

Women in Northern Ireland Involved in Prostitution

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Summary: This paper outlines the research¹ carried out by the Department of Justice into women involved in prostitution in Northern Ireland. It identifies the issues that women involved in prostitution face; this includes local women involved in prostitution and also those women who have been trafficked into Northern Ireland and forced into prostitution. The support and interventions currently in place in Northern Ireland are recognised and are compared to best practice elsewhere. Research from other jurisdictions is drawn upon to provide a more complete picture of the issue.

Keywords: Women, prostitution, human trafficking, exploitation.

Introduction

In October 2010 the Department of Justice (DoJ), in partnership with the Northern Ireland Prison Service (NIPS) and the Probation Board for Northern Ireland (PBNI), published *Women's Offending Behaviour in Northern Ireland: A Strategy to Manage Women Offenders and Those Vulnerable to Offending Behaviour*.² The strategy aims to address the complex issues and vulnerabilities that can lead women to offend, or indeed reoffend, in Northern Ireland. It identifies women involved in prostitution as a potentially vulnerable group that could benefit from supportive interventions, and commits to carrying out research in this area. In response to this commitment, research was conducted to

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¹ Research paper investigating the issues for women in Northern Ireland involved in prostitution and exploring best practice elsewhere. Available from www.dojni.gov.uk

² Available from www.dojni.gov.uk

investigate the issues for women in Northern Ireland involved in prostitution and to explore best practice elsewhere. The research was collated through engagement with relevant organisations and individuals³ and accessing a range of websites, newspapers, academic journals and research papers.

The DoJ, PBNI and NIPS will use this research to identify how best to configure services to meet the needs of the women involved. This paper provides an overview of the research and its key findings.

The issue of human trafficking is included in this paper, recognising that women may be trafficked into Northern Ireland and forced into prostitution. However, women, or indeed men, who have been trafficked are not 'prostitutes', even though they are forced to work in the industry.

Prostitution in Northern Ireland

Prostitution is occurring in towns throughout Northern Ireland. However, Belfast – in particular South Belfast – remains the main problem area for human trafficking for sexual exploitation and prostitution. This is thought to be because the area is easily accessible, is relatively anonymous with a fluid population and has a high number of rented properties available that can be used as brothels.

In 2010, the Police Service of Northern Ireland (PSNI) suggested that there were approximately 40–100 women involved in prostitution at any one time in Northern Ireland. However, the common opinion of those interviewed for this research is that it is extremely difficult to obtain an exact figure for the number of women involved, given the covert nature of the activity. Moreover, street prostitution has declined in Northern Ireland and off-street prostitution has increased, making it harder to track.

The age of those involved in prostitution in Northern Ireland can range from younger than 15 to 50 or more years of age. There is a strong link between children going missing from care and those children who are sexually exploited. Anecdotal evidence suggests that prostitution in Northern Ireland is linked to organised crime gangs and drug use. It is also suggested that women involved in prostitution in Northern Ireland (in particular those who have been trafficked) are commonly subjected to

³ A list of the organisations and individuals contacted is given at the end of this paper.

violence. Research carried out by the Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission and the Equality Commission (2009) suggests that traffickers control the women through threats of violence and of sexual violence, confiscating official documents and passports, isolating them from contacting anyone in the outside world, and through debt bondage. A PSNI officer confirmed that he has worked with cases where the debt bond can be from €40,000 to €60,000. It is also likely that these women will have their movement restricted: research by Zimmerman (2006) indicated that 77% of the women interviewed who had been trafficked had no freedom of movement whatsoever.

Legal position in Northern Ireland

There are laws that make certain behaviour related to prostitution illegal; for example, the Sexual Offences (NI) Order 2008 (Office of Public Sector Information, 2008), which became operational on 2 February 2009, makes it illegal to “kerb crawl” in a vehicle in order to buy sex from a person involved in prostitution. It is also illegal to “solicit” or proposition a person in a street or other public place in order to buy sex. The Sexual Offences (NI) Order stipulated that kerb crawling and soliciting to buy sex must be persistent for it to become an offence (two or more occasions within three months). However, on 1 April 2010 that element of persistence was removed by the commencement of the Policing and Crime Act 2009, which also amalgamated persistent soliciting and kerb crawling into one offence called “soliciting”.

The Policing and Crime Act 2009 also makes it illegal to buy sex from someone who has been subjected to force, with offenders facing up to a £1000 fine and a criminal record. Males buying sex are no longer able to use the excuse that they did not know that a woman had been forced or coerced into the sex industry.

The Sexual Offences (NI) Order 2008 also makes it an offence to persistently loiter or solicit in a public place in order to sell sex. However, the Policing and Crime Act does not remove the need for such actions to be persistent to be an offence. It is also illegal for those involved in prostitution to take money for sex with the intention of not performing the service (clipping) (National Offender Management Service (NOMS)).⁴

⁴ NOMS is an executive agency of the Ministry of Justice, bringing together the headquarters of the Probation Service and HM Prison Service to enable more effective delivery of services.

