**THE IRISH HOSPICE FOUNDATION INTRODUCES**

**COMPLICATED GRIEF PROGRAMME TO IRELAND**

* ***AMERICAN EXPERT LAUNCHES PROGRAMME –***

The Irish Hospice Foundation (IHF) announced today (9th January) that it has introduced a Complicated Grief Programme to Ireland which will support bereaved people who have become overwhelmed by their grief.

About 290,000 people are bereaved in Ireland every year.  It is estimated that between 3,500 and 7,000 people - for a variety of reasons - are at risk of developing complicated grief.

For most people, grief becomes more manageable with time and people find their own way through it with the support of family and friends.  In complicated grief, the natural grieving process is derailed.  People can suffer for years or even decades after a death, with feelings of intense yearning, preoccupation with painful memories and difficulty re-engaging with life.

Complicated grief is now recognised as a mental health issue and has been included in the American Psychiatric Association’s Diagnostic and Statistical Manual. Research has indicated that a treatment approach such as that developed by American bereavement expert Dr Kathy Shear - which addresses the impediments that keep grief from being integrated into someone’s life-  is effective in helping people come to terms with a difficult reality and facilitates a return to a good level of functioning. Grief never goes away entirely, but it can be transformed and integrated so it no longer dominates someone’s   life and they can again experience joy and satisfaction.

The Programme was officially launched today by Dr Shear who is the Patron of the Programme.  She also conducted a workshop for 30 Irish practitioners in how to implement the evidence-based treatment for complicated grief that she pioneered.

Dr Shear is the Marion E. Kenworthy Professor of Psychiatry at Columbia University School of Social Work in New York. She is a consultant to national and international groups working in bereavement and grief.  This was her second training visit to Ireland to up-skill Irish practitioners in effective treatment for complicated grief.  Her first training course took place in 2011 and was hosted by the IHF in partnership with the Psycho-Oncology Department of St Vincent’s University Hospital.

Dr Susan Delaney who manages  the Complicated Grief Programme, has trained under Dr Shear for the past two years.   She commented: “Dr Shear has done pioneering work in this area and her complicated grief protocol has provided a new way to treat complicated grief that offers hope to both practitioners and bereaved persons who are stuck in their grief.”

She continued: “Our Complicated Grief Programme will consist of a small clinical practice but the main thrust of the programme will be capacity building to ensure that Irish people presenting with complicated grief have access to effective treatment.”

The programme will maintain a list of professionals trained in the complicated grief protocol.  Further information on accessing this treatment can be obtained by contacting Dr Delaney at 01 679 3188

The IHF is the national charity which promotes the hospice philosophy and supports the development of hospice and palliative care.  Work in the area of bereavement is a core activity for the IHF.  It has established a national education and resource centre from which it provides a comprehensive range of education and training programmes as well as resources on bereavement.