

PRESS RELEASE

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Tackling domestic, sexual and gender-based violence head on: Game Changer project launched by Ruhama, GAA and White Ribbon Ireland

Game Changer, a new project aimed at raising awareness and action through sport to tackle Domestic, Sexual and Gender-Based Violence (DSGBV) has been launched today (Monday, 25th November 2024). Game Changer will seek to harness the positive influence of Gaelic Games to challenge the social and cultural norms that contribute to gender-based violence and sexual exploitation and aims to deliver positive behaviour change throughout society.

Game Changer is a partnership between Ruhama, the GAA, and White Ribbon Ireland, supported by the LGFA and Camogie Associations. The project is a strategic response to deliver on the goals of the Government's Third National Strategy on Domestic, Sexual and Gender-Based Violence (DSGBV) with funding from the Government of Ireland, led by Cuan under the aegis of the Department of Justice. The three-year project will deliver a number of initiatives and will work with Gaelic Games to:

- Challenge the societal culture of sexual violence, including sharing of pornography, intimate image abuse and sexual exploitation.
- Encourage behaviours that support values of gender equality and respect; and build confidence, opportunity and 'sense of place' for women and girls.
- Encourage men and boys to engage in active allyship to eradicate gender-based violence in our society.
- Support the challenging and disclosure of abusive behaviours.
- Raise awareness of the harms and consequences of human trafficking for sexual exploitation.

Launching Game Changer in Croke Park today, Minister for Justice Helen McEntee TD, said: "I am delighted to be here today to Launch Game Changer in Croke Park with Ruhama, the GAA and White Ribbon Ireland, supported by the LGFA and Camogie Associations. There is an epidemic of domestic, sexual and gender-based violence in this country and I have prioritised action to tackle domestic violence and violence against women. Our objective has to be nothing short of zero tolerance. This means not only zero tolerance for this crime within our criminal justice system, but also zero tolerance for it within our society. The GAA is a phenomenal organisation and their support and leadership, at national and at community level, will ensure this important message of zero tolerance is brought to every town and every parish in the country. Ruhama have demonstrated enormous leadership in developing new and innovative approaches to raising awareness and tackling domestic, sexual and gender-based violence."

Gaelic Games awareness campaign to be first phase of Game Changer

The first phase of Game Changer was launched today to mark the first day of the annual 16 Days of Activism against Gender-Based Violence. This initial phase will see a Gaelic Games-specific campaign which will promote freedom from fear of gender-based harassment and violence for women in society. The campaign will be promoted across all Gaelic Games communication channels, directly to all units and members, and therefore into every community in Ireland, including 500 clubs internationally located in 52 countries. It features four of Gaelic Games' top inter-county stars, Oisín Gallen (Donegal footballer), Louise Ní Muircheartaigh (Kerry LGFA), David Fitzgerald (Clare hurler), and Amy O'Connor (Cork camogie), with a supporting cast of players from DCU's four Gaelic Games codes. This awareness campaign has been informed by qualitative research conducted amongst Gaelic Games players and members (including the youth voice), officers, coaches and supporters from clubs across the four provinces.

President of the GAA, Jarlath Burns, said: "The GAA, in partnership with the LGFA and the Camogie Association, is proud to take a stand against the pressing societal issues of Domestic, Sexual, and Gender-Based Violence. As Gaelic Games are deeply rooted in every community across Ireland, we are committed to leveraging our influence to foster awareness, education, and positive change.

"This initiative has been shaped with the guidance of expert organizations such as Ruhama and the White Ribbon Campaign, whose invaluable input has helped us identify meaningful ways to make an impact.

"We extend our gratitude to the club members who participated in focus groups, providing insights that shaped the content of this project, and to the players who have lent their voices and presence to our campaign. These individuals truly embody the spirit of our initiative—they are the Game Changers driving this vital conversation forward.

"Together, we believe we can inspire change and promote a safer, more respectful society for all."

Barbara Condon, CEO of Ruhama said "Game Changer has been born out of the GAA family, White Ribbon Ireland and Ruhama's proactive and innovative commitment to confronting violence against women and fostering a safe environment both in sport and society. The GAA is the heartbeat of communities, reaching every town, village and city countrywide. Sexual violence and sexual exploitation remain very hidden in society, this project brings visibility locally, regionally and nationally, working towards zero tolerance to Domestic, Sexual and Gender-Based Violence. Our hope is that this project has a significant impact on women's safety in Ireland and inspires other sports organisations to take similar stands".

"For White Ribbon Ireland to be part of a project such as Game Changer in where every parish and village in the country can be reached is hugely exciting", said Sean Cooke CEO Men's Development Network. "The opportunity to invite men and boys to become positive

agents of change with the women and girls in their lives in addressing gender-based violence and promoting equality is both innovative and progressive and will create the conditions in which women and girls will feel safe in their communities. As a three-year collaboration between the GAA family, Ruhama and White Ribbon Ireland, Game Changer has the ability to have a long lasting and a sustainable impact into the future.”

Launching the event in Croke Park today along with the organisation representatives and Minister McEntee were the four Game Changer player ambassadors: Kerry footballer Louise Ní Muirheartaigh, Donegal footballer Oisín Gallen, Clare hurler David Fitzgerald and Cork camogie player Amy O’Connor.

For more information on Game Changer see: <https://learning.gaa.ie/gamechanger>

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Notes to Editors:

- Photographer Julien Behal will issue photos to photodesks – for use, free of charge – this afternoon.
- Barbara Condon, Colin Regan, Sean Cooke, Stephanie O’Keefe (CEO Cuan), and Frances Fitzgerald (Ruhama Ambassador) are available for media interviews.



About Ruhama

Ruhama has been supporting women impacted by prostitution and human trafficking since 1989 and witnesses daily the profound trauma experienced by women who have been sexually exploited. Ruhama provides a diverse range of holistic supports including counselling and trauma therapy. Ruhama actively works on both national and international levels to influence policy and legislation to protect and support women impacted by sexual exploitation and gender-based violence. Ruhama recently won Charity of the Year 2024 at the Charities Institute Ireland Charity Excellence Awards.



About White Ribbon Ireland

White Ribbon Ireland managed by the men's development Network encourages and mobilizes men and boys to take action to end violence against women and girls and gender-based violence by actively participating in awareness-raising and capacity-building programmes. We work collaboratively with various stakeholders, including schools, workplaces, and community groups, to foster a culture of respect, safety and equality.



About the GAA

The GAA is Ireland's leading sporting and community Association and works closely with its sister associations, the LGFA and Camogie, in all it does. Gaelic Games' unique contribution to community development, health promotion, and social cohesion is recognised across Europe with a recent independent recent social return on investment of the Irish Life GAA Healthy Clubs Programme alone highlighting a €50m p.a. contribution to the health and wellbeing of the nation. The GAA's role as a lead partner in Game Changer is an extension of that work and contribution to Irish society.