



## Alice Leahy Director of TRUST first to scoop overall National Health Literacy Award

Healthcare professionals acknowledged for their efforts to address health literacy problems

**Dublin, Monday 20<sup>th</sup> April 2009:** Alice Leahy, Director of TRUST, was the first 'Overall Winner' at the Crystal Clear MSD Health Literacy Awards 2009 today for her life's work in combating social exclusion and providing medical related services for people who are homeless. Alice, who was appointed to the Irish Human Rights Commission in 2006, was awarded at a ceremony in Dublin. Six other organisations were also recognised for their efforts to communicate clearly with the public. Alice won the prestigious overall award for her impressive work with the charity TRUST, a non-judgmental, befriending, social and health service for people who are homeless, which she co-founded in 1975.

"Alice's work embodies the ethos of health literacy," said Dr. Gerardine Doyle, UCD Business Schools and chairperson of the Crystal Clear Awards judging panel. "She empowers those who are sleeping on the streets of Dublin, who have varying literacy levels, to access the services they need. The judges felt her willingness to communicate in non-conventional ways through personal contact, paintings, poems, uplifting magazines and books is inspirational and we honour her for her ongoing dedication to a person-centred model of care."

The Crystal Clear Awards are part of the MSD/NALA Health Literacy Initiative, which is a collaborative project between the National Adult Literacy Agency (NALA) and Merck Sharp & Dohme Ireland (Human Health) Ltd. Over 135 entries were received this year, each one focusing on health literacy, which is a person's ability to make sound health decisions in the context of everyday life.

Ms. Inez Bailey, Director of the National Adult Literacy Agency (NALA), said:

"Every patient has the right to basic health information that is easy to access and understand. All the projects shortlisted for the Crystal Clear Awards should be commended for taking a patient-focused approach to communicating health matters. **With over 1 in 4 Irish adults affected in some way by literacy difficulties**, it is crucial that healthcare professionals communicate more clearly with their patients in order to help them to effectively manage their own health."

Commenting at the awards lunch on behalf of the awards sponsor Dr. Neil Boyle, Managing Director, Merck Sharp & Dohme Ireland (Human Health) Ltd. said:

“Following on from the success of the first Crystal Clear Awards last year, we’re delighted to see an increase in the number of entries this year. We feel the response reflects the growing awareness among healthcare professionals of the need to think about health literacy when communicating with patients on matters concerning their health. We hope that the MSD/NALA health literacy campaign will help lead to better informed and more empowered patients.”

Some of the awards in various categories included: St. Mary’s Hospital for the ‘Lifestory Project,’ designed to help those who find it difficult to communicate due to depression or dementia, Ana Liffey Drug Project for the ‘Duck, Dive and Survive’ series of information leaflets, The Women’s Health Council for the booklet ‘Menopause: A Guide,’ St Michael’s House for the ‘Live and Let Die’ Bereavement and Loss Programme, the Irish Society for Quality and Safety in Healthcare for the ‘Let’s Talk Medication Safety’ educational booklet and the HSE Health Promotion Service for their ‘3-Week Menu Plan’ for pre-school services.

For further information on the MSD/NALA Health Literacy Initiative or the Crystal Clear MSD Health Literacy Awards log onto [www.healthliteracy.ie](http://www.healthliteracy.ie).

## **ENDS**

### **For further details or images, please contact:**

Iris Cribbin, mobile 087 414 2881, office 01 6618 915, [iris@corporatereputations.ie](mailto:iris@corporatereputations.ie)

Ann Marie Gannon, mobile 085 169 4735, office 01 661 8915,

[annmarie@corporatereputations.ie](mailto:annmarie@corporatereputations.ie)

## **Notes to Editor**

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### **Crystal Clear Judging Panel**

The judging panel for the awards is represented by individuals from NALA, the Health Service Executive (HSE), the Health Information and Quality Authority (HIQA), Irish College of General Practitioners (ICGP), the Irish Practice Nurses Association (IPNA), UCD Business Schools, University College Cork (UCC), the Adelaide Hospital Society and Cairde. The media partner to the awards this year is The Irish Medical Times.

### **About Merck, Sharp & Dohme Ireland (Human Health) Ltd.**

Merck Sharp & Dohme Ireland (Human Health) Limited is the Irish subsidiary of Merck & Co., Inc., a leading research-based pharmaceutical company that discovers, develops, manufactures and markets a wide range of innovative pharmaceutical products to improve human health. For further information visit [www.msd.ie](http://www.msd.ie)

### **About the National Adult Literacy Agency (NALA)**

The National Adult Literacy Agency (NALA) is an independent member-based organisation committed to making sure people with literacy and numeracy difficulties can fully take part in society and have access to learning opportunities that meet their needs. NALA was established in 1980 and has campaigned since then for the recognition of, and response to, the adult literacy issue in Ireland. It is concerned with developing policy, advocacy, research and offering advisory services in adult literacy work in Ireland. For further information visit [www.nala.ie](http://www.nala.ie)

## **References**

<sup>1</sup> Anne McCarthy, National Adult Literacy Agency, "Health Literacy Policy and Strategy Report", August 2002