' strategies don't work out in practice. There are too many different sorts of people out there with very different needs and problems and many of them can't or won't go into day centres.

As the Simon Community receives no funding from any government sources we can and will continue with our streetwork. We currently have a team of nine full time volunteer streetworkers, led by Moritz Schwartz, as well as a number of part time volunteer co-workers. We aim to have teams out 365 days a year (but recently due to the training programme we have actually missed a few nights). Most nights of the week however there are usually two or three teams out. They go around in pairs, taking hot drinks and tobacco, talking to the people they find sleeping or begging on the streets. Being outside of the professional system we have unfortunately not had referral rights into the special hostels or temporary 'rolling shelters' that exist. But we are still able to refer people into some hostels or direct them towards other places and with the opening of Simon House we are now once again able to offer them accommodation ourselves. We are also training our streetworkers so that they will be better able to offer support or advice in other areas. And we have begun meeting with some of the professional teams to see how we can work together a bit more. We are particularly interested in trying to help...



*Volunteer, Simone Bruch, on Streetwork*

New Local Government  
Thinking on Streetwork... ★

... some of those hard to reach individuals who have in the past been suspicious or even hostile to the government funded street work teams. Most of the professional outreach work in Westminster is due to stop at the end of March and although they have not always been as popular as they would have liked the work these teams have been doing has been tremendously important. Cutting these outreach services could potentially be very hard indeed for a lot of people. At the Simon Community we aim to meet the needs which other agencies can't and so we will do our best to try and fill this vacuum! Any support you can give us in this will be very much appreciated. Thanks.

Mark Palframan, *Services Manager*

# Reflections On Homelessness



THE FOLLOWING POEMS AND PERSONAL OBSERVATIONS ON HOMELESSNESS HAVE BEEN CONTRIBUTED BY SIMON COMMUNITY VOLUNTEERS, SIMON STAR READERS AND STREET HOMELESS PEOPLE.

**People who live on the street**  
Come and sit a while and I'll share a few stories with you. There is a doorway - the entrance to a busy office during the day - in quite a posh part of London. Here is the place that John calls 'home' each night. We sat and chatted and he gave us his views on many world matters. Then he said: "you've given me a sandwich, coffee and a cigarette. I would like to give you something in return. What can I give you?" As we looked at his meagre possessions we wondered what to ask for. Then I said:



**Noreen**, *fulltime Simon volunteer*

"Give us a thought for the day". John replied: "The times we experience suffering in our lives affect us at a much deeper level than the times we experience joy". The scene is a busy London Underground subway. A group of six or seven people sit on the ground. There is one woman and all the rest are men. They call out to any women

who pass by, especially the younger ones. The woman sits on the edge of the group. I notice the tears running down her face. "What's the matter?" I ask. "It doesn't matter" she replies. I wait. She says: "I'm fifty one. I've had enough. I've been raped, I've been abused, I've had enough." I feel helpless. I put her name down as a possible referral for Simon House. As we leave I say to her: "I'll see you again". Her reply was chilling: "You'll probably never see me again." A little old lady lies in the doorway on the Strand. It's a very cold night. I say to her: "Do you find it very cold tonight?" She looks at me and says: "We have so much to be grateful for. We had no tsunami, we are so lucky to be alive. We have many blessings." Another evening we were in the same part of London. It rained all the time. I was feeling... *continued on page 4*

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TO MAKE  
A DONATION

PLEASE SEE THE FORM  
ON THE BACK COVER

# Reflections On Homelessness



very sorry for myself and constantly complained about the weather to my companion. I was worried that my coat wouldn't be dry in time for the tea-run the following morning. Then we met a man sitting with his back to the wall. He had no shelter of any kind to protect him from the elements. He seemed completely unaware of the rain. He just sat there looking vacant. One thing I've learned during my time working with the homeless is that each person is different, each person is unique. When we find ourselves saying: "The homeless are .....", we need to stop and remember that there are as many different personalities among homeless people as among any other group of people in society. Thank you for spending this time with me. I hope that some of what I've said has touched cords of compassion, love and care in you.