There are a range of laws against organising prostitution: for example, it is against the law to cause, incite or control prostitution for gain and to keep or manage a brothel used for prostitution. Before the Sexual Offences (NI) Order 2008, the maximum penalty for keeping a brothel was six months; this has been increased to seven years under the new legislation. It is also a serious offence to pay for sex with a person under the age of 18, and this carries a maximum sentence of life imprisonment (Explanatory Guidance to the Sexual Offences (NI) Order 2008).

The Policing and Crime Act 2009 inserts a new section into the Sexual Offences Act 2003 which “grants the courts the power to close, on a temporary basis, premises being used for activities related to certain sexual offences”. Such premises can be closed for up to three months (Office of Public Sector Information).

The Sexual Offences Act (2003) includes laws against trafficking into the UK for sexual exploitation, trafficking out of the UK for sexual exploitation and trafficking within the UK for sexual exploitation. The maximum sentence for these offences is 14 years.

Recorded offences relating to prostitution

PSNI Central Statistics confirmed that between 1 April 2005 and 30 September 2010, PSNI recorded 18 offences involving exercising control over a prostitute, controlling prostitution for gain and paying for the sexual services of a child. In addition, between 1 April 2005 and 30 September 2010 seven offences were recorded involving trafficking for sexual exploitation (figures for the year 2010/11 are provisional and subject to change).

These low figures suggest that perpetrators of such crimes are hard to detect. Turner (2008) argues that “organisers of this vile trade know that the prospects of being caught and convicted are almost zero”. A PSNI officer in 2010 confirmed that arrests are low for trafficking offences because there are various problems including international jurisdiction, victim cooperation and victim identification. To bring charges and obtain convictions against traffickers, the police need evidence and witnesses who are willing to testify in Court. Unfortunately, many of the women recovered choose not to testify and once rescued they simply decide to go home to their families; in other cases witnesses abscond.

There are no figures showing how often a woman involved in prostitution is taken into custody. In many cases if they receive a

custodial sentence it is not for “prostitution” but for another offence, and they may be reluctant to indicate their involvement in prostitution for the fear of being “labelled”. For example, NOMS suggests that the majority of women involved in prostitution who go to prison will be there for drug offences, and that prison staff are unlikely to know that the women have been involved in prostitution. As a result they will receive no support in prison to help them to exit the trade. It is crucial that prison staff be made aware that prostitution can be a hidden problem among the women in their care and given appropriate training to respond to their particular needs.

In Surrey, an NHS Outreach worker runs sessions in the local prison for female sex workers. These sessions are advertised around the prison as, “an information and education course for anyone who has worked in the sex industry”. This helps to reach the women involved in prostitution who are hidden behind other convictions, most likely relating to drugs.

It is likely that some women in prison in Northern Ireland will have been involved in prostitution but this may not be immediately obvious from their prison records. The programme in Surrey could provide a model of best practice in supporting women in prison who have been involved in prostitution in Northern Ireland.

Human trafficking in Northern Ireland

PSNI identified 25 potential victims of human trafficking in 2009/10; five were identified for forced labour, 17 for sexual exploitation, one for domestic servitude and the remaining two victims absconded prior to being interviewed (Organised Crime Task Force, 2011). Research indicates that Northern Ireland is a destination country as well as a transit country for victims of human trafficking for sexual exploitation (Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission and the Equality Commission, 2009). It is common for these victims to be moved across the border from Northern Ireland to the Republic of Ireland and back. Many of the women who have been trafficked into Northern Ireland and forced into prostitution were under the illusion that they would be working as nannies, seamstresses or hairdressers or that they would be receiving an education (UTV News, 2009). These women, who are believed to be predominantly Chinese or from Africa or South America, are commonly subjected to violence and threats (BBC News Wales, 2010; *News Letter*, 2009).

Human trafficking across jurisdictions

At the Joint Committee on Human Rights, Examination of Witnesses, May 2006, Rebecca Dudley, a volunteer with the Women's Aid Federation of Northern Ireland said that she had completed research on human trafficking and found that 'police sources have noted the ease with which the land border can be crossed within Ireland'. It is clear that women trafficked into the Republic of Ireland can easily be moved to Northern Ireland. There are also cases that highlight the links between Northern Ireland and England, Scotland and Wales in relation to human trafficking.

Women involved in non-trafficked prostitution in Northern Ireland

It is important to note that women involved in prostitution in Northern Ireland will not always be trafficked from other countries. Some may be Northern Ireland women who have got caught up in the sex industry because of problems that they have experienced in their lives. FRANKI, a group in Manchester that works with women involved in prostitution, has noted the lack of attention and sympathy for non-trafficked women involved in prostitution and has argued that: 'Because children, and to an extent, trafficked women are seen as prostitution's *real* victims, other adult women are automatically de-prioritised. So long as people can say "we're doing all we can to stamp out the *really* nasty side of the sex industry" meaning sex slavery and child abuse, they can ignore the ones they imagine must be choosing it' (Bindel and Kelly, 2003; emphasis in original). Internal trafficking can also take place where a woman who is a native of the country is sold and trafficked around Northern Ireland.

