HOUSE OF COMMONS

Women and Equalities Committee

Oral evidence: So-called honour-based abuse, HC 831

Wednesday 7 December 2022

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Watch the meeting

Members present: Caroline Nokes (Chair); Dame Caroline Dinenage; Carolyn Harris; Mark Jenkinson.

Questions 1-30

Witnesses

I: Ms Yasmin Khan, Founder of Halo Project and National Adviser to the Welsh Government, Dr Roxanne Khan, Founder and Director of Honour Abuse Research Matrix (HARM) at University of Central Lancashire, and Prof. Aisha K Gill Ph.D CBE, Prof. of Criminology, Centre for Gender and Violence Research at University of Bristol.

II: Ms Surwat Sohail, Chief Executive at Roshni Birmingham, Dr Hannana Siddiqui, Head of Policy and Research at Southall Black Sisters, and Ms Diana Nammi, Founder and Executive Director at Iranian and Kurdish Women's Rights Organisation.

Examination of Witnesses

Witnesses: Dr Roxanne Khan, Professor Aisha K. Gill and Yasmin Khan.

Q1 **Chair:** Good afternoon, and welcome to this afternoon's meeting of the Women and Equalities Select Committee. Welcome to everybody joining us. This is the first session of our inquiry into so-called honour-based abuse, part of a programme of work on tackling violence against women and girls. We are going to hear in a moment from our first panel of witnesses, but first, I would like to advise everyone watching this—whether in person or on the internet—that we are likely to hear some very distressing content about this form of abuse. If anyone is affected by what they hear, there are some suggested support organisations listed on our website, and we are going to hear from some of those same support organisations a bit later.

I welcome Professor Aisha Gill, professor of criminology at the School for Policy Studies at the University of Bristol, and Yasmin Khan, the national adviser to the Welsh Government and founder and director of the Halo Project, who is with us via Zoom. We are also expecting Dr Roxanne

Khan, who is senior lecturer in forensic psychology at the School of Psychology and Computer Science at the University of Central Lancashire and director of the Honour Abuse Research Matrix.

Members of the Committee will ask our witnesses questions in turn. They will indicate to each witness who they want to answer, but if at any point the witnesses wish to come in on any question or contribute something additional, please do raise your hand and we will endeavour to bring you in at an appropriate moment. Can I start by just asking the witnesses whether you are relaxed that I use your first names?

Yasmin Khan *indicated assent.*

Professor Gill: Aisha is absolutely fine.

Q2 **Chair:** Brilliant, thank you. Can I start, Aisha, by asking you about the term "honour-based abuse" and what difficulties there are, both in defining it and in that term itself?

Professor Gill: Sure. One of the key points to highlight is that "honour" covers a broad variety of concepts and behaviours. We understand it in the context of respect, integrity and status, and it is really key to understand that the manifestations of violence associated with it are critical to understanding its motivations and behaviours.

For example, thinking about definitions, what we are looking at is a range of behaviours—perceived immoral or shameful behaviour on the part of the victim—and these manifestations can be perceived in terms of policing sexualities and behaviours, or if someone is behaving in a manner that is seen to violate those social and cultural norms and behaviours in those families and communities. It holds significant power and control in terms of the surveillance of women's behaviour. Examples include divorce, adultery, sex outside of marriage and wearing clothes in a particular fashion that is seen as deviant, so the transgressions of individuals' behaviour are used as the basis.

Whether that is perceived or real, it is used to justify violence against women. It is important that I highlight this because to understand honour-based violence and its components is to understand it within the framework of violence against women and patriarchal structures.

Q3 **Chair:** Thank you. Is there a better term that we could use as part of this inquiry? I dislike the title of my own inquiry.

Professor Gill: Sure, I understand that. One way of looking at it is that the definition can be understood in terms of how victims understand their experience of violence, predicated on the notion of honour, and how perpetrators use it as a basis of control. The one direction I would give is that the CPS definition is very broad. We are looking at a broad collection of behaviours that are used to control individuals within families or other social groups, or to protect cultural or religious beliefs or norms.