## Noreen Cullen

Simon Community volunteer

## Kids

See young kids on our street -  
Some you just stare at, others you meet.  
Sitting so sad and so alone,  
What future for them without a home?  
Think about things gone by,  
Why did Mum and Dad have to die?  
Just time on their hands, no time to think.  
Begging for a can to drink.  
Night after night - just the same,  
Then one winter night the angels came.

Now at last no longer alone.  
Now in his everlasting home.  
Living now without hurt or shame.  
At peace now without being lonely  
or in pain.

A place so peaceful filled with  
charms,  
Held so tight in those Angel's arms.

By *Dave McKane*



*Zoltan, new fulltime Simon volunteer*

## Little Ted

Nice and snug in his little bed,  
my best friend little Ted.  
Just one eye and a raggy nose.  
Just getting old I suppose.  
I first saw him so unhappy and alone  
"Please Mister just take me home."  
All wet and soggy, filled with fears,  
I'm sure I saw his little tears.  
"All I need is love and care,  
just a little bed to share.  
I don't mind a dog or cat,  
think I could put up with that.  
So I'm getting a sleepy little Ted.

"Can you please tuck me up in your  
little bed?"

So it's goodnight - sweet dreams from  
little Ted.

Next time you see a Teddy all sad and  
alone,

just pick him up and take him home.  
Love for you he will share.  
"All I need is love and care."

By *Dave McKane*

## A poem for homeless people & others in dire straits

In the major dramas of Life  
Secrecy hides betrayal  
Nobody sees sacrifice  
- the 'TV beefburger culture'  
Swallows all semblance of human  
drama  
Meanwhile 'Reality TV' pretends  
To re-enact some stories of trivia  
Like a figment of mass imagination

And the homeless people, the  
disempowered  
The people under Vauxhall Bridge  
Are truly dramatic, unknown,  
unrealised

Their misery is the payment for our  
society's sins,  
Blinded to its own selfish motives,  
Always seeking 'Culture', 'Drama'  
And spitting in the face of humanity

*Teresa Doughty*

...continued on page 5

# Reflections On Homelessness



## A personal story of homelessness

My name is Kat and I have been working for the Simon Community for four months. I am writing because before I came to the Simon Community I had been homeless myself. I'm not sure where exactly my story starts, where I started to go wrong. I think the beginning for me was when I started to become a teenager, and the usual rebelling against my parents, society and everyone in authority took over my life.

I come from a good home, with loving parents, in a good area. When I was fourteen I started experimenting with drugs, and drinking heavily. This was when things started to become more difficult for my parents. I was self-harming and taking overdoses, I think it was impossible for my parents to stand by and watch this. At fifteen I started running away. It makes me laugh now- what was I trying to achieve? Anyway, I left school at sixteen and went to a different school to do my A levels. This was a calmer time in my life, I had a good boyfriend who my parents got on with, I had some "better" friends, and I calmed down a bit in myself, drank less and so on.

When I started back in my second year my boyfriend moved away to go to University. I was totally devastated, and quit my A levels with the thought of getting a job and moving to be with him. This didn't happen, I got a job I hated, and drank more and more, sometimes not waking up to vomit. This went on for just over a year, until

I got a job that I didn't really like much more, but the people I was working with were better. Around this time my boyfriend went to Australia on some student exchange thing. We decided it was best to split up, although it was supposed to only be temporary, because he went for five months.



**Ed**, *new fulltime Simon volunteer*

He went in February and I first moved out of my parents' house in April, into a really nasty area with some friends I hardly knew. It must have broken my parents' hearts but there was no telling me, of course. I remember my mum saying to me as I moved out that I would end up taking harder drugs now, because I would become so immune to it that I wouldn't care anymore.

I had always said that I would never take a lot of drugs, but that changed quite quickly when I moved out and my boyfriend wasn't around anymore,

I was just experiencing life, right? I think a part of it was just looking for acceptance in my workmates, most of it was just me though.

I remember the first time I started "properly" taking drugs. It was one of the most amazing experiences of my life. And so, even though I got really ill off it, the next week, when I was better I went and did it all again. This was the start of my darkest period. I started to take drugs every day, still going to work. The relationship with my parents deteriorated rapidly. I can't imagine watching someone you love so much just being on total self-destruct and still not caring about themselves, not even recognising anything is wrong. I lost a lot of weight, but this pleased me, my friends were worried though.

