A new book on grief entitled ***Irish Stories of Loss and Hope*** was launched by the Irish Hospice Foundation (IHF) as a resource for bereaved people.

Best selling author Deirdre Purcell launched the book on behalf of the IHF. ***Irish Stories of Loss and Hope*** is a collection of stories, poetry and art from individuals which captures their stories of grief and offers insights into how they coped with their loss. The anthology includes personal accounts of bereavement by hospice volunteers as well as well-known Irish people including journalists Nell McCafferty and Roisin Ingle, broadcaster Joe Duffy and Senator Mary O'Rourke.

Some of Ireland's best known poets have also contributed to the book including Nobel Laureate Seamus Heaney, Brendan Kennelly, Paul Durcan, Rita Ann Higgins and Patrick Kavanagh. In addition, the book also contains the work of artists such as Anne Madden, Sean Scully, Kathy Prendergast, Aileen MacKeogh and Amelia Stein.

Approximately 30,000 people die each year in Ireland. Each death affects at least 10 people. Therefore, at least 300,000 people are newly bereaved each year. It is hoped that this book will be a resource for bereaved people and those who care for them. It demonstrates how different grief can be for everyone and offers suggestions, comfort and hope for the grief journey.

Author Deirdre Purcell stated: "Many people I love have died and left me here. I carry on, of course. 'It's what he/she would have wanted' is the theme - and delusion - of our hectic century where everyone must keep up. As a consequence, I have missed space to mourn and grieve, to sport a black diamond or armband on my sleeve, to be respectfully excused from public jollity, Christmas cards and "taking me out of myself." Here, with Irish Stories of Loss and Hope, there is a direct route into that space; while we all grieve differently and each story, poem or art work is individual, there is a common premise: honesty."

Dr Susan Delaney, Bereavement Services Manager at the IHF and editor of the book, commented: “We hope that in reading this book, people who are bereaved will learn the individual nature of grief, the difficulties that grieving brings and also the hope that exists as people find their way through. We are very grateful to all of the contributors who so generously shared their experiences of bereavement. We are also grateful to Health Services Staffs Credit Union for their generous sponsorship of this book.”

Marie McBryan, President of Health Services Staffs Credit Union, stated: “Health Services Staffs Credit Union and its members are delighted to support this wonderful and moving publication which will undoubtedly bring hope and comfort to so many people.”

The IHF is a not-for-profit organisation which was set up in 1986 to support hospice services and promote the hospice philosophy. Its vision is that no-one should have to face death and bereavement without appropriate care and support.

Work in the area of bereavement is a core activity for the IHF. The Foundation supports bereavement services in four regions of the country. Its Education and Bereavement Resource Centre includes a specialist reference library. Practical training is provided in the form of workshops and seminars. The IHF also organises a Certificate in Children and Loss and an MSc/Postgraduate Diploma in Bereavement Studies in association with the Royal College of Surgeons in Ireland.

The IHF also received a grant towards the publishing costs of the book from Dublin City Council. The book will be available free of charge to all bereavement groups and libraries. It will also be available to the public at the nominal cost of €5. Copies of the book are available from Dubray Books and the IHF. Dubray Books have waived the customary percentage and will return the full cost of the book to the IHF.

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