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**Queen pays tribute to Cruse Bereavement Care in Northern Ireland
volunteering group with prestigious Award**

Cruse Bereavement Care in Northern Ireland has been announced as one of 79 volunteering groups from across the UK winning this year's Queen's Award for Voluntary Service, recognising the outstanding contributions made to local communities by groups voluntarily devoting their time for the benefit of others.

The prestigious National Honour, which is equivalent to the MBE, sets the national benchmark for excellence in volunteering, and the activities of those awarded have been judged of the highest standard.

Cruse Bereavement Care in Northern Ireland has received the Award from Her Majesty for its work in Northern Ireland as part of a national organisation which will celebrate 25 years in 2009 of providing vital bereavement support throughout the province. Currently over 500 volunteers and a small staff team provide a range of services including support to adults, children and young people alongside developing services in all of Northern Ireland's prisons.

The 2008 Award winners were selected from 379 groups nominated by members of the public who have been helped personally or witnessed the benefits of a group's work in their community. Cruse will be presented with an exclusive crystal trophy marking their success at a special local ceremony being given by the Queen's Lord Lieutenant for County Antrim.

Speaking of their success, Anne Townsend, Director from Cruse in Northern Ireland said: " We are thrilled to have received this prestigious honour for the contribution Cruse has made to bereavement support in the community, it will be valued by every volunteer and staff member in Cruse."



Phil Hope, Minister for the Third Sector, said, "I'm sure everyone in Northern Ireland will join me in offering Cruse in Northern Ireland our congratulations and sincere thanks.

The work of Cruse demonstrates the positive impact that volunteers have on communities, work they undertake without seeking any kind of accolade. That is why I'm particularly pleased their efforts are recognised by the Queen's Award for Voluntary Service."

More than 600 groups around the UK have now won the Queen's Award for Voluntary Service, over the six years since it was created by Her Majesty to mark the occasion of her Golden Jubilee in 2002.

For details of all this year's Queen's Award for Voluntary Service winners and information on how to nominate a group that really makes a difference, visit www.queensawardvoluntary.gov.uk, where a nomination form can be downloaded.

– Ends –

For further information

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Notes to editors

About the Queen's Award for Voluntary Service

In 2002, in celebration of Her Majesty's Golden Jubilee, the Queen's Golden Jubilee Award for Voluntary Service by Groups in the Community was established. Its purpose is to recognise groups of individuals who are giving their time freely for the benefit of others. It is the highest honour that can be bestowed upon groups of this kind and is equivalent in status to the MBE. As such, the Queen's Award not only serves to provide recognition of volunteer groups, but also demonstrates the high respect in which volunteering is held.

Groups must be nominated for the Award – self nomination is not permitted. A group (two or more people) can be nominated if it is based in the UK, the Channel Islands and the Isle of Man. The group has to have been volunteering for the benefit of people in the UK or overseas for at least three years and more than half its members must be volunteers who have the right of residence in the UK. Groups solely concerned with fundraising for charitable purposes are not eligible. Further details on entrance criteria and the nomination process are available from www.queensawardvoluntary.gov.uk.