After a while of maintaining this lifestyle I decided to quit my job. I had a bit of money so I was ok for a while. But when the money ran out I got my hands on my savings of £10,000. This is also when I first became homeless, ironically. I moved to another city, to try to sort myself out, although it was quite obvious to me it wasn't going to work because on the morning I was leaving, me and my friends found me a load of drugs to go away with in case I couldn't find a dealer for a while. So I came back and slept on friends' floors, then moved in with a guy who later tried to stab my boyfriend at the time. So I moved out of there, into a lovely house with a good friend. Unfortunately this house had loads of debts on it (he'd been living there for years), and my money was running out. So, about a month later...

*continued over*

## Reflections On Homelessness



*continued...*

we got evicted, my boyfriend had broken up with me (because there was no money left, or he couldn't deal with my drug-taking), I had nothing. But I finally got a bit of perspective on life, luckily, and so although this was probably the hardest time in my life, I coped fine.

Some of my friends helped me out, but I was still not able or willing to help myself. You can only doss around for so long though, and my welcome was getting a bit outstayed. So, eventually I went to the Cyrenians, and they helped me out. I went in a safe-house for women, and then a young person's hostel.

That brings me to here. I am writing because it is easy to become homeless. I think there are some pre-conceptions about homeless people, and I certainly don't fit that mould. My mum had the attitude that if you take drugs it's game over, but I think of all the things I have done, and what I have learnt, and maybe I did do it the "wrong" way, but here I am now, loving every second of life, and how many people can say that? Homeless people are just that, people who happen to be homeless. Sometimes it hard to remember that they're exactly like you and me.

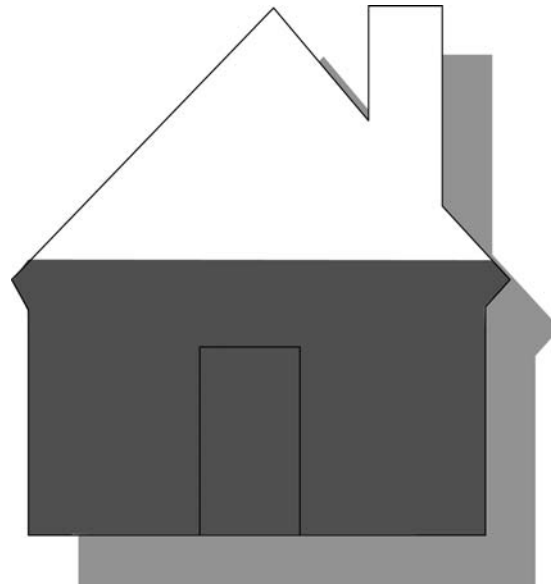
**Kat**

*Simon Community Volunteer*

# Community News & Events



## Simon House Appeal



£80,000

£40,000

£0

## Simon House Appeal

The Simon Community would like to say thank you to all Simon Star readers, church communities, schools, trusts and companies who responded to our appeal for funds toward the annual running costs of our new shelter, Simon House. Contributions now total over £46,000, which takes us over the half-way mark. It is a great comfort to know that we can run the shelter at full capacity for at least the next six months, and we are working hard to secure more funding for the long-term.

We would also like to thank Nathan Wilkinson of Arc7 Architects, North London, for providing free consultation services to The Simon Community with regards to the refurbishment of Simon House.



## TO MAKE A DONATION

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# Community News & Events



## *When Christmas came to Street Café*

Every Christmas The Simon Community is fortunate to receive an anonymous donation of several turkeys, a ham, and a generous

helping of potatoes and vegetables. So this year we decided to take Christmas to Street Café, and on 21st December served up 75 dinners from the back of the Simon van. Another donation of over 100 mince pies completed the meal and with several volunteers wearing reindeer antlers and

Father Christmas hats (with flashing lights!) the mood was very festive. Ex-Simon resident and community co-worker Jon Cartledge did an excellent job cooking all the food and the feedback from everyone who attended Street Café that night was that the effort was... *continued over...*



*Simon Community resident and co-worker Pat Donnelly on an early morning tea run*

# Community News & Events



*Continued from page 7...*

...much appreciated. This was also the night that new Simon supporter and part-time volunteer David Wheeler chose to come and find out what The Simon Community is all about; and whether it was Jon's cooking or the charm of the characters at Street Café that did it, David has now signed himself up for a 15 day sponsored trek in Nepal to raise money for our new shelter. He hopes to raise £1,500 and if you would like to support his efforts you can visit his online fundraising page to make a donation, at [www.justgiving.com/davestrek](http://www.justgiving.com/davestrek) or make out a cheque payable to The Simon Community and send it to PO Box 1187, London, NW5 4HW. Please include a note to let us know it is a sponsorship donation.

