

Simon Community's Temporary Move to Glen Road

March 2026



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Introduction:

Simon Community's Move to Glen Road

For over 20 years, Simon Community has operated a Young People's Service on the Malone Road, offering safe, supported accommodation for young people aged 18–25 who are experiencing homelessness. Their current home is now in severe disrepair and requires urgent refurbishment to make it safe again. Following years of searching for a suitable temporary alternative, 210 Glen Road has been identified as the first safe and available building within Greater Belfast that could provide a temporary home for 26 young people.

This move comes at a time when homelessness in Northern Ireland is at its highest recorded levels, with over 62,000 people officially recognised as homeless — around one in every 31 people. West Belfast is particularly affected, with approximately 7,000 people currently experiencing homelessness. Demand for youth accommodation continues to rise, driven by factors such as poverty, family breakdown, lack of affordable housing and young people leaving care or unsafe situations. A safe, supported service for these young adults is essential.

This Report

We recognise that news of the move has brought questions and concerns. In December, we paused the relocation for three months to ensure we could listen fully, respond to issues raised and provide clear information to the local community. During this time we met with schools, elected representatives, community groups, residents and many other local voices.

We also hosted a multi-agency roundtable in February to explore the main concerns in detail. These conversations helped us understand the issues clearly, respond where we could and ensure our decision to proceed is shaped by what we heard.

This report summarises that engagement. It breaks down the four themes raised throughout our conversations - understanding the service, site suitability, safeguarding and risk, and community engagement.

Not every question we have been asked could be answered in detail, as some information requested included personal or confidential information which we are legally and ethically unable to provide. However, every query that could be answered has been addressed openly in the pages that follow.

Our Move

As we reach the end of this stage of engagement, we are now in a position to confirm that Simon Community will begin moving into the Glen Road Foyer in March 2026.

Following advice given at the roundtable meeting, we will take a phased approach to opening the service. Young people will move in gradually in the weeks ahead, and staff will be on site 24 hours a day to offer support, manage the service safely, and be available to the community whenever needed.

We sincerely hope that a phased approach gives everyone time to adjust to our presence. We are confident that any remaining concerns can be addressed through ongoing conversation and seeing the service operate day to day.

We want to thank everyone who took the time to speak with us over recent months. Your feedback has shaped this report and the approach we will take as we move forward.

We are keen to keep listening, and we look forward to working with our new neighbours and community partners in the weeks and months ahead.

Jim Dennison
Chief Executive



Theme 1: *Understanding the Service and the Young People*



Theme 1: Understanding the Service and the Young People

This section focuses on four key sub-themes:

- What the service is.
- What the service is not
- Who the Young People are
- Exclusion criteria - who will not be there

What the service is

The Glen Road Foyer will be a **temporary accommodation supported service for 26 young people aged 18–25** who are experiencing homelessness. The median age of the young people is likely to be 20 years old.

What is temporary accommodation?

Temporary accommodation is housing provided as a safe, short-medium term solution for people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness while they wait for a permanent home. Due to a lack of available social homes in Northern Ireland, young people can be stuck in temporary accommodation for longer periods - the average length of stay in the Foyer is 11 months.



The Foyer

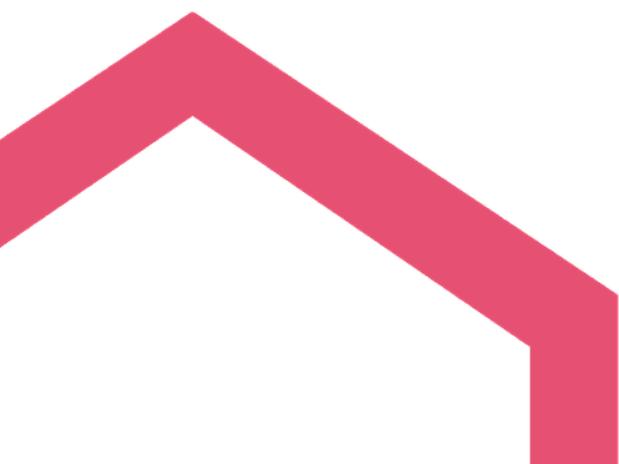
The Foyer model for young people (aged 18-25 years old) experiencing homelessness is widely recognised and supported by statutory partners. We work closely with the Northern Ireland Housing Executive (NIHE), and with support from the Belfast Health and Social Care Trust, to provide safe, supported accommodation for young people who need it.