If we understand how honour works in communities in terms of prestige and status, we have to understand that it is also its components in terms

of how it manifests itself. What I am trying to say is that it is an oxymoron. There is no clear definition. The reason why: it is contested, because whose honour are we talking about? That is what I want to get to, and that is why there are implications in terms of drilling down to a definition. A broader basis allows us to look at honour-based abuse in broad aspects of different forms of behaviour that are used as a form of dishonour, and to look at it in the context of shame as well.

There are aspects of honour or honour behaviours that are honourable, and that will be subjective to diverse communities, but also diverse experiences. How honour is perceived and understood in one community—let's say south Asian communities—will be very different from how it is understood and experienced in another community, such as in Traveller, Kurdish, Iranian, Greek or Italian communities. Those associations are connected to the understanding of sexuality and of gender regimes, how women are treated in those communities and how the behaviour of individuals is policed in those communities.

There are layers to understanding what honour is in its attributing of violence against women and girls. One of the things about understanding its definition is recognising its collective aspect, which is slightly different from domestic violence. We are looking at collective violence that may be perpetrated by a number of perpetrators within not only the family, but the community.

Q4 **Chair:** Thank you. Can I turn to Yasmin and ask whether there are any particular communities in which honour-based abuse might be more prevalent?

Yasmin Khan: I just want to add on the term "honour-based abuse" that we do have a legal, statutory definition for domestic abuse, but it seems that the CPS definition of honour-based abuse has been widely accepted by the Government, CPS and policing. That sets the scene in terms of the significance and importance that honour-based abuse has.

It appears in BME communities. This is a crime that occurs regularly and often, and is very, very serious. I think there needs to be particular emphasis and direction nationally on honour-based abuse. The important thing to note about where this is more prevalent is where and how we receive the data. The data is recorded through police systems and specialist organisations like the Halo Project. Building that fulfilment and that real rich data depends on how closely you work with your police forces or whether you are commissioned by the police service in your locality. The facts remain that the data is not rich at all.

To give you an example, earlier this week we met with Northumbria police, Cleveland police and Durham police, which in the last quarter reported anything between five and 17 incidents. However, we have covered the whole of the north-east in those figures, and when we look back at them we have supported 204 victims so far. That does not come from inquiries or information provided, but outreach, critical support plans and interventions that have been provided.

The question was about figures. If we look at them, it seems that the prevalence applies to the south Asian communities—Pakistani and Indian communities—and there is an increasing number from middle eastern and north African communities. As my colleague, Aisha, has quite rightly mentioned, across parts of Wales where we work, we ourselves have seen an increase in victims coming forward from eastern European and GRT communities. There simply isn't a one-size-fits-all approach that should be applied to victims.

As Aisha has outlined, the honour code in Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities is somewhat different to what is recognised as bringing shame and dishonour in the south Asian communities. There could be two very stark reasons. In one community, it might be the way you dress that brings shame and dishonour to the family. In another community, the honour code may be contravened by taking decisions about who you marry.

The real issue about the data is that a victim of forced marriage will also be a victim of honour-based abuse. A victim of FGM will also be a victim of honour-based abuse. There is huge disparity in the primary category where this is recorded. I am really pleased that we are having these conversations. They must be held in relation to the Domestic Abuse Act and the subsequent strategy, and the violence against women and girls strategy. Many of the campaigners in the room today gave information that this was not a good idea: honour-based abuse is placed within both of those strategies, meaning professionals have a lack of guidance and a lack of steer on how to protect victims of honour-based abuse, because it is never one type of victim.

Q5 **Chair:** Can I just follow up on that? You mentioned that there can't be a one-size-fits-all approach across different communities. Could there be a one-size-fits-all approach to how data is collected? Is there any particular police force that is doing that well?

