

# keep homeless off the streets for a bed



**HOMELESS:** People are being forced to sleep rough because there's a shortage of emergency beds.

them on the streets.”  
For some, she says, not being able to consume a certain amount of alcohol at the initial stages of coming off the streets “is the barrier to accessing services.” She adds: “The intention here is to enable people take the first steps to addressing their addiction.”  
Despite the gloom, Ms Kelleher says there has been huge progress made in addressing homelessness since Simon was established in Cork in 1973, and particularly since 2000.  
However, there are still huge issues that need to be addressed.  
“What we need to do now is to prevent people becoming homeless,” says Ms Kelleher. “We need to offer more support to high risk groups that are vulnerable to becoming homeless.”

“People who are discharged from prison, young people in the care system — so that when they turn 18 there is no inevitability to becoming homeless, people with mental health problems — so people are discharged from hospital into suitable accommodation.”  
There is also a need to dispel the stigma that’s attached to homelessness.  
“Becoming homeless — that is something that happens to people, a bad experience rather than a revolving door system.”  
Indeed, often a marriage or relationship breakup, job loss or a mental health crisis, can put people on the streets.  
“It’s important to remember that most of us are no more than four pay packets from homelessness,” says Ms Kelleher.

Meanwhile, with the onset of the cold weather and the present shortage of beds, Simon have to think fast and short-term.  
A cold weather shelter will open in a city centre location in mid-December to provide extra beds on a temporary basis at the most crucial time of the year.  
“We are very conscious that this is a sticking plaster and we need a permanent solution, but in the meantime we can light a candle,” says Ms Kelleher.  
The reality is that until the Gateway facility is open, there will continue to be homeless people who cannot access what they need and there will continue to be lives at risk.  
“People at the moment are slipping through the cracks,” says Ms Kelleher.

## O’Shea on Monday



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### Hoodie wearers are just shy teens who feel the cold

**HOODIES:** So, you want to ban them.  
As a long-time hoodie wearer (pictures from the early 1980s would suggest I wore one-piece hooded bodysuits as far back as then), I take issue with this. I would have no problem with a ban on turtle-neck jumpers. Such a prohibition would be worth it never to see the self-righteous smirk of a neck-dressed prat again.  
Ban cardigans. Ban T-shirts two sizes too small that beef up the upper bodies of steroid-users. Ban socks in sandals. Ban knee-length boots.  
But you have got us hoodie wearers all wrong.

Now I know the arguments from your side.

A group of hooded kids standing in the glow of a convenience store’s front window, looking like they are up to no good.

A hooded young man making his way through a shop, each move watched by eagle-eyed staff.

The sullen, hooded teenager, ensconced in a bean bag in front of a games console as a weary parent gives up trying to extract a few words of conversation about their day.

Stereotypes, Michael. Stereotypes the non-hooded like to offer.

A ban on hoodies, however, would not be unprecedented in the history of the State.

Many now forget the phasing out of headgear that was successfully administered by coalition governments led by Cumann na nGaedhel in the 1950s. Up until then Irish men had proudly sported rimmed hats such as tam o’shanter for well over a century.

These administrations attempted to ban them on the pretence of trying to bring an end the stereotype Irishman they had helped portray in Hollywood films. When this failed, they instead upped taxes on hats and brought the millenary industry to its knees (recent research shows that many high-ranking civil servants from this period had interests in the burgeoning umbrella market.)

The only members of Irish society to survive this brutal headgear cull were, surprise, surprise, the racing fraternity, who were offered generous incentives to carry on wearing anything from Stetsons with leathers sticking out of them to large lacy pink monstrosities on ladies’ days.

Farmers were also allowed to keep wearing caps up until the ratification of the Common Agricultural Policy, which enforced a strict ban.

The removal of hats from urban Irish society lasted throughout the 1960s, ‘70s and ‘80s, until the advent of baseball caps in the 1990s (there was a brief fad for deerstalkers in 1968, between the fading popularity for ‘the twist’ and the assassination of Robert Kennedy.)

Baseball caps and hoodies had a

**ROBERT O’SHEA’S open letter to Shadow Minister for Justice Noonan, (and also, if my mother is reading this, I found that blue jumper: You can stop looking).**

similar nestling period in the 1990s. Some people today will even wear baseball caps ‘neath their hoodies, but I have to say that the opinions I offer here cannot be taken to represent that group. It is the hooded alone that I claim to speak for today.

For to be hooded is to strike a philosophical pose. We hooded are a solipsistic bunch and our outlook on life cannot be narrowly defined by the summary thoughts of the community or by middle-aged politicians.

Let me puncture those myths I mentioned earlier.

Outside that convenience store, supposedly loitering with intent are the group of hooded kids, one probably on a bike, swaying backwards and forwards with his feet on the ground. You look at them and think bad things: they are wasting their time, they appear threatening, they talk too loud. They, on the other hand, think nothing about you; not bad things, not good; you might as well not exist.

Inside the shop, the hooded young man isn’t about to steal anything (even if the security guard would gladly turn every theft from a ‘Whodunit?’ into a ‘Hoodunit’); he is after all the person under the greatest surveillance in the entire place. Perhaps though, he believes the CCTV camera would steal a part of his soul if it caught a picture of his face — we hooded are a spiritual bunch.

Sloped in front of the computer screen is a figure trapped in the scenery of existential teenage angst. Yapping in front of them is their parent. Their grunts are misconstrued as unconnected, automatic replies to the original conversational assault. They are, in truth, effective utterances of what they want you to hear and language is rightly viewed with some scepticism by the hooded one.

Until the older generation realise that we are not indulging in anti-social behaviour, but are wallowing in a shallow philosophical malaise and trying to keep our ears warm in a breeze, then, and only then, will the hooded and unhooded be able to live together in harmony again.

*Yours sincerely,*  
**Robert O’Shea.**