Support available in Northern Ireland for women involved in prostitution

There are six main projects, initiatives or organisations that provide support to women involved in prostitution in Northern Ireland (trafficked or otherwise).

- *The Police Service of Northern Ireland (PSNI)* is developing policies to address prostitution and human trafficking for sexual exploitation.

- *The Organised Crime Task Force Pilot Project* supports victims of human trafficking in Northern Ireland. This is funded by the Organised Crime Branch of the DoJ.
- *The Blue Blindfold Campaign* aims to raise awareness of human trafficking in Northern Ireland.
- *SEEDS* is a multicultural support agency for ethnic minorities and migrant workers based in Derry.
- *The Belfast Commercial Sex Workers Service* is a public health nurse-led service run by the Belfast Health & Social Care Trust and is the only dedicated service in Northern Ireland that provides support to those involved in prostitution in Northern Ireland.
- *Safe Choices Barnardos* is a service that works with children who go missing from care who have been sexually exploited.

Organisations such as Nexus Institute,⁵ Extern,⁶ the Northern Ireland Association for the Care and Resettlement of Offenders (NIACRO)⁷ and Women's Centres also have the potential to be involved in providing support to women involved in prostitution.

Prostitution in England, Scotland, Wales and the Republic of Ireland

Research on women involved in prostitution, and their needs, is limited in Northern Ireland. However, substantial research has been conducted in England, Scotland, Wales and the Republic of Ireland. It suggests that women may become involved in prostitution for a variety of reasons. Some will become involved for financial reasons and to pay household expenses (The Home Office, 2004), while others enter prostitution to fund a drug dependency, often with the unfortunate consequence that the more money earned, the more their drug use escalates (Cox and Whitaker, 2008). Ruhama (www.ruhama.ie) suggests that some of the women it has worked with have used drugs to numb themselves so that they can do the work.

⁵ The Nexus Institute offers a therapeutic intervention to adult survivors of historical childhood sexual abuse and adult survivors of current sexual violence, including rape.

⁶ Extern works directly with children, adults and communities affected by social exclusion throughout Ireland.

⁷ NIACRO provides support to help offenders reintegrate into society.

A factually based drama produced by the BBC called *Five Daughters* told the story of five young women involved in prostitution in Ipswich who were murdered in 2006. This focused mainly on drug addiction, and the writer is quoted as stating that the women were 'drug addicts first and sex workers second. Prostitution was a means to an end, and the end was being able to feed their drug habit.' The mothers of three of the murdered women were interviewed by the BBC before the programme was made and all stated that prostitution was not a career choice and that their daughters had become involved simply because of their addiction to drugs. Women's Aid in Northern Ireland suggested that although drug use is an issue for many women involved in prostitution, it isn't usually an issue for trafficked women.

The Home Office (2004) notes that the first step in helping women involved in prostitution is to provide suitable drug treatment. After this issue has been addressed, the service providers can work to link the women to a range of other services such as health, education and employment. The Home Office also reported that up to 95% of those involved in street-based prostitution are addicted to heroin and/or cocaine, suggesting that initiatives to help them to break their drug habit will be instrumental in the success of any exit programmes.

According to the Home Office (2004), the link between prostitution and alcohol abuse must not be overlooked and recent research has shown that a high proportion of women involved in prostitution have binge-drinking problems and many have ended up in hospital.

Research also indicates that exiting prostitution is not an easy process and that women who do exit may re-enter at a later stage, depending on what is happening in their lives (Cox and Whitaker, 2008). Women trying to leave prostitution are often very poor and face barriers in gaining employment as they usually have low levels of educational attainment (Farley, 2003).

The majority of women involved in prostitution have experienced physical or sexual abuse before entering the trade and are subjected to violence while involved in prostitution (Zimmerman, 2006). These women are also likely to have experienced homelessness in their lives (Stewart, 2000). Research indicates that women involved in prostitution might find it difficult to trust a healthcare provider or anyone else offering support; many women won't disclose their involvement in prostitution due to a fear of being stigmatised (Parriott, 1994).

There are strong links between prostitution and domestic violence, where men and women control their partner and force them to work in prostitution (Harding and Hamilton, 2009). ‘There is evidence to show that there are shifting patterns in the way in which prostitution is operating. The trend is away from pimps controlling a number of women and towards “pimp/partner” relationships. In these circumstances the violence which pimps may use to control their partner is properly classed as domestic violence and those involved in prostitution should be afforded the same protection against the perpetrator as any other victim of domestic violence’ (The Home Office, 2004).

It is likely that women involved in prostitution will not report domestic violence that they experience in the ‘pimp–prostitute’ relationship, as they are frightened of the consequences or they believe that the police will not pay any attention to them (Scott, 2002).