Yasmin Khan: The second part is quite an easy answer. The main thing is how that information could be collected better. There are different policing systems that record different crimes. Unfortunately, that information isn't combined together. But there is an easier way to collect this information, and that is by not just ethnicity, but making sure that we are well-guided with national guidance about the primary level of abuse. If the primary level of abuse is honour-based abuse, then we can look at whether forced marriage is also part of that journey for the victim.

The difficulty is that each statutory safeguarding organisation will record the information very differently, and they don't talk to specialist organisations, many of which are in the room today. That information and rich data that we have should be used in collaboration with policing and education systems. We have seen an increase in younger victims coming forward about honour-based abuse. In education, there should be guidance about what information should be collected and how it should be classified. We really need a national steer. There isn't one, and local areas are doing what they feel is right.

There is goodwill in police services to do better, but there is no guidance on how that better might look. There really needs to be a review on how information is collated. Unfortunately, data follows commissioning decisions, resources and interventions. We already have quite a weak infrastructure for support for victims. The BME organisations, specialist organisations and VAWG organisations mentioned in the Domestic Abuse Commissioner's report, released last week, have very clear evidence to say they are the best organisations to provide the safety and recovery that victims from diverse groups need and deserve.

Chair: Thank you. Aisha, do you want to come in? Could I just ask—I am conscious that we are tight on time—if answers could be kept brief?

Professor Gill: Sure, I understand. I just want to briefly follow on from Yasmin's point about data and draw out some of the challenges around that. There have been some estimates provided by the Iranian and Kurdish Women's Rights Organisation, which will be speaking later today. One of the key points is how data is recorded and the implications for responses. There is significant under-reporting and misrecording of honour-based violence cases, which are actually likely to have an impact on understanding how to respond broadly to gender-based violence.

As Yasmin has already highlighted, honour-based violence is not a specific statutory offence, but rather a collective term that encompasses a collection of practices. So, when we look at these practices, we also need to bear in mind the intersections of honour-based violence with other forms of abuses on the continuum, such as forced marriage, FGM, harassment, assault, false imprisonment, threats to kill, rape and femicide or murder in the name of honour. We can prosecute these forms of abuses in relation to the laws that we already have that regulate the specific offence in question.

I want to draw on some research that my colleagues and I have done at the University of Bristol Centre for Gender and Violence Research with colleagues at the University of Essex, looking at a police force's response around data monitoring and—

Chair: Can I just interject, please? There will be other sections of the brief that ask about policing.

Professor Gill: But I just want to highlight the issue around the data. If there is not the same definition of honour-based violence, it is actually difficult to collect the data. The lack of data across agencies has an impact in terms of monitoring the value of an intervention. I just want to re-emphasise that point, given that Yasmin highlighted it. Forgive me.

Q6 **Chair:** No, that is absolutely fine. I want to just welcome Roxanne Khan at this point—thank you very much for making it. We will bring you in with a question in a minute.

Having asked whether there are any communities in which honour-based violence is more prevalent, are there any in which it is less?

Professor Gill: Because the nature of under-reporting is really problematic, we have some idea of where there are significant hotspots—we know this from research that I have already mentioned—but it is really difficult to absolutely say there is a particular community where honour is a manifestation in terms of the context of honour-based violence.

What we can say is that there are significant concerns around particular forms of violence predicated on honour in Black and racially minoritised communities. As a consequence, we need to engage with and ensure that our infrastructures, data monitoring and specialist services reflect responses to that. We are going to have significant challenges around detection, prevention, provision and prosecution as a consequence.

Q7 **Chair:** Thank you. Roxanne, I will bring you in at this point. What are the challenges around how we understand the motivations of perpetrators, and how important is it that we manage to do so?

Dr Khan: I just caught the back end of what Aisha was saying there and I have spoken to Yasmin as well—I think we all end up knowing each other—so I may accidentally recap some of the things that have already been said.

