

**Launch of the Jubilee Year Grief Relief Appeal 2009**  
**Chief Executive and Director of Services, Cruse Bereavement Care**  
**Debbie Kerslake**

It's a great privilege to be here, as Chief Executive, in such a special year for Cruse.

I am delighted that our *Grief relief* appeal is being launched at the same time as *Voices of Cruse*. I was fortunate enough to read a draft of the book. Reading about our history gave me a better understanding of where we came from; how much we have achieved and a real sense of the responsibility we all carry for the future of this wonderful organisation.

I spoke at the Cruse West Midlands Jubilee conference a few weeks ago and I was talking about where Cruse is going. I received an email a few days later from one of the delegates who said,

*Cruse has so much to celebrate. Margaret Torrie would be very proud to know that from her small beginnings, that what she started, her successors have been able to continue and expand so thoughtfully and professionally.*

It means a great deal that Margaret's family are here today and I really hope that you feel that we have treasured her legacy.

Nigel Tricker, our chair, highlighted how far we have come. We now deliver a range of services and have achieved an international reputation. But some things have stayed exactly the same – namely the passion and dedication of those within Cruse to be alongside people at the worst time in their lives.

Our Areas and Branches continue to provide high quality bereavement support and counselling to thousands of bereaved people each year **but** we know that there are still many who do not know of our support or cannot access our services. There are still parts of the country where there is no face-to-face support service and our helpline struggles to cope with huge demand.

We need to expand and develop. But we can only do this with your help. As we enter our 50th year we are determined to reach out to those who we are currently not reaching and to raise our profile so that anyone who needs help knows they can turn to us.

With our Area development programme we intend to extend coverage to the whole of England, Wales and Northern Ireland.

We have exciting new projects targeting under-represented groups.

These include a project aimed at improving our support to those in the Services and ex-Service community. Working with other organisations like SSAFA we need to ensure that support is there for all those who are bereaved - the partners and children of those who have died as well as the mums and dads; brothers and sisters, friends and colleagues.

We aim to recruit volunteers with a service background. We need to ensure that our volunteers are aware of the particular issues related to death in service and we need to make sure that those serving abroad can access appropriate support.

Cruse works with more bereaved children and young people than any other organisation in the UK. But we know that there are still children and young people who don't get the support that they need and the life-long impact this can have.

We have a new project starting which will mean that we can set up more local services for children and increase the number of volunteers providing face-to-face support. We will be working in schools and with youth groups to increase awareness of the impact of bereavement and ways to support children and young people and we will be developing RD4U our incredibly popular website developed by children and young people for children and young people.

I was taking a visitor round Central Office last Friday and we went into the helpline. One of the volunteers had just finished a call and he asked her who she had been talking to. She explained that it was a husband who had phoned desperate to know what he should do for his wife. She was sat in the car outside the house hysterical and self-harming after the death of her father.

Another volunteer had just finished speaking to a nursery where one of the toddlers had died. She was supporting the distraught staff and giving them advice about how best to help the young children.

I came out of the room and was then handed a booklet that we had been sent by Izzie. Izzie is now 13. She was 9 when her dad died after a short illness. As she wrote to her dad- "When your heart stopped beating, a piece of mine stopped too". Izzie has been using our children's website for a number of years posting messages and getting support from other young people. She now wants to give something back and has written a short story illustrated by cartoons that she wants to go on our website to help other children and young people. She wants to show that life can go on.

*Voices of Cruse* finishes with the words of Ted Bowman

*Bereavement Care whatever it is includes hope, hope that someone will hear the cries, hope that someone will stop by, hope for a better day tomorrow, hope to get through the decisions, hope for release, hope for hope.*

The husband wanting to support his wife  
The nursery staff coping with the death of a child  
and Izzie

These are just some of those who Cruse has helped, to restore hope when all hope seems lost.

Please support Grief Relief and help us to continue to be there at the most difficult times of people lives.

Thank you.