The service operates within a structured, 24/7 staffed environment. When a young person is referred to the Foyer, they are welcomed by a professional and highly trained team who support them throughout their stay and help them prepare for independent living.

Alongside accommodation, we work with each young person to help them move out of homelessness as quickly as possible. This includes support with housing options, education, employment, health and rebuilding family relationships.

We also organise a range of daytime activities, including cooking skills, language classes, art workshops and social activities, and work with local training and education partners. Our Activities Coordinator supports young people to attend job fairs, build applications and develop the skills needed to secure employment.

Simon Community's Foyer is more than just accommodation. It provides stability, support and opportunity, helping young people build their independence and move towards a secure and lasting home.



What the service is not

In the past few months, there has been speculation about what the Foyer is, and the service it will provide. There have also been similarities drawn between Simon Community and other organisations who operate very different services with entirely different purposes.

The Foyer is:

- **not** a drop-in centre
- **not** an emergency shelter
- **not** an addiction facility
- **not** a probation or offender management service
- **not** a "secure unit"
- **not** a centre for people seeking asylum (all the young people are legally permitted to live in the UK).



Some people have asked if there will be lots of coming and going or new/different clients using the service every day. We want to reassure you that that is not the case. The environment will be calm and stable, with a small, consistent group of young people rather than constant turnover.

Each young person will have their own self-contained unit with a kitchen and ensuite bathroom. Visitor access is managed carefully, and the site will have a dedicated staff team on duty 24/7 to ensure safety and stability.

Who the young people are

The young people will be carefully referred through structured processes involving NIHE and, where appropriate, social services.

Typical experiences include:

- significant challenges accessing affordable housing including social housing
- poverty and spiralling rents
- family breakdown
- leaving care
- escaping unsafe or unstable situations
- trauma or adverse childhood experiences

In the last 12 months, around **1/3 of the young people who have been living in the Foyer were in education, training or work**. A number of others spent their time volunteering in their local community.

Some commentary online has suggested a link between homelessness and a threat to the community. In reality, the young people who come to stay with us are often among the most vulnerable, and are far more likely to be at risk of exploitation than to pose any risk to others.

Meabh, 22, currently lives at the Foyer and has experienced periods of homelessness since she was 16. "I was born in the Royal Hospital and I've lived in Belfast my whole life. In a lot of ways, I'm like many people my age. I've been living here since November 2024, along with other young people who are trying to move forward in their lives.

For me, Simon Community has been respite. Here I feel safe. The staff have supported me, and I'm getting back on my feet - I have a job lined up and I'm hopeful for the future. I'm not looking for sympathy – I'm asking for a chance."

Exclusion criteria – who will not be there

There has also been speculation on social media of who could be placed at the Foyer, and we want to give you clarity on some rumours we have seen online.

The Foyer is not a probation service. Individuals with a history of sexual or serious violent offences, or those subject to public protection arrangements, will not be placed at the service.

These are young people who just need a chance at a better life.

One local resident of the Glen Road area lived in a Simon Community service when she was younger. She recently told us: "I had to leave a Simon Community young person's accommodation but thankfully was accepted back and given a second chance at a later time.

I was able to flourish within Simon Community and came out with independence. Simon Community is a very big stepping stone."



Theme 2: **Site Selection and Suitability**



Theme 2: Site Selection and Suitability.