O’Connor and Healy (2006) refer to the work of Barnardos, which identified four phases of entrapment into prostitution, as shown in Figure 1. Figure 2 illustrates the cycle of domestic abuse.

Figure 1. The cycle of entrapment into prostitution

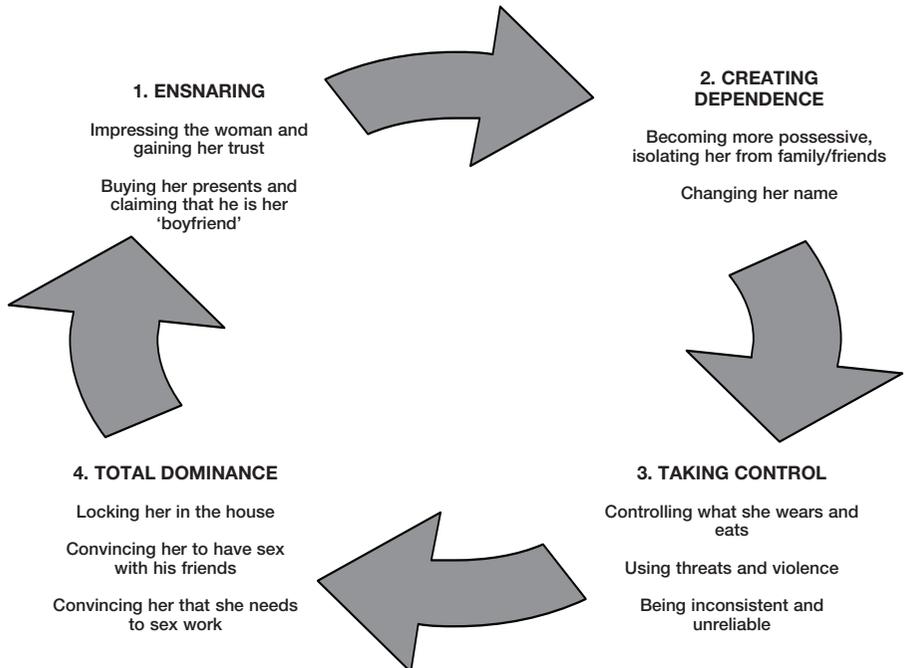
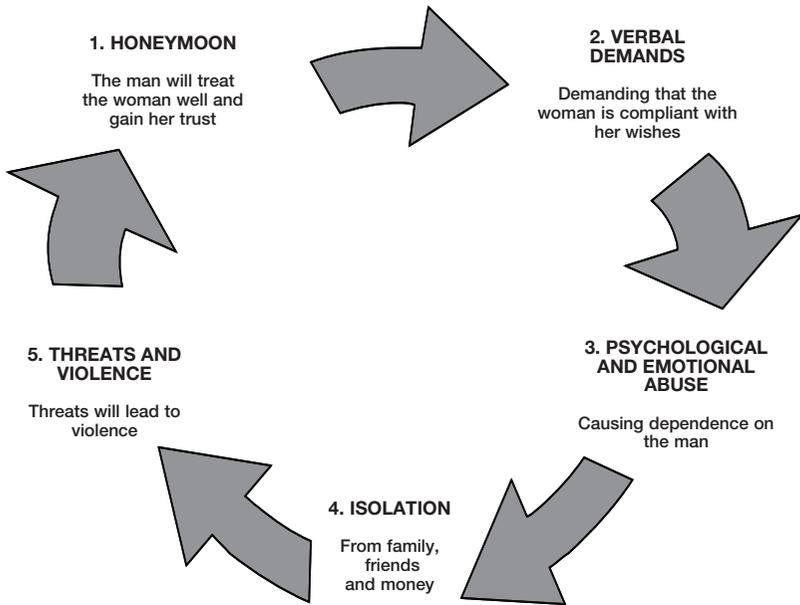


Figure 2. The cycle of domestic abuse (information accessed from NOMS)



Figures 1 and 2 highlight the distinct similarities between the phases of domestic abuse and the phases of entrapping a woman in prostitution. For example, the ‘honeymoon’ phase in the domestic abuse model is congruent with the ‘ensnaring’ phase of the entrapment into prostitution model. During the ‘honeymoon’ period the man will gain the woman’s trust through buying gifts and treating her well. The domestic abuse cycle and cycle of entrapment into prostitution both then move to the man making demands on the woman, isolating her from her friends and family and causing her to be totally dependent on him through psychological and emotional abuse. Both cycles eventually lead to threats and then violence and abuse. Staff from Extern and Ruhama have suggested that same-sex domestic violence is also an issue, where one woman will ‘pimp’ her female partner.

Overall, the similarities between domestic abuse and prostitution are clear, suggesting that any initiative to support women involved in prostitution should have input from experts in the field of domestic violence, and strategies on domestic violence should be consulted to enable a better understanding of its link to prostitution.