A lot of the issues stem from the lack of clarity in definition. I am afraid that that is something you might hear often. That lack of clarity is not unique to honour-based violence; it is very common in all forms of family abuse. With honour abuse particularly, the complexities come from how we understand the victim's experience of that abuse. Do they even understand that it is related to honour abuse? It is very difficult for a victim to define themselves as a victim. That also applies for victims of honour abuse. There is a complexity there. We have to value their perspectives, because we must be victim-focused, without also indicating that they are to blame. The words "honour-based violence" indicate that honour is something to do with them—that they may have caused it, they are part of it. At the same time, we have to capture the motive of the perpetrators and abusers, which is honour.

No wonder there are complexities. We need to have an ongoing debate. The contentiousness comes from the fact that "honour" is a positive, very powerful word that is globally understood. It is an emotional word, and it relates to something that is extremely positive. It is paradoxical: how can a word that, linguistically, means something so powerful and strong and that has very good connotations be related to something that is so harmful and dangerous, particularly when it is applied to young girls and women? The paradox then applies to the perpetrators, who may try to justify their abuse in those terms: it is an honourable act, so it may be charged by them and weaponised in that way.

The other issue is that we have to understand how it fits into the broader paradigm of violence against women and girls—the VAWG strategy that we are trying to work with. Does it fit into gender-based abuse? We know there are male victims too. There are lots of issues. On top of that, it is very easily misinterpreted, and it is therefore open to exploitation by those

who want to demonise particular groups—Muslim communities in particular. There are many issues relating to that. We must understand that the perpetration stems from defining it and the issues relating to that.

Q8 **Chair:** Yasmin, can I pick up on something that Roxanne said about the challenge with victims identifying themselves as victims? Is that one of the barriers to them coming forward to report abuse? What are the other ones?

Yasmin Khan: That is most definitely one of the barriers. I have yet to hear a victim who has contacted our programme or other programmes say they are a victim of honour-based abuse.

There are simply not enough services that understand how victims need to be protected. Statutory services are, quite shockingly, still making hugely institutionally racist comments about how they think the service or support should be applied. For example, we have worked with many schools that have said to young at-risk women, "Surely that's not the case. Don't be silly. That doesn't happen here anymore. You need to stand up to your parents and say this." That has been really detrimental.

The policies and procedures around supporting victims, wherever they make those disclosures, are not really understood. That is why we are having this debate about the understanding of honour-based abuse. The fact remains that when victims need support, they want to speak to specialist organisations that are from that community and that can provide that level of confidence, so they don't have to rehearse what "honour" means to them or how something so minor has had such a huge impact, in terms of the abuse they are receiving.

One thing that has worked really well is the forced marriage guidance and the "one chance" rule. When victims come forward and make their disclosure, it may be the only chance that services have to support them. There is an issue if you don't speak the language or if, as the report highlighted, there are firewall issues, which Southall Black Sisters have noted, around looking at immigration status before safety. I know that some formidable work is being done on that, but the fact is that many women still go unprotected because they are scared about what will happen to them if they come forward to make those disclosures.

Victims who report to the police are generally at an absolutely critical stage of violence, and they need immediate, critical support. That is the only time we tend to see victims contacting the police. They come through referrals through education. Health is an area that we really should be focusing on. That is why there is a real need for cross-Government and cross-policy work to have that understanding of what pathway to take.

If you are working in an area and you have specialists in BAME organisations, they will be able to provide you with cases. They will be able to tell you about things that have worked out really well when victims have come forward and asked for support, and about how that support plan was provided. It is really important that experts and specialist

organisations can influence those decisions based on the cases we are dealing with, day in, day out, in volumes we have never seen before. I think so much information and evidence can be provided by by-and-for-led organisations, which can really fill the huge gap in knowledge and data that we keep referring to today.

Q9 **Mark Jenkinson:** I would like to explore some of the issues around police and statutory services. Aisha, the 2015 HMIC report found that many forces, as we just heard from Yasmin, were severely under-prepared for dealing with this abuse. What changes do you believe were successfully made between that report and the Halo Project's super-complaint?