Over the Christmas period David also worked with his local community in Surrey and arranged for a collection of warm clothing and blankets for us to distribute to people in need on the streets, and toiletries for residents at the new shelter. We are very grateful to David's local church, Our Lady Help of Christians, Madeira Road, Surrey, for contributing so generously to this collection.

## *City Company Provides Warmer Winter Kits for Street Homeless*

Simon was pleased to have the support of Bloomberg - a financial services company in the City of London - over Christmas. As part of the company's annual Best of

Bloomberg week, employees worked with a number of charities to support their Christmas activities. The Simon Community received 100 Warmer Winter Kits which were designed to provide the everyday kind of items which people living on the street sometimes find it hard to come by, including gloves and toiletries. The kits came in a handy rucksack and were customised for men and women. Simon distributed the kits on its early morning tea runs, which were extended to everyday over the Christmas period, and they were much appreciated. Bloomberg also donated gently used warm clothing & several hundred cookies made by its staff and these were a welcome addition to the ubiquitous Simon cheese sandwich on the tea and soup runs!

## *Bi-annual Headcount of Rough Sleepers*

The next Simon Community headcount of rough sleepers in London will take place on the evening of Friday 1st April between 12am and 2.30am.

**If you would like to volunteer for the headcount please call Sarah Cahill on 020 7482 8085.**

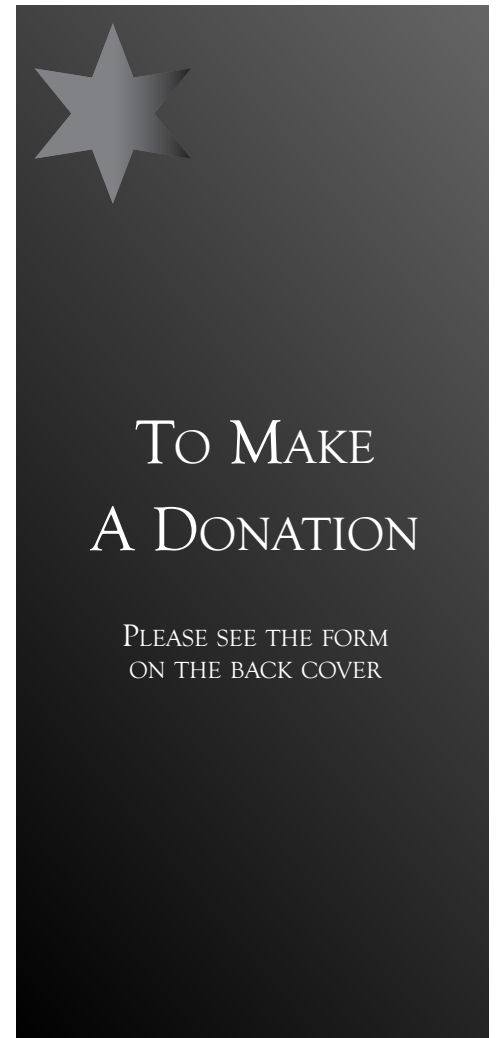
### **What do the headcounts involve?**

The headcounts involve approximately 40 volunteers working in teams of two. Each team is assigned a London borough, or part of a borough, and is given a map to indicate streets and other areas where rough-sleepers are known to bed down for the night. Volunteers are simply asked to record

the number of rough sleepers they come across and to indicate whether they were male or female.

### **Why are the headcounts important?**

The last headcount in October proved that there are still hundreds of people who, for a whole variety of very different and individual reasons, are not able to access appropriate accommodation. They also help to inform how and when our streetwork is carried out by showing us where rough sleepers are gathering and at what time.