Best practice elsewhere

Prostitution appears to be less prevalent in Northern Ireland than in England, Scotland and Wales, where, proportionally, there are substantially more projects to support such women. Examples of projects researched include the Anawim Project in Birmingham, Routes Out/Base 75 in Glasgow, The Bradford Working Women's Service, The Safe Project (Birmingham) and Streetreach (Doncaster). These offer a drop-in centre, an outreach service or both. At present there is no project in Belfast providing an outreach service for women involved in prostitution, although a drop-in centre is available. The drop-in centre in Belfast operates from a sexual health perspective but also aims to deal with other health and life issues that clients experience. Referral pathways and signposting to other appropriate services are available for clients as required.

The provision of an outreach service in Northern Ireland would be useful in reaching those women who are afraid of attending a drop-in clinic or who are prevented from attending by whoever is controlling them. A Sex Workers in Custody and the Community (SWICC) training course, provided by the National Offender Management Service (NOMS), suggested that many women may not be aware that services are available in their community, again highlighting the need for outreach whereby a greater number of women can be alerted to the availability of services. Existing projects in Great Britain show that outreach can be run successfully, though caution needs to be exercised because it can be dangerous for staff or volunteers.

Through outreach and drop-in centres, the best-practice projects mentioned above offer support in housing, education, employment, accessing benefits, child care, drug use, and accessing social services. Child care is an important issue given that many of the women who attend projects such as Anawim are mothers. Therefore they may need help in caring for their children, especially if links with family and friends have broken down. Women who attend the Anawim Project stated that they feel that they are living double lives as their children don't know what they are doing. Consequently support to help the women deal with the emotional trauma of leading 'a double life' needs to be available.

The examples of best practice show that there is a focus on 'prevention', whereby the projects aim to stop women from entering prostitution in the first place. At present there are no projects or campaigns to divert women from entering prostitution in Northern

Ireland, suggesting that a focus on diversion or prevention needs to be developed to bring Northern Ireland in line with the examples of best practice from England, Scotland and Wales.

The projects mentioned above are targeted at harm reduction for women involved in prostitution, but also have a strong focus on helping women to 'exit' prostitution. Countries outside the UK also have projects that focus on harm reduction or exiting for women involved in prostitution, emphasising the need for both types of project in Northern Ireland. For example, in Sweden, social welfare projects take an exiting focus while charities focus on harm reduction, whereas in Spain there are three or four harm reduction projects and three or four exit projects. New Zealand has six harm reduction projects and six exiting projects and the Netherlands has harm reduction projects for those involved in prostitution in all major cities. However, there is a lack of exiting programmes in the Netherlands due to funding issues (Kelly *et al.*, 2010).

The Anawim project works in partnership with prisons and courts to provide support to women regardless of their stage in the criminal justice system. Anawim also has close links with the women's centres in Birmingham, to share expertise and provide women involved in prostitution in the community with the best possible support. In Northern Ireland a similar partnership approach is needed to ensure that a consistent service is offered to all women involved in prostitution. Support should not be restricted to those in the community; there also needs to be a focus on those who are in the criminal justice system, including those in custody or on probation.

In addition to the initiatives mentioned above, Safe Exit, a project that works to develop better services for people involved in prostitution in England, has developed a range of handbooks for women, men and young people involved in prostitution as well as people who have been trafficked into England for sexual exploitation. The handbook for women involved in prostitution contains the following sections.

- Staying safe: tips for women selling sex
- Sexual health
- Drugs and alcohol
- What services are available, e.g. drop-in and outreach
- What to do if you are the victim of a sexual assault or rape
- How to exit prostitution

- Useful websites
- General help lines

There are also a number of projects that provide support specifically for women who have been trafficked for sexual exploitation; for example, the Dignity Project in the Republic of Ireland, the Poppy Project in England, the TARA Project in Scotland and the Diogel Project in South Wales. Many key issues are dealt with by all the projects mentioned above, such as providing secure accommodation; healthcare services; counselling; and legal services. Such issues are also dealt with by the Organised Crime Task Force pilot initiative operating in Northern Ireland, suggesting that support available for women trafficked into Northern Ireland and forced into prostitution broadly conforms with best practice projects run in the Republic of Ireland and England, Scotland and Wales. This consistency of approach reflects standards set by the Council of Europe (2011). An evaluation of the Northern Ireland pilot, while identifying some areas for improvement, concluded that it met the standard set out in the Council of Europe's convention.

There are also a number of projects in England, Scotland and Wales that raise awareness, tackle negative stereotypes of women involved in prostitution and human trafficking and lobby for reform in the law. Projects such as Demand Change!, CROP and the Coalition Against Trafficking in Women all work to promote the issues that women involved in prostitution (trafficked or otherwise) face. These projects will reach out to the general public to help them to change negative stereotypes that they may have relating to women in prostitution as well as lobbying government to ensure that laws relating to prostitution are up to date and effective. In Northern Ireland the Blue Blindfold Campaign works to promote awareness of trafficking and the negative effects it has on the women involved and society in general.

