



Ruhama

Fighting Sexual Exploitation, Prostitution and Human Trafficking

**Submission to the Joint Committee on Justice:
General Scheme of the Domestic, Sexual and Gender Based
Violence Agency Bill 2023**

March 2023



About Ruhama

Ruhama is an Irish NGO and registered charity that offers nationwide support to individuals, predominantly women, impacted by prostitution and human trafficking for sexual exploitation.

Ruhama's mission is to support and empower women impacted by prostitution and sex trafficking by providing safe, accessible, psychological and practical assistance to co-create opportunities to enhance their lives. Ruhama raises public awareness and advocates to influence policy that will support and protect women. Ruhama provides a diverse range of holistic supports including Outreach, Casework, Counselling/Trauma Therapy, Education and Development programme, Bridge to Work programme, and survivor voice engagement.

About the submission

Ruhama welcomes the Bill to establish the new Domestic, Sexual and Gender Based Violence (DSGBV) Agency to oversee the implementation of the Third National Strategy on DSGBV, and the continuation of the work in this area.

We believe that it is important that the Bill encompasses the intentions of the Third National Strategy on Domestic, Sexual and Gender-Based Violence, with the emphasis on collaborative inter-agency function and integrates a survivor-centred approach. Ruhama notes that there is no mechanism included for monitoring progress of the agency such as key performance indicators in the delivery of its functions and would recommend the inclusion of such mechanisms for accountability and to ensure its success.

The following comments and recommendations outline Ruhama's view on the inclusion of these elements within the current draft of the Bill.

Part 2, Head 10, (4)

Ruhama recommends that the recruitment of an appropriate Chief Executive of the Agency is not exclusively recruited via a Public Appointments Service competition but is advertised publicly to draw applicants from other sectors, particularly civil society organisations (CSOs), who possess extensive knowledge, experience, and expertise.



Part 2, Head 13, (3)

Ruhama recommends that staff of the Agency are not solely recruited or transferred from the Child and Family Agency but is advertised publicly to draw applicants from other sectors, particularly CSOs, who possess extensive knowledge, experience, and expertise.

Part 2, Head 14

- (1) (b) Ruhama recommends the inclusion of provision of safe and appropriate accommodation for victims of human trafficking.
- (2) (a) Ruhama notes that there is no mechanism or protocol included for consulting with CSOs and victim/survivors as per commitments in the Third National Strategy on inter-agency functions. This includes involvement of CSOs in a collaborative capacity. Ruhama recommends the inclusion of a mechanism or protocol to enable consultation and collaboration with civil society organisations and victim/survivors, as per intention of the Strategy.
 - (i) Ruhama recommends that CSOs are included in reference to the provision of advice and support in the implementation of any national strategy and any implementation plan approved thereunder, and foster collaboration between those bodies.

Part 3, Head 18 & 19

Ruhama is concerned about the lack of representation and expertise from the NGO sector and recommends that at least two members of the Board are represented from civil society organisations.

Part 4, Head 34

Ruhama welcomes the inclusion of accountability of the Agency to Oireachtas Committees. Ruhama recommends that accountability would also be extended to an independent body to monitor progress of the agency's business plan and Key Performance Indicators (KPIs).



Part 5, Head 36

(2) Ruhama notes that funding is determined in respect of the financial year of the Agency. There is no reference to multi-annual funding which many service providers currently receive. It is essential to include and provide multi-annual funding to ensure strategic and financial planning, cost effectiveness and sustainability.