Professor Gill: That is a great question. To be totally honest, I do not think we have made significant headway. The HMIC report was important in highlighting barriers to, and vulnerabilities around, reporting, and the inherent risks around reporting. I think there are still significant tensions in understanding how this powerful "norm" of honour and shame operates and actually creates constraints in terms of victims' experiences of reporting. Of course, the HMIC report and the Hertfordshire research that I was involved in—which was in 2018, so three years later—actually highlighted that, for some victims, reporting to the police resulted in a heightened sense of vulnerability.

The involvement of the police was really dependent on their understanding of the context, contours and consequences of reporting as a victim of honour-based violence. That requires an understanding of the risks. Yasmin mentioned the gold standard for evidence collection—gathering at the point of reporting. But there are issues not only around understanding victims' motives and the implications of their reporting, but also around how a case is managed from when it is opened to when it is closed. I think it is really important that I spend a few minutes, if I may, highlighting some of those findings.

The victims spoke of how they experienced reporting. To take some of the examples that victims gave, it was attempted to interview some victims with their family, in front of the perpetrators, which put them at significant risk of harm. Also, where there was a lack of understanding, it led to inaction or no-criming as a consequence and escalated harm. When we are talking about under-reporting and police responses, we have to look at the way in which the victim experiences the criminal justice system—we cannot disconnect those things from their experiences of how cases are pursued throughout the criminal justice system.

We are seeing some pockets of success, but not many. Those pockets of success that I have been involved in relate to police officers actually having a really strong understanding of not only communities but the manifestations of the honour-based violence that I have spoken about. We cannot disconnect honour-based violence from other forms of gender-based violence. We need to recognise that, in this context, there will be multiple perpetrators. There will be consequences not only for family members. Bystanders may be complicit. There may not be a recognition that women can also collude in the violence. The fear of reporting to the

police may also be based on experiences that are transnational, so we cannot deal with that without understanding other criminal justice responses.

One of the key points around recording data and understanding reporting and policing is that, with those police officers I worked with, there was an overlap. Where a case was honour-based, it was recorded as domestic violence and abuse, but it actually was honour-based. We need to have an understanding of that. My learned colleague Dr Roxanne has highlighted the contested elements of this, which have an impact on understanding victims' experiences and the cost of speaking to the police. I think we can do more work around that.

Chair: Can I remind witnesses that we will run out of time at 4 o'clock, because I will lose quoracy at that point? I want to hear from as many of you as possible.

Professor Gill: Can I just say that, if we are going to move forward on this, we need to ensure that police meet their statutory obligations, as per the victim code 2015 and 2020, in terms of recognising the needs of priority victims.

Q10 **Mark Jenkinson:** Yasmin, in that super-complaint, you have outlined the need for police to undergo continuous and improved cultural training. What specific issues do we need to tackle in that training?

Yasmin Khan: Having been the author of the super-complaint, which is going to be published imminently with recommendations for all police forces, I can take you through the process of police recording. The call comes through to someone on the front desk. That call is then sent to some kind of vulnerability unit, which then looks at the response team that can go out and visit. At that point, the training that is required is across all the levels within policing.

What we find, working with police forces across England and Wales, is that training is probably only provided to the safeguarding officers and officers in the vulnerability teams, and there is sparse training quality. For example, it is very important to understand the risks, triggers and motivations of honour-based abuse. But, for policing, what is really important is to understand that the risks escalate when a victim makes the disclosure to the police. What is really important is for the police to understand, as Aisha highlighted, that there are multiple perpetrators. But the risk assessment that the police use, which is the SafeLives DASH risk checklist—for domestic abuse, stalking and honour-based—only asks a handful of questions. It does not ask about whether there is going to be potential revenge, retribution or reprisal once someone has made that report to us. There is no clear understanding around that.