There are currently no organisations working in Northern Ireland to address the issues faced by women involved in prostitution who are not trafficked. Such a campaign would be useful as it might help to change negative stereotypes and deter men in Northern Ireland from using women involved in prostitution. Kelly *et al.* (2010) feel that policy and law enforcement is not enough to protect women involved in prostitution and organisations dedicated to improving laws should work in unison with those who provide support services to empower the women and help them to exit.

Ruhama: Comprehensive example of best practice

Ruhama, a Dublin-based NGO that has been working with women affected by prostitution since the late 1980s, provides a comprehensive example of best practice that supports all women involved in prostitution (trafficked and not trafficked) and also raises awareness and tackles stereotypes of prostitution and human trafficking.

Ruhama's mission is threefold:

- to reach out to and provide support services to women affected by prostitution and other forms of commercial sexual exploitation (e.g. trafficking)
- based on individual need, to offer assistance and opportunities to explore alternatives to prostitution
- to work to change public attitudes, practices and policies that allow the exploitation of women through trafficking and prostitution.

Ruhama supports women currently involved in prostitution including those who have been trafficked, as well as those who have exited prostitution or are at risk of entering. Ruhama also works to publicise issues surrounding trafficking and prostitution and lobbies government to make the necessary changes for the good of the women involved in the trade.

Ruhama provides support through arranging appointment-based visits to its premises, and primarily through outreach. It makes direct contact with women working in prostitution through an outreach van which visits areas where street prostitution takes place. Ruhama also works in partnership with other agencies such as health and drug clinics, Courts, the Garda and prisons so that it can 'reach out' to a larger number of women involved in prostitution. After initial contact is made, outreach workers will agree to meet the women again to provide further support.

Ruhama realises that it is now harder to make direct contact with women on the street as many women work indoors, therefore it provides multilingual pages on its website to help women recognise that support is available and to access it. Although Ruhama has been operating for many years, it appreciates the importance of updating service to meet the changing needs of the market, and its multilingual contact pages reflect the fact that many women operating in the Irish sex trade cannot speak English. Ruhama has also developed multilingual leaflets, distributed to

GP surgeries and health centres to help them reach as many women affected by prostitution in the Republic of Ireland as possible.

Ruhama has a range of one-to-one programmes that focus on the women's personal development. Initially counselling is provided by fully trained and professional counsellors who help women identify their major concerns. Following this Ruhama provides training and education to help women find an alternative means of making money. The women can attend education classes at the Ruhama centre or Ruhama arranges for them to attend education and training classes in their local area. Education includes IT training, English classes to help those who cannot speak English, literacy classes and support for women who wish to obtain a degree. Many women that Ruhama has worked with have been able to enter mainstream employment.

Ruhama also provides support in areas such as housing, healthcare, legal issues, accessing benefits, budgeting and drug addiction and will act as an advocate on behalf of the women to enable them to access any services that they might require. If required it will accompany women when attending healthcare appointments or trying to access housing, as well as to any Court hearings. Through providing this seamless support Ruhama is able to build up a trusting relationship with the women, who will be more likely to avail readily of the support available.

Ruhama recognises that women who exit prostitution may be prone to return to it, and provides long-term aftercare support to those who have exited the trade, to help them integrate into society. While Ruhama encourages women to exit prostitution, it does not discriminate against those who continue in the profession, providing support to all women involved in prostitution. It is important to note that the majority of women with whom Ruhama works show a desire to leave prostitution but need help in doing so.

In addition to the direct services to women that Ruhama provides, it works to raise awareness of the issues that women involved in prostitution might face. This is done through TV campaigns that highlight the growing problem of human trafficking and the needs of women involved in prostitution, and through organising seminars to promote issues surrounding prostitution and trafficking. This action has helped Ruhama to highlight the social and political changes required to eliminate abuse through prostitution and human trafficking. Ruhama also networks with relevant Government Departments and agencies to lobby for better services for women involved in prostitution, and advocates for appropriate legislation and directives.

Potential model of support for Northern Ireland

Overall, the projects or initiatives mentioned above are examples of best practice that have worked effectively in other jurisdictions. From analysing the best practice examples from elsewhere, nine themes emerge.

1. *Support needs to be in place to stop women from entering prostitution in the first instance* (Ruhama in Dublin, Anawim in Birmingham, Potteries Housing Association Working Women's Project in Stoke-on-Trent, Pow! Support and Counselling Services in Nottingham, The Bradford Working Women's Service and Streetreach in Doncaster all work to divert women from becoming involved in prostitution.)
2. *Support needs to be provided to women currently involved in prostitution* (Ruhama, Routes Out/Base 75 in Glasgow, Anawim, the Magdalene Group in Norwich and Streetreach provide a range of support such as legal advice, education, sexual health, employment, health care, accessing benefits, accommodation, drug additions and child care.)
3. *A drop-in centre and outreach, as well as a helpline and website will enable women involved to access support more easily* (Anawim Project and Routes Out/Base 75 provide a drop-in centre and Potteries Housing Association Working Women's Project, the Safe Project in Birmingham and Street Girls in Blackburn provide outreach. The Magdalene Group, Pow! Support and Counselling Services and Ruhama provide a drop-in centre and outreach. Ruhama also has a helpline and a multilingual website.)
4. *Women who have been trafficked need specific support* (The Poppy Project in England, the TARA Project in Scotland and the Diogel Project in South Wales help trafficked women with translations, legal advice, counselling and accommodation services.)
5. *Support guides for women involved in prostitution and for professionals are useful engagement tools* (Safe Exit, a project that works to develop better services for people involved in prostitution in England, has developed a range of handbooks for women, men and young people involved in prostitution, the UKNSWP (UK network of sex work projects) provides a resource pack for those involved in prostitution which includes a directory of services, and Ruhama has developed multilingual leaflets that are distributed to GP surgeries and health centres.)

