



# Ruhama

Supporting women affected by prostitution

*Spring Newsletter 2020*

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Email: [admin@ruhama.ie](mailto:admin@ruhama.ie)

Phone: 01-8360292



Donate **here**.

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## International Women's Day 2020



For International Women's Day 2020, we held a movement and meditation class with our service-users. The feedback was great and it was a wonderful opportunity to focus in on wellbeing and positive mental health!

We also took the opportunity to celebrate the women who have come before us to lay the foundations for a more equal society. It was also a reminder that there is a long way to go until the world is safe and equal for women and girls. We're stronger together!

Do you want to be part of our team supporting women affected by prostitution & sex trafficking? Check out page 3 for information on Ruhama's 2020 volunteer recruitment!



## *Ruhama during the coronavirus pandemic*

# **We are still here for you.**

We are living in unprecedented times in the midst of the Coronavirus pandemic that has swept the world.

Ruhama is still here for those who are affected by prostitution and sex trafficking. We have taken precautionary measures to protect our service-users, staff and volunteers.

## **We are still operating the service in the following ways:**

**Referrals and Out-Of-Hours Emergency Service:** We are still taking new referrals so whether you are a frontline agency engaging with women affected by prostitution or you yourself are looking for advice or support, please don't hesitate to reach out. Email [servicemanager@ruhama.ie](mailto:servicemanager@ruhama.ie) or call 0860223008 (weekdays, 9am-5pm) (Out-Of-Hours emergency support: 0863813783).

**Casework:** Our caseworkers are continuing to link in with service-users remotely. If you are a current service-user please get in touch with your caseworker directly.

**Material Supports:** We are providing emergency packs and material supports for a number of our service-users who are in vulnerable and precarious situations.

**Education and Development:** Service-users are continuing to engage with our programmes remotely.

**Counselling and Holistic Therapies:** While all direct contact therapies have been postponed for now, we are continuing to provide counselling services remotely.

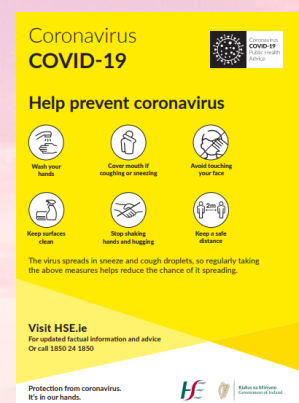
**Street Outreach:** Our outreach van is not currently going out to link in with women in on-street prostitution. However, if you are selling sex on the street, or know of someone who is, and you need support then please get in touch with us.

**Isolation resources:** We have developed a resource pack to help cope with anxiety, depression, isolation and boredom at this time. Check it out [here](#).

For more information, please see [here](#). For the latest updates, see the [HSE website](#).



*Emergency care packages for service-users.*



## Women graduate from *Shaping Your Future*



*Shaping Your Future* is one of a number of courses offered on our education and development programme. Women who have experienced prostitution and sex trafficking may face many barriers in accessing employment. The effects of trauma and low self-esteem as well as long gaps without employment and precarious immigration status are just some of the issues they face.

**This course provides participants with the tools and skills necessary to support the job-seeking process and shape professional development. A big congratulations to the women who graduated from the course this month. Here's what some women had to say about it:**

*'It gave me way more confidence and helped me to improve my decision making skills.'*

*'I didn't know about transferable skills! I'm so glad to have a CV now, and feel confident enough to do a job interview.'*

*'It gave me space to explore what I enjoy and what I'm interested in.'*

## Volunteer Recruitment 2020

### Volunteer Recruitment Spring 2020

We are recruiting for our outreach van, counsellors and volunteers in education & development!

Visit [www.ruhama.ie/volunteer](http://www.ruhama.ie/volunteer) for details.



Do you want to be part of our team supporting women impacted by commercial sexual exploitation?

Recruitment for volunteers for this year is currently ongoing. We are carrying out recruitment & interviews remotely and will update in relation to training when we have more details.

Contact Neasa at [volunteer@ruhama.ie](mailto:volunteer@ruhama.ie) for more details or check out the website!



# Ekene's\* story

My name is Ekene and I am from a country in West Africa. When I was 21, I was trafficked to Ireland and spent 18 months being moved around the country and forced to see Irish men who wanted sex.

We were found when the Gardaí came in to an apartment we were in one day. They moved us out, and put us in touch with a woman from Ruhama who set us up with emergency accommodation. After a couple of weeks, we were placed in Direct Provision centres - I was sent to one in a rural place. I'm glad to be out of the situation I was in, but living in here is still really difficult. I have a lot of trauma because of what has happened to me and I still feel isolated from other people here - although there is very little space or privacy as I share a room with 3 others.