This section focuses on three key sub-themes:

- **The temporary nature of the move**
- **Site selection and suitability**
- **Planning permission**

The temporary nature of the move

The current building of the Malone Foyer (on the Malone Road in South Belfast) is no longer safe to live in. Persistent leaks and wider structural issues now require a full, urgent refurbishment to make the property fit for purpose again.

Radius Housing, the owner of the Malone Road building, has begun a major redevelopment programme that requires the site to be fully vacant. The refurbishment is expected to take approximately two years.

To ensure young people continue to have safe, supported accommodation during this period, Simon Community must temporarily relocate the Foyer. 210 Glen Road has been identified as the only suitable and available building capable of hosting the service while the Malone Road property is rebuilt.

Once the refurbishment is complete, the Young People's Service will return to its long-term home on the Malone Road.

The **Director of Development at Radius Housing** confirmed the long-standing plan for the Malone Foyer and significant investment involved: "The purpose of the refurbishment is to give the young people using this service accommodation that is suitable for their needs.

In two years, we want to be in a position where we are welcoming the young people back to a safe, energy efficient building on the Malone Road."

What will happen to 210 Glen Road once the young people move back to Malone Road?

While a final decision has not yet been made about the future use of the building, we are committed to working with our housing partners and engaging with community representatives before any decisions are taken.

Together, we will review local housing need to consider the most appropriate long-term use of the property in helping to alleviate or prevent homelessness across Belfast. West Belfast is particularly affected, with around 7,000 people currently experiencing homelessness — the second highest figure in Northern Ireland.

A range of options could be considered for the building. For example, it could be used by another homelessness or supported accommodation provider, transferred to the Housing Executive, sublet or returned to the landlord. What is important is that this decision will not be made in isolation, and the community will be part of the conversation.



Site selection and suitability

We became aware of 210 Glen Road through our partner NIHE.

After an extensive search over nearly ten years (working closely with Radius Housing), no other suitable properties became available. 210 Glen Road was reviewed against our own assessment criteria (below) and by our statutory partners, and was assessed as suitable location for the temporary Foyer service.

"We have been active in this search alongside Simon Community . [Alternative options] aren't there. If they were there, Radius would be buying them for permanent housing options".



Director of Development, Radius Housing

We use a consistent assessment criteria when identifying any supported accommodation sites. This includes:

- capacity to manage risk responsibly within a community setting (including if in close proximity to local schools)
- enclosed and secure site (in the case of Glen Road, there is a high boundary wall)
- suitability for 24/7 staffing and supervision
- self-contained units
- proximity to transport, education and employment and services

Some people have suggested using unused city-centre buildings. However, many of these properties have been vacant for some time, would need significant refurbishment and do not have the necessary planning classification for residential use.

Others have suggested that suitable alternatives must exist elsewhere in the city, but unfortunately, after an exhaustive search, no other options meet the requirements for a temporary home for the Foyer.

Moving the young people out of Belfast would also not be an option. It would remove vital access to services, their education and employment, isolate them further from much-needed support networks, and take away the only stable thing some have had in their lives - the city they call home.

210 Glen Road is the only viable option.

Planning

Based on professional advice and guidance, Simon Community understands that the proposed temporary use of 210 Glen Road is consistent with existing planning permissions.

We are aware that a planning enforcement complaint has been submitted to Belfast City Council. We first learned of this at a community meeting in January and have since proactively sought clarification from the Council. We have contacted the Planning Service, requested a site visit, and continue to follow up.

To date, we have still not received any formal notification or details about the complaint. From what we understand, Belfast City Council is reviewing the matter through its statutory process. Simon Community is fully cooperating and will continue to do so.



Theme 3: ***Safeguarding, Risk and Anti-Social Behaviour.***



Theme 3: Safeguarding, Risk and Anti-Social Behaviour.

