



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

28th August 2017

92 victims of sex trafficking supported by Ruhama in 2016

Ruhama calls on Government to use new laws to clamp down on sex buyers and the criminals who run prostitution

In launching its [2016 Annual Report](#) today, [Ruhama](#), Ireland's only dedicated national frontline service for women affected by prostitution and sex trafficking, outlines the support it provided to **304 women of 37 different nationalities** from across the globe during 2016, including **92 victims of sex trafficking from four continents**.

The experiences that those seeking help from Ruhama disclose are deeply harrowing and include rape, assault and many other forms of psychological, physical and sexual violence. **222 women** required intensive support from Ruhama's casework service. Most had been sexually exploited in brothels, massage parlours, hotel rooms and apartments across the country. A further **63 women in street prostitution** accessed support via Ruhama's mobile outreach van, which takes to the streets of Dublin's 'red-light' areas 3-4 times a week. In 2016 alone, Ruhama saw **99 new victims** of Ireland's sex trade.

Sarah Benson, CEO of Ruhama, said: "The bulk of prostitution in Ireland is run by organised crime gangs who profit from the sexual exploitation of women and girls, particularly in off-street locations. These unscrupulous individuals make money from human misery – moving often vulnerable migrant women in a coordinated fashion from brothel to brothel across Ireland, with a view to satisfying local sex buyers' demands."

Sarah Benson added: "Since March of this year we have important new laws in place in Ireland to protect those harmed in prostitution, as part of the *Sexual Offences Act 2017*. It is now illegal to purchase sex in this country and the penalties for organising and profiting from prostitution have been increased. More needs to be done to ensure that these laws are properly enforced, in order to achieve their objective to minimise the inherent harm of a wholly exploitative trade."

Sarah Benson continued: "The **Sexual Offences Act 2017** also decriminalises those selling sex outdoors, something Ruhama has long campaigned for. It was already permissible for individuals to sell sex indoors and so now there is a recognition enshrined in law that no one should be criminalised for their own exploitation in Ireland. It is incumbent on Gardaí to ensure that they do not target vulnerable people in prostitution for criminal sanction. The vast majority of those in prostitution are women, and there are also a small number of transwomen and men. All may be

victims of many different crimes, including human trafficking. Garda focus should be targeted towards the buyers and those who are genuinely profiting from the prostitution of others.”

Ruhama is calling on the Government to use all the tools at its disposal to effectively tackle this dangerous trade. This includes fully resourcing An Garda Síochána’s National and Regional Protective Services Bureaus to take down the organised crime networks that control prostitution and sex trafficking across Ireland. Ruhama also calls on the Government to mount a public awareness campaign to ensure that the people of Ireland know that this is now a country where no human being can be considered for sale.

ENDS

Key statistics in our [2016 Annual Report](#):

In 2016, Ruhama supported a total of 304 women in a variety of different ways:

Total number of women supported by Ruhama : 304	
Number of women	Type of support
63	Women received street outreach support
1,038	Staff and volunteer hours of street outreach were delivered over 130 nights
222*	Women received casework support, of whom: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 130 women received general casework support • 92 women received casework support as victims of trafficking
26	Women received support, but did not access outreach or casework
99	Women accessed Ruhama's services for the first time, of whom: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 73 women received general casework support • 26 women received casework support as victims of trafficking
1,719	Face-to-face contacts were made
11,307	Telephone contacts were made**
7,792	SMS contacts were made**
53	Women received dedicated Housing & Welfare assistance
79	Women received Education & Development support
	<i>*7 women accessed both street outreach and casework support</i>
	<i>**phone contacts to and on behalf of women</i>

Media contacts:

Ruth Breslin, Ruhama Policy and Communications Manager: 086 259 1247

Sarah Benson, Ruhama CEO: 086 600 3115

Wally Young, Young Communications: 087 247 1520

About Ruhama

[Ruhama](#) is a non-governmental organisation (NGO) and a registered charity, which works on a nationwide basis with women affected by prostitution and sex trafficking. Ruhama offers **free and confidential** support and assistance to women who:

- Are actively involved in prostitution
- Are seeking to exit (leave) prostitution
- Are victims of sex trafficking
- Have a past experience of prostitution/sex trafficking

CONTACT US. FOLLOW US.



Ruhama

25 Cork Street
Dublin 8.

Download our full 2016 Annual Report Here: <http://www.ruhama.ie/assets/Press-Releases/Ruhama-Annual-Report-2016.pdf>

Tel: +353 1 836 0292

Website: www.ruhama.ie

Facebook: www.facebook.com/Ruhamalreland

Twitter: [@Ruhamaagency](https://twitter.com/Ruhamaagency)

LinkedIn: <https://www.linkedin.com/company/ruhama>