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# Help Simon Raise Money by Recycling Your Old Mobile Phone



Did you know that you can help the environment and raise money for Simon's work just by recycling your old mobile phone? The Simon Community has teamed up with mobile phone recycling specialists, Greener Solutions, to create a new fundraising opportunity and give you a really easy way of recycling your old mobile phone. Greener Solutions will give The Simon Community £3 for every mobile phone that it receives from a Simon Community supporter. So if you have an old phone and you have been wondering what to do with it, please take a few moments to follow the simple steps below and you will be helping to raise money for Simon.

Recycling your old mobile through Greener Solutions ensures that its various components will be recycled or disposed of safely, or if possible phones are reconditioned and sent to developing countries.

**Are you part of a community group or school? Do you work for a company which regularly upgrades its employees mobile phones?**

If you are part of a community group, school or you regularly get a new mobile through work you could help us to collect even more old mobiles by promoting the scheme within your group or amongst your colleagues. Please call Sarah Cahill on 020 7482 8085 for more information or to discuss.



## **Why make the effort to recycle your old phone?**


Waste from mobile phone products is a subject of rising concern. They contain many toxic substances and if we simply throw out our phones with the rest of our rubbish these can be released into the air and groundwater when burned in incinerators or disposed of in landfills, creating threats to human health and the environment.

## **All you have to do is:**

1. Remove your SIM card from your old mobile phone
2. Place the phone in a sturdy envelope
3. Send it to Greener Solutions' FREEPOST address below.
4. Please don't forget to include a note saying that you are recycling your phone on behalf of The Simon Community, or put our name at the top of the FREEPOST address so that we are sure to get our £3!
5. Cut out these instructions so that you can refer to them again, and tell your friends!

**Simon Community  
Greener Solutions  
FREEPOST LON17592  
MITCHAM  
CR4 3UZ**

# Save Money on Your Purchases & Raise Funds for Simon



The Simon Community has teamed up with a new service called Price<less to help you save money and at the same time raise funds for Simon's work.

Price<Less is a buying service which saves consumers money on their major household purchases. The expert buyers at Price<Less make savings of 25% on average, on a 'no results - no fee' basis. 20% of the money saved goes to charity. The service is simple. Price<less will search for savings on anything you want to buy over £200 - for example a car, your next holiday or a computer. Price<less could also save you money on insurance or your utility bills.

This is how it works:

- Simply call the Price<less team and tell them what you are about to buy and the best price you have found.
- Our professional buyers will search for alternative suppliers with a better price.
- We will phone you back and tell you how much they can save you. (Average = 25%)
- If you decide to buy, we charge 20% of the saving which goes to charity.
- You then go ahead and buy the product/service directly from the cheaper supplier.
- If we can't find you a better price, you pay nothing.
- If you decide not to buy from the cheaper supplier, you pay nothing.

*There is no charge for our service - only a share of the savings which will help to raise money for The Simon Community.*

**Here's how one Price<less customer saved money on a new car:**

Steve first heard about Price<Less through his company. He had decided to buy a new Ford Mondeo. Having visited two local dealers, the best deal that he had been offered for the specification of car that he wanted was £15,820. He then phoned Price<Less and spoke to Mike, a Price<Less buyer. Mike took full details of the car along with how far Steve was prepared to travel to buy one.

Mike phoned Steve back two days later having found a car meeting the specification at a dealer 80 miles away with a price of £13,810. Although the car was not available locally, Steve decided that the saving of £2,010 was well worth it. He agreed to a charge of 20% of the saving from Price<Less, i.e. £402.00 which he paid using his credit card. Mike then gave Steve details of the quote reference from the dealer so that he could buy the car at the Price<Less negotiated discount. Steve saved a net £1,608 after paying Price<Less £402.00 which Price<Less paid to charity.