This section focuses on three key sub-themes:

- **Safeguarding and daily operations**
- **Anti-social behaviour**
- **Community safety and schools**

"There is buzzer entry into Simon Community properties, you can't just come and go as you please."

Local Glen Road resident & person with lived experience of living in a Simon Community service



Safeguarding & Daily Operations

Simon Community has more than 50 years' experience delivering safe, supported housing and over 20 years' experience specifically in young person's services.

We have robust recruitment, training and supervision of staff. Safeguarding is embedded in every part of the service. Every single employee is Safeguarding trained and every frontline manager operates as a designated Safeguarding Officer. For escalations, we have Safeguarding Leads, who are experts in their fields.

We also operate strong multi-agency risk management procedures in conjunction with PSNI and Social Services.

The service operates in a structured, managed environment, with:

- staff onsite 24/7 to provide oversight, support and intervention when needed
- risk is assessed on an ongoing basis
- personalised support and safety plans
- clear routines and expectations
- monitored visitor access
- proactive management of any incidents or safety concerns, with safety plans for each individual.

Mental health issues, substance use, refusal of entry and visitor management are handled through clear and robust procedures and early intervention.

The effectiveness of these procedures is evident in the positive community relationships we have across Northern Ireland.

At the Multi-Agency Round Table, the PSNI representative welcomed the early engagement of the police service in this move, and also noted that anti-social behaviour is a problem all over Belfast.

“Whatever steps can be taken to negate anti-social behaviour is not just a police matter, it is for everyone. The police can be a big part of this and much comes down to police visibility and information sharing. PSNI involvement from the start has been a real positive [with the new Glen Road Foyer], rather than being involved after.”



Anti-social Behaviour

We know there is a fear that the introduction of a homelessness service will increase anti-social behaviour. Research states the opposite: supporting young people in safe accommodation significantly reduces risks linked to street homelessness and activity, including exploitation and unsafe behaviours.

We know that issues around drugs and alcohol are also a concern for many people, and they are becoming more common across society as a whole. At Simon Community, we work closely with everyone in our services to help them make safer choices and to manage any challenges in a responsible and supported way.

Illegal drugs and alcohol use is not allowed on site. Our staff are experienced, trained and are on hand 24/7 to provide help and address concerns quickly.

We do not conduct searches - this is a supported accommodation service, not a custodial setting. Instead, staff work extremely closely with young people to manage risks and maintain a safe environment.

Where there is evidenced cause for concern, we take immediate and appropriate action.

At all times there are a minimum of two members of staff available to manage any potential disruptions. But we understand community concerns and so, for an interim period, we will deploy additional security measures at 210 Glen Road.

Community Safety & Schools

We operate over 20 accommodation services safely in residential neighbourhoods across Northern Ireland and almost three quarters of our services are beside or within close proximity to schools. In fact, this particular service has operated safely beside Methodist College for over 20 years.

This is not a transient or drop-in service. The young people are very well known to staff and supported daily. Our staff are continually assessing their wellbeing and are able to identify any changes to their risk levels on a daily basis.

PSNI involvement and partnership working are central to maintaining public safety if required. And if risks do become unmanageable, placements can be ended.

We know that some people have raised concerns about the young people who will live in the Glen Road Foyer, and their experiences of childhood trauma or mental health. It's true that many of the young people who come into our service have been through difficult experiences growing up. This can range from a lack of stable family support to more serious experiences such as abuse.

But these experiences – and the fact that a young person does not have a home – does not make them unsafe or a risk to their community or to local schools. These are young people who may have had a tougher start than most, but with support they too can build a bright future.

The Director of Development at Radius Housing said: "We run a number of projects with Simon Community. This particular service on Malone Road, nobody has ever heard about, and I always think that's a great sign! It's right beside Methodist College, on a busy thoroughfare, so it is already beside a school and it's not an issue."

Theme 4:

***Community
Engagement and
Communication***



Theme 4: Community Engagement and Communication.