There is a bus that goes once a day to the local town. Sometimes I walk there instead for exercise as it's about 25 minutes away. Once, when I was walking, a car pulled up and a local Irish man asked me if he could give me a lift. I accepted because it was about to rain. When I got in the car, he told me that he knew I didn't have much money but that if I had sex with him he would give me €50. I was terrified - I didn't want to, but I was afraid he would keep me in the car and attack me. I told him 'no' and he called me names and told me to get out of his car.

That afternoon I called my Ruhama caseworker and told her what happened. She gave me tips on what to do and how to assert myself if that ever happened again. My anxiety got really bad, so she linked me in with one of Ruhama's counsellors.

Now Ruhama support me to travel to Dublin once a week for counselling. I have also started in an education programme that is helping with my confidence and self-esteem, and I'm planning to do a third-level course this year. I've been speaking to my friends here about how we can support and protect each other because some of them have been in similar situations.

I am hoping to eventually become a nurse here and send money home to my family so they can have a better life. Life in Direct Provision is difficult but I know I will leave here one day. I'm positive about the future and I am looking forward to making a better life for myself here in Ireland.

*\*Name has been changed to protect woman's identity*



# *We Don't Buy It* campaign launch

**WE DON'T  
BUY IT DUBLIN 2020**

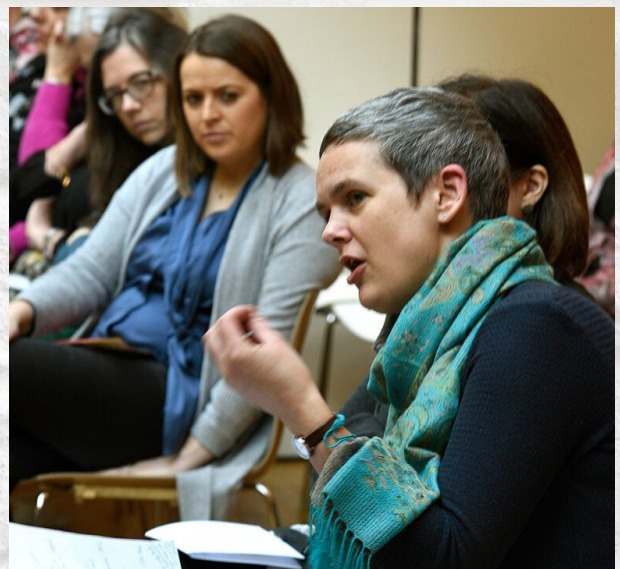
On March 4th we joined our partners at the *We Don't Buy It* campaign launch to call on men to take a stand against prostitution and sex trafficking. According to a Red C survey carried out in late 2019, most men say never have purchased sex and they never will. However, the 6% of Irish men who have paid for sex fuel exploitation and inflict harm upon the women they pay to sexually access.



The campaign is raising awareness of the Criminal Law (Sexual Offences) Act 2017 criminalising the purchase of sex. It's also busting the myths that surround prostitution and allow its proliferation around the world. No, most women aren't in it out of 'choice.' No, it's not just lonely men looking for some company. No, women aren't making big money (criminal gangs are).



We're proud to be part of the campaign alongside survivor group SPACE Intl., the Sexual Violence Centre Cork and the Men's Development Network. Persuasion Republic are the great minds behind the creatives. You can find out more [here](#) and you can also sign the [declaration](#) to support laws and policies protecting those impacted by the sex trade.



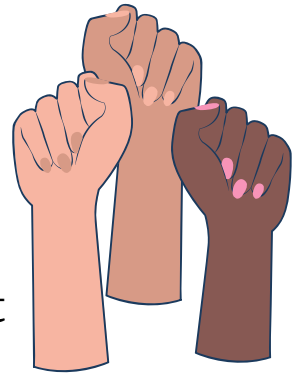
**We don't buy the myths. We don't buy the lies. We don't buy the misery.**

Follow the *We Don't Buy It* campaign:



## Check out *The Sexual Violence of Prostitution & Pornography*

In November 2019, survivors of prostitution and activists against the sex trade from around the world spoke at a conference in Dublin to highlight *The Sexual Violence of Prostitution & Pornography*.



Members and colleagues of SPACE International spoke about their activism and the need for countries to decriminalise those in the sex trade and implement laws targeting both organisers and men who pay to sexually access women. The need for holistic exit supports was also a core message.

Across the world, it is the most vulnerable and marginalised women and girls who are in the sex trade. Ireland has the laws in place – now we can move towards a society where the bodies of women and girls are not commodified, where everyone has equality of opportunity and where women have real and viable alternatives to prostitution.

You can watch the video from the conference [here](#)!



**Finally, a big *WELCOME* to our new teammates!**

We are delighted to welcome our new colleagues to the Ruhama team! Naz has joined us as the Organisational Administrator. Tomás is now taking care of our Finance & Operations. Ellie has gotten stuck into our Communications work. Finally, Michael will be coordinating our Bridge to Work programme.