**With 2 phone calls...Steve had saved £1,608 and raised £402 for charity.**

**If you decide to use the Price<less service don't forget to nominate The Simon Community as your chosen charity.**



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**The Simon Community**

*Living and working with London's street homeless*

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[thesimoncommunity@yahoo.com](mailto:thesimoncommunity@yahoo.com)

[www.simoncommunity.org.uk](http://www.simoncommunity.org.uk)



# Please Support Simon's Essential Streetwork Services

On the front page of this newsletter we talk about the changing climate of outreach work and how, as a result, The Simon Community may soon be the primary provider of streetwork services for homeless people in Westminster. Once again, it is our decision to remain independent of government funding which means that we are able to continue providing an essential service to homeless people, even when the controversy and the withdrawing of funding means other agencies have to stop.

## Why Streetwork is essential

Streetwork is the first point of contact for people coming into The Simon Community. It is carried out by our volunteers and involves going out onto the streets of central London every day of the year to make and maintain contact with people sleeping rough, and to respond as far as we can to their needs. Some will want a chat, but others might not want to talk. However, it is important to let them know that we exist, and gradually over time they may trust us enough to talk to us and let us help.

In just one evening then, a Simon streetwork team might find someone a place to stay, encourage someone to seek help and advice or even just offer a friendly face and a hot drink to someone who otherwise gets ignored every day. Daily Streetwork also means we can keep in close contact with as many people as possible and stay in touch with the latest news on the street.

## How you can help...

With your support we can keep doing streetwork everyday, and a little money goes a long way. For example:

- Just £7 buys a daily travelcard, which the volunteers need to travel to and around their designated streetwork area.
- £30 per month pays for an Internet connection so that when Simon House is full we can access up-to-the minute information on vacancies at any of the other hostels throughout London, via the online hostels directory. This information can then be passed to the streetwork teams on duty.
- £15 per month pays for the use of three mobile phones, enabling the streetwork teams to make calls to those hostels with vacancies to secure someone a bed for the night.
- £6 buys six bus saver tickets which are used to take people to hostels if a bed is found for them.

- £40 would enable us to buy new, robust drinks flasks to replace our old ones which are leaking. The offer of a hot drink is usually very welcome.

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**BY MAKING A DONATION YOU WILL BE ENABLING US TO PROVIDE SUPPORT AND FRIENDSHIP TO SOME OF THE MOST ISOLATED AND VULNERABLE HOMELESS PEOPLE IN LONDON. OUR STREETWORK TEAMS ARE ALSO WORKING HARD TO HELP AS MANY ROUGH SLEEPERS AS POSSIBLE GET OFF THE STREETS AND INTO APPROPRIATE ACCOMMODATION. PLEASE GIVE WHAT YOU CAN BY SENDING YOUR DONATION ALONG WITH THE FORM ON THE BACK PAGE OF THIS NEWSLETTER. YOUR DONATION DOES MAKE A DIFFERENCE AND YOUR ONGOING SUPPORT IS MUCH APPRECIATED.**


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# Ways Of Giving

THE  
*Simon*  
COMMUNITY

Please complete this form and return it with your donation to:  
The Simon Community, PO Box 1187, London NW5 4HW

 Alternatively you can make a secure donation online via our website, why not visit us at:  
[www.simoncommunity.org.uk](http://www.simoncommunity.org.uk)

*giftaid it*

Using Gift Aid means that for every pound you give we get an extra 28 pence from the Inland Revenue, helping your donation to go further.

Title: \_\_\_\_\_ Full Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Post Code: \_\_\_\_\_

I wish to make a donation to The Simon Community of £

I enclose a cheque/ postal order made payable to The Simon Community

Please treat this and all donations I've made since April 2000 and all donations I make in the future as Gift Aid donations until I notify you otherwise.

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

\*In order for us to be able to reclaim the tax you have paid on your donations, you must have paid income or capital gains tax in the UK, equal to the tax that will be reclaimed (currently 28p for each £1 you give)

Please notify us if you change your name or address, or if your circumstances change and you no longer pay sufficient income tax and/or capital gains tax.

You may cancel this arrangement at any time simply by notifying the Simon Community.

Please tick if no acknowledgement is required

I would like more information on:

- Making regular donations through standing order
- Making regular donations through direct debit
- Including Simon in my will

I would prefer to receive Simon Star by email  My email address is \_\_\_\_\_

**THANK YOU FOR YOUR SUPPORT**

THE SIMON COMMUNITY IS A REGISTERED CHARITY, NUMBER 283938