This section focuses on four key sub-themes:

- **Engagement to date**
- **How we've responded to feedback**
- **The multi agency roundtable and our decision to move**
- **Future communication and engagement**

Engagement to Date

Simon Community has been committed to hearing from all voices throughout the engagement process. We acknowledge that some members of the community have expressed concerns. At the same time, support for the move has been consistent and visible through phone calls, emails, social media messages, and conversations with residents, community groups and partner organisations.

Since summer 2025, we have been engaging with the community in a variety of ways:

- Engagement with elected representatives started in July 2025 and schools in August 2025.
- A small neighbour letter drop to neighbours (December 2025).

Following this, the relocation was paused to allow time for further engagement.

- Two subsequent open days took place (December 2025 and January 2026) with attendance from around 60 local residents who spoke directly with staff.
- A larger letter drop to over 550 local residents (February 2026) with a detailed Q&A document and a strong encouragement to contact us with further questions.

- Since the larger letter door drop, we have received a small number of emails/calls in response.
- A multi-agency round table meeting with a variety of statutory partners (February 2026) - more details below.
- This report, which can be accessed via Simon Community's website [here](#).
- A large letter drop to the same cohort of over 550 local residents in mid-March with an update on the move and an invite to view this report.

We recognise that there has been criticism about the nature and timing of our early engagement with the community. We are sorry for this and have reflected carefully on the feedback we have received. In particular, we recognise that providing a clear and comprehensive Q&A document earlier in the process would have been very helpful.

We would like to thank residents for their patience and engagement with us to date.

How we have responded to feedback

We had initially hoped to move into 210 Glen Road in December so young people could enjoy Christmas in their new home. This was paused for three months to allow for more information to be shared about the service.

Changes have already been made to the building based on feedback given by local people, including:

- window frosting
- window restrictors
- enhanced CCTV

We recognise our responsibility to be good neighbours. If issues arise now or in the future, we will continue to respond quickly, transparently and in partnership with relevant agencies.

The Multi Agency Roundtable & Our Decision to Move

To ensure that every issue was fully explored, a multi-agency roundtable meeting was held on 26th February 2026. While this was not a public meeting, we were keen to ensure it directly addressed the key areas of concern that had been raised throughout the engagement process. Chaired independently by Father Martin Magill, attendees included Radius Housing, the NI Housing Executive, Clanmil Housing, PSNI, Belfast City Council, St Teresa's Primary School, religious leaders, elected representatives, individuals with lived experience of homelessness and local residents.

The discussion was structured around the four themes outlined in this report - understanding the service, site suitability, safeguarding and risk, and community engagement - to allow a comprehensive examination of the issues.

Across these themes, all partner organisations confirmed that they were satisfied with the information provided and reassured by the safeguards, referral pathways and the service model in place. Collectively, all the attendees expressed confidence in Simon Community's ability to keep the community and the young people safe, and formally welcomed the service to the area.

As this stage of engagement concludes, and with building work starting on the Malone Road Foyer with no suitable alternative accommodation available for the young people, Simon Community has made the decision to now move forward with the temporary relocation to Glen Road.



Future Communication & Engagement

Our decision to move forward now reflects both the urgent need for safe accommodation for young people experiencing homelessness and our continued commitment to working positively with the community.

As we look to the future, we remain very open to continued conversation. We want to establish regular, structured communications channels so concerns can be raised early and addressed effectively. We would very much welcome suggestions from the community on what this could look like, or how much future communication they need from us.

Once we have moved in, our team will be on site 24/7 to deal with any immediate or urgent issues or concerns. We are easy to contact and would encourage anyone to get in touch if they have any questions or to arrange a visit.

- Email feedback@simoncommunity.org
- Call the Glen Road Foyer team on 028 9068 6200





Thank you to everyone in the Glen Road community for working with us.

Together, we can make sure the Foyer continues to give young people the safety and support they need to move toward a better future.

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