In 2018 I was involved with a domestic homicide review on Jessica Patel, who was brutally murdered in an honour killing. I spent a very long time pulling out the research reports of esteemed academics in the room today and providing guidance and case studies to a room full of professionals

who were failing to see the signs of it being honour-based. I started off by looking at the routine process of policing operations, but, at the extreme end, there are many victims who need support, and serious risk is not being considered—these people are at the highest risk level. The police will put a referral into a multi-agency risk assessment conference. You will hear from panellists in the next session about the number of incidents that are not considered to be high risk, when in fact they should be, because they have not been risk-coded correctly. The risk journey of a victim has not been understood, and they come back as a repeat victim at a later stage when a critical response is required.

The super-complaint concludes that there is a considerable level of racial anxiety and fear about whether the police are doing the wrong thing. My advice is to always look at protections and safeguarding before race and ethnicity. What we have concluded within the super-complaint, and by speaking to many officers across police forces, is that, unfortunately, we still have the Rotherham effect, where race and culture are considered before protection and safeguarding.

Q11 **Mark Jenkinson:** What problems do voluntary interviews with suspects in these cases pose, and what should replace them?

Yasmin Khan: In the report, we have highlighted the real impact of holding people under voluntary suspect interviews—that is with the cases that we have highlighted in the super-complaint around sexual abuse in BME communities. In the case studies we included in the report, we saw time delays and collusion of community and family members to put pressure on the victim to drop the charges and the case. Therefore, rather than having voluntary suspect interviews, suspects should be held and then released under investigation once those interviews have been conducted. We have seen, time and time again, the immense pressure that victims and survivors face in coming forward and making the disclosures.

The whole element of understanding what honour-based abuse means, and the impact of honour-based abuse, is that it is all around the pressure of the family. The perpetrators are male, but sometimes it involves the mothers, the mothers-in-law and the sisters-in-law, so it is a very complex issue that needs complex solutions and an approach that really ensures that victims do not go undetected or unsupported, and that we do take those risks very seriously.

I was working with the Met police on an honour killing a couple of years ago, and they said that 72 hours from the point of disclosure there was a tragic murder, so it just goes to show you how quickly that escalation can occur.

Q12 **Mark Jenkinson:** Thank you. Briefly, Aisha, have you anything to add on any of that?

Professor Gill: Just to highlight that, in terms of safeguarding, I think we are seeing a significant concern—one needs to place this within the context of the covid-19 pandemic as well, with the impact on specialist

services—because many, many victims are actually falling through the cracks. As a consequence, safeguarding is being undermined. We should also consider the intersections between post-separation violence and child contact, and the escalation of violence that is perpetrated on victims of abuse, particularly women who may be exiting, and how honour manifests itself.

I also want to raise concerns around issues of confidentiality. Yasmin and I have worked together on the super-complaint, and there are real issues around client confidentiality and protection. We need to be really holding our professional support services to account, in terms of not only data protection but data sharing, and to ensure that they meet their due diligence obligations under the victims code—I cannot emphasise that enough—in terms of recognition of priority victims.

Q13 **Carolyn Harris:** Something that Yasmin and Roxanne said earlier got me thinking about people who I would perceive to be victims, but who do not see themselves as victims—sometimes because they have gone into a situation knowing that this will happen to them. What practical things can we encourage the Government to put in place to not only support victims but get potential victims to recognise that they are, in fact, victims?

Dr Khan: There are so many different ways that you can approach this effectively—this comes back, again, to what Yasmin said about a multidisciplinary, multi-partnership approach. Different agencies and different groups can all contribute to making a positive effect, and I think that, from a governmental perspective, it is about supporting, or championing, some of those initiatives.

If I can just give you a brief backdrop about victimisation, honour-based abuse is a global problem; it is very prevalent, and it occurs in collectivist cultures, so it is quite important to separate out the notion that it occurs only in south Asian communities of Muslim heritage. It is about reframing our understanding of what honour-based violence and abuse is.

