



8<sup>th</sup> June, 2009

## PRESS RELEASE

### LOCAL CRUSE VOLUNTEERS MEET HRH THE PRINCESS ROYAL

Volunteers and staff from Cruse Bereavement Care throughout Northern Ireland were honoured when HRH The Princess Royal attended the Cruse 50th Anniversary Reception at Malone House, Barnett Demesne, Belfast on Wed 3<sup>rd</sup> June.

In Northern Ireland Cruse has been providing bereavement support since 1984 and is part of a national organisation which is celebrating its 50th Anniversary in 2009. Cruse is a volunteer based organisation with 500 volunteers in Northern Ireland, who in 2007-2008 gave 37,619 hours to support the organisation. In 2008 the work of Cruse in Northern Ireland was acknowledged by being awarded The Queen's Award for Voluntary Service.

On arrival Her Royal Highness was greeted by The Lord- Lieutenant of Co Antrim Mrs Joan Christie OBE who went on to present The Rt Hon The Lord Mayor of Belfast Councillor Naomi Long MLA, Chief Executive of Belfast City Council Peter McNaney, Michael McGimpsey MLA, Minister, Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety, and Michael McBride, Acting Permanent Secretary, Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety.

Throughout the visit HRH was accompanied by Ms Valerie Miskimmon, Cruse Regional Chair, Northern Ireland and Ms Anne Townsend, Director Cruse Northern Ireland. Moving inside to the Harberton Room, HRH met the Cruse National Chair, Chief Executive and representatives of the Cruse Regional and Honorary Committees.

Her Royal Highness, The Princess Royal went on to meet around 100 guests attending the reception to celebrate the 50th Anniversary of Cruse, including representatives of Northern Ireland Cruse area branches, *Remember our Child* project volunteers, Youth Advisory group, Area Branch staff, Volunteer Administrator and Charity Shop volunteers, Prison volunteers, Prison Support Co-ordinator and Regional office staff . During the reception music was provided by Harpist, Cherith Boyle, and the event was supported by Funeral Services Northern Ireland Ltd.

Later, following a few words of welcome by Ms Miskimmon, HRH was invited to present certificates to Ms Janet Leckey in recognition of 25 years service to Cruse, Oenone Vincent ,founder member of Cruse Northern Ireland, and seven Area branch representatives and a representative of the Cruse Charity shop, in recognition of their service and contribution to Cruse.

Bringing the visit to a close Ms Miskimmon invited Youth Volunteer Miss Brigid Molloy to present a posy of flowers to HRH The Princess Royal and following farewells HRH departed for the next engagement.

Anne Townsend, Cruse Director in Northern Ireland says: "It was a privilege to have HRH The Princess Royal attend this special event to mark the Cruse 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary and especially in volunteer week. Volunteers are vital to supporting the bereavement needs in our community and it was a very special way to acknowledge their contribution. Everyone was impressed by the individual attention HRH The Princess Royal gave to every volunteer and her keen interest in our vital work."

### **Notes to Editors**

Cruse Bereavement Care aims to promote the well-being of bereaved people and to enable anyone suffering a bereavement to understand their grief and cope with their loss, through a nationwide network of trained Bereavement Volunteers and through its National Helpline.

Cruse Bereavement Care celebrates 25 years in Northern Ireland this year. The services are delivered via a branch structure with offices based in Belfast, Londonderry, Ballymena, Ballymoney, Bangor, Newry, Omagh and Moy, and supported by the regional office based in Belfast.

In 2007-2008 Cruse in Northern Ireland responded to over 11,000 requests for support from bereaved individuals, including over 2,000 requests for face-to-face support.