



The Irish Hospice Foundation

“WE HAVE AN OPPORTUNITY HERE TO
INITIATE A SIMPLE BUT POWERFUL
CONCEPT WHICH WILL BE A PROTOTYPE
NOT JUST FOR IRELAND BUT FOR THE
REST OF THE WORLD.”

— *Gabriel Byrne*
Patron Irish Hospice Foundation

THE IHF IS IRELAND'S NATIONAL CHARITY DEDICATED TO ALL MATTERS RELATED TO DYING, DEATH AND BEREAVEMENT IN IRELAND. FOR ALMOST 30 YEARS, THEY HAVE ASSISTED HOSPITALS, FAMILY DOCTORS, FAMILIES AND LOCAL HOSPICE SERVICES UNDER THE PREMISE THAT EVERYONE—CHILDREN AND ADULTS OF ALL DIAGNOSIS—HAVE THE RIGHT TO A GOOD DEATH WHERE THEY SECURE DIGNITY AND COMFORT. TODAY, THE IRELAND FUNDS ARE ASSISTING THEM WITH THIS MISSION. HERE, SHARON FOLEY, CEO OF THE IRISH HOSPICE FOUNDATION EXPLAINS THEIR WORK AND HOW THE IRELAND FUNDS ARE HELPING THEM TO ADVANCE.

Saying goodbye in an acute care hospital—Design & Dignity

"How can you say goodbye, ask for or give forgiveness, when there are five other people in the ward, a pile of visitors, the TV on and the staff working away all around?" That was just one of the questions our Patron Gabriel Byrne asked himself as he visited a close friend who was dying in a busy ward in a Dublin hospital.

Since then, the acclaimed New York-based actor has been a passionate champion of the work we do in the Irish Hospice Foundation (IHF) aimed at improving care for those who die in hospital and making the experience more bearable for their loved ones. Today, nearly 50% of deaths in Ireland (30% in the United States) happen in acute care hospitals. While hospital staff do their best, the reality is that, with limited resources, hospitals are less able to focus on the needs of their most vulnerable—those at the end of life.

Recognising how deeply people are affected by their surroundings, we are working with hospitals to change not just the culture of care but also the physical environment of hospitals for people facing death and for their families.

Through our DESIGN & DIGNITY PROJECT, projects in 11 acute hospitals are being supported under the first phase of the programme. Our work under Design & Dignity has been heavily influenced by research from the USA. We are transforming neglected mortuaries into havens of peace and respect. In the first phase, funds raised in the US will go towards funding the Design & Dignity programme.

THE AIM OF DESIGN & DIGNITY IS TO FUND 'EXEMPLAR' PROJECTS IN PUBLIC HOSPITALS, TRANSFORM THE WAY HOSPITAL SPACES ARE DESIGNED FOR PEOPLE AT THE END OF LIFE AND THEIR FAMILIES, AND SET THE STANDARD FOR OTHER HOSPITALS TO FOLLOW.

These relatively small investments are making a real difference to people at what is often a traumatic time in their lives. "Simple, transformational and a model for all" is how our Patron Gabriel Byrne describes our project.



Governed by a Board of Directors, the Irish Hospice Foundation receives no core funding from the State and depends on the generosity of supporters. In introducing our work to potential supporters in the United States, we in the Irish Hospice Foundation are immensely fortunate to have benefited from the expertise and the continuing goodwill of The American Ireland Fund. Their expertise helped us develop and host a launch event in NYC, secured funding for our programme and introduced us to a range of contacts and advice.

The Irish Hospice Foundation believes everyone has the right to a good death—where there is dignity and comfort. With funds we have raised, over our 28 years of existence we have:

- funded a national programme in acute hospitals aimed at improving end of life care.
- funded Ireland's only Consultant Paediatrician with a special interest in palliative care and a team of Children's Outreach Nurses who support families in caring for their seriously ill children at home
- funded a Nurses for Night Care Service for people with illnesses other than cancer which enables more people to fulfil their wish to die at home with dignity
- developed bereavement resources and provide education to help people cope with their grief
- supported independent voluntary hospice groups around Ireland by coordinating national fundraising events
- influenced decision-makers to make services more widely available to all who need them

— Sharon Foley, CEO, Irish Hospice Foundation