6. *A partnership approach needs to be adopted* (Anawim and Ruhama work with Courts, prisons, police and Probation to provide support to all women involved in prostitution.)
7. *Issues relating to prostitution and human trafficking need to be promoted and the public educated* (Demand Change!, CROP, the Coalition Against Trafficking in Women and Ruhama all work to promote the issues that women involved in prostitution, trafficked or otherwise, face.)
8. *Support needs to be in place to help women exit prostitution* (Ruhama, Anawim, Routes Out/Base 75, Pow! Support and Counselling Services in Nottingham and the Bradford Working Women's Service all help women to exit prostitution.)
9. *Links need to be maintained with women who have been able to exit prostitution* (Ruhama and the Safe Project provide long-term support to help those who have exited prostitution to avoid re-entering.)

A comprehensive model of support for women involved in prostitution in Northern Ireland might consider the nine themes outlined above. Work is already taking place in relation to some themes; for example, Theme 2 suggests that a drop-in centre should be available but this is already provided by the Belfast Commercial Sex Workers Service, and Theme 4 suggests that specific support for trafficked women is needed, but this is already provided by the OCTF pilot.

Conclusions

There is currently one drop-in centre in Northern Ireland which offers support to all women involved in prostitution, but outreach is not provided. The majority of projects in England, Scotland, Wales and the Republic of Ireland provide outreach services and an expansion of this type of support would be beneficial in Northern Ireland. Nonetheless, providing outreach carries risks, and outreach workers and volunteers need to exercise caution and be aware of the possible dangers.

Ensuring a consistent police response to prostitution and human trafficking in Northern Ireland could be key to reducing the problem. Policies are currently being developed by the PSNI to address this. It is important that the DoJ, PBNI and NIPS work with the PSNI on taking these policies forward.

In addition to a vigilant police force, the public need to be made aware that prostitution and human trafficking for sexual exploitation are occurring in Northern Ireland, and that the majority of these women need help to escape from or exit prostitution. Raising awareness and educating the public to identify indicators of human trafficking or prostitution will facilitate the PSNI in its investigations.

Way forward/next steps

The DoJ, PBNI and NIPS plan to hold a round-table discussion with organisations or individuals that work directly with women involved in prostitution, to identify how best to configure services to meet the needs of the women involved. A follow-up seminar might then be held bringing together all interested parties; and contacts from England, Scotland, Wales and the Republic of Ireland who work with women involved in prostitution will be invited so that we can learn from other jurisdictions and have a wider discussion on the issue.

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Organisations/individuals contacted

Northern Ireland

- **PSNI:** PSNI Central Statistics provided information on current offences relating to prostitution and statistics for these offences. Three PSNI Officers responsible for investigating prostitution and human trafficking in Northern Ireland, two based in Belfast and one in Derry, were interviewed. (A range of statements made by the PSNI in news reports are included throughout the paper.)
- **Northern Ireland Prison Service (NIPS):** NIPS staff working in the women's prison, Ash House (committal staff and staff working on the landings) were interviewed.
- **Probation Board Northern Ireland (PBNI):** A Probation Officer who works with women currently in Ash House was interviewed.
- **Department of Justice (DOJ) Public Protection Unit:** Staff from the Public Protection Unit of the Criminal Justice Development Division in the Department of Justice provided information on terminology in relation to prostitution and advice in relation to laws relating to prostitution in Northern Ireland.
- **Organised Crime Branch, Policing and Community Safety:** The Organised Crime Branch in the Department of Justice fund a pilot project to support victims of human trafficking in Northern Ireland. The Head of Organised Crime Branch and other members of staff within the branch provided information on this pilot project and on characteristics of human trafficking in Northern Ireland.
- **Belfast Commercial Sex Workers Service:** This is a public health nurse-led service run by the Belfast Health & Social Care Trust and is the only dedicated service in Northern Ireland that provides support to those involved in prostitution in Northern Ireland. Staff from this service gave information on the support that they provide to women involved in prostitution in Northern Ireland. They were also able to share knowledge on the scale, location and characteristics of prostitution in Northern Ireland. This knowledge was gained from working with women in prostitution for the past 10 years.

- **Barnardos Safe Choices (NI):** Staff from Barnardos Safe Choices (NI) provided information on the support that they provide to children in care who are susceptible to being sexually exploited. They also shared knowledge on sexual exploitation of young people in Northern Ireland and their pathway into adult prostitution.
- **Researcher investigating child exploitation in Northern Ireland on behalf on Barnardos:** This researcher was able to share information on the research being carried out into children who are sexually exploited in Northern Ireland, which had a degree of overlap with this research paper.
- **Nexus Institute:** The Nexus Institute offers a therapeutic intervention to adult survivors of historical childhood sexual abuse and adult survivors of current sexual violence, including rape. The Clinical Practice Manager of the Nexus Institute was interviewed and shared the organisation's knowledge of prostitution in Northern Ireland.
- **NIACRO:** NIACRO provides support to help offenders reintegrate into society. NIACRO staff were asked to share the experiences of working with women involved in prostitution in Northern Ireland.
- **Extern:** Extern works directly with children, adults and communities affected by social exclusion throughout Ireland. A programme manager provided information on working with women involved in prostitution in Northern Ireland.
- **Women's Aid:** The Area Management Co-ordinator of Foyle Women's Aid, Foyle Women's Aid Refuge Manager and Management Co-ordinator of Belfast and Lisburn Women's Aid provided a detailed description of the service they provide to victims of human trafficking in Northern Ireland.
- **SEEDS:** SEEDS is a multicultural support agency for ethnic minorities and migrant workers based in Derry. The Director of SEEDS provided information on the support they have giving to victims of human trafficking over the past five to six years.
- **Women's Community Support Project:** Members of the Women's Community Support Project (a Women's Support Network representative, a NIACRO representative and staff from the Falls, Shankill and Windsor Women's Centres) were interviewed and shared their knowledge of prostitution in Northern Ireland.
- **Department of Justice (DOJ) Statistics and Research Branch:** The DOJ Statistics and Research Branch provided statistics on

prosecution and conviction offences relating to prostitution in Northern Ireland.

- **NI Law Centre:** Staff from the NI Law Centre provided an overview of the support that they provide when representing victims of human trafficking in Northern Ireland.
- **UK Border Agency UKBA (regional offices):** Staff working for the UKBA in Northern Ireland provided an overview of the work that they do when a potential victim of human trafficking is identified.
- **Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety (DHSSPS):** Staff from the DHSSPS provided information on the guidance that they are developing for working with individuals who have been trafficked.
- **Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission (NIHRC):** The Head of Legal Services, Policy and Research at the NIHRC provided information on the NIHRC's stance on human trafficking.
- **The Blue Blindfold Campaign launch:** The Blue Blindfold Campaign launch was attended on 23 February 2010. This campaign aims to raise awareness of human trafficking in Northern Ireland. Key speakers at the launch included Anna Lo MLA, Paul Goggins MP, an Assistant Chief Constable in the PSNI and Head of the UK Human Trafficking Centre.

Republic of Ireland

- **Ruhama:** Ruhama is a Dublin-based NGO that has been working with women affected by prostitution since the late 1980s. Staff from Ruhama provided information on the sex industry in the Republic of Ireland and the support that they provide.
- **Dignity Project:** The Dignity Project is a project of transnational partners who will study and document the good practice that is identified in each partner country in services to victims of trafficking. It will then look at how best to replicate such models at the local level. The coordinator of this project was interviewed and shared knowledge of prostitution and human trafficking in the Republic of Ireland.
- **Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform:** The Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform in the Republic of Ireland provided a range of research papers relating to prostitution and human trafficking.

England, Scotland and Wales

- **Home Office:** A number of staff from the Home Office provided advice on laws relating to prostitution and terminology. They also provided a range of research papers relating to prostitution in England, Scotland and Wales.
- **NOMS, Women’s Team:** Staff from the NOMS Women’s Team provided research papers relating to prostitution in England, Scotland and Wales.
- **West Yorkshire Probation:** Staff from West Yorkshire Probation provided further papers on research conducted in England.
- **Bradford Working Women’s Service:** Staff from the Bradford Working Women’s Service shared their knowledge on local support services.
- **Streetreach, Doncaster:** The manager of Streetreach provided an overview of the work they do to support women involved in prostitution. The project was one of the first in England and is seen nationally as a model of good practice.
- **Anawim Project, Birmingham:** Staff from the Anawim Project provided an overview of the service that they provide to support women involved in prostitution in Birmingham. Staff from the project also attended the Sex Workers in Custody and the Community training, which is described further below. At this event a DVD was shown in which women who attend the Anawim Project were interviewed.
- **Eaves Housing:** Staff from Eaves Housing provided a range of research papers relating to prostitution in England, Scotland and Wales.
- **Safe Exits Partnership:** This partnership develops better services for people in prostitution and reduces the impact of prostitution on communities. Staff from the partnership provided research papers on prostitution.
- **HMPS ‘Sex Workers in Custody and the Community’ training** was attended in the NOMS Women’s Team Office in Burton-upon-Trent.