One way of looking at it is that in collectivist communities, where the collective good trumps the individual good, individuals almost have to sacrifice what is good for them in order to do what is good for the community or for the other. Honour abuse—honour killings—have been reported in the Mediterranean, North America and Latin America, but in the UK it is more commonly associated with middle eastern, north African and south Asian communities, and with Turkish populations.

Because of the media reporting of prolific honour killings, the attention in the UK is on south Asian communities. However, against that, although fewer than 3 million people in the UK are of south Asian or Arab heritage, which is just under 6% of the total population, the victim data shows that the majority of victims in the UK are of south Asian or Arab heritage. So there is something there. Is it because it is a small group of people and within that small group of people it is very common?

Against that sort of backdrop, what we also know about south Asian women—this is based on research—is that they are most at risk of suicide, self-harm and self-harm ideation. There is a very good study, for example, that was done by Khatidja Chantler and colleagues. It estimated that half of all south Asian females in the UK who have attempted suicide have been a victim of domestic abuse. Data was analysed from an emergency department in Manchester. What they found over four years was that there was a higher rate of self-harm in south Asian communities versus their white or Black female counterparts. The risk was 1.5 times higher for suicide attempts for those between the ages of 16 and 24. The cause, they reported, was nearly always family conflict related to cultural choices and pressurisation into arranged marriages—forced marriage. What we have here is a group of young women and girls who are at risk of honour abuse. That is not to exclude, more broadly, the fact that males and older women are at risk as well, but if we have a group of young people at risk, maybe that is where the governmental support can come from.

If I have a moment—I do not want to take over, Chair, because I know we have to keep moving things on—I want to mention briefly that I am a member of the HARM network. We are basically a multigroup of people who work collectively to come up with innovative solutions. I will start with one that I worked on with Yasmin, Nazir Afzal—who I am sure you know—and also Caroline Goode, who was the detective who prosecuted the perpetrators of Banaz Mahmod's honour killing. We worked collectively to develop a guidance for workplaces—for young people when they are at work. It is very simple. It gives 10 steps for employers to support people when they are at work, because everybody that goes to work can have support. It aligned perfectly with Paul Scully's review of how to support people in the workplace against domestic abuse. I did submit to that review. Unfortunately, honour abuse did not get mentioned, but it said "minoritised victims". I think there could be more emphasis there, perhaps championing some work that is very practical and pragmatic—and it is not. You do not have to reinvent the wheel. We cannot change everything. We cannot change violence and abuse but we take preventive steps.

Very briefly—I promise I will move on—I should mention that we worked with another group of experts. We know that young people are at risk in schools, colleges and universities. Those of us who work in universities are often at the forefront of listening to young women who are victims of forced marriage. We have developed a universities domestic abuse policy guidance that is fully culturally competent. That has been championed by Apsana Begum.

There are pragmatic yet innovative strategies that we can be involved with that can support those most at risk. It does not necessarily always have to be with the police. The police have got some work to do. You will hear in the second session from people who are on the frontline of working with victims in strategy agencies, but I think there are untapped areas.

Professor Gill: May I offer an example of victim experience?

Q14 **Carolyn Harris:** I will just go to Yasmin, because there is going to be

work done in Wales and it would be good if Yasmin could tell us about the work that is going on in Wales and share the message.

Yasmin Khan: It is really important that victims can recognise the abuse and what is happening to them. One of the things we do know is that we need to do as much as we can to reach out to a diverse range of communities who can recognise the honour-based abuse that is happening to them and can recognise how this will affect them and their children.

Lots of programmes are in existence. One that we have developed, which is trauma-informed and influenced by survivors, is called the Halo Hope Programme, and other BME specialist organisations have developed their own. This is a six-week programme that works by looking at the particular signs of honour-based abuse, giving examples, as a collective. That is one of many tools that can be provided and delivered in community groups, but again there is an issue around resource and the implications for that.

I must pick up on a good practice that works well, which we did as part of the communications around our own legislation, the Violence against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence (Wales) Act 2015. Prior to the pandemic, we focused on hard-hitting campaigns that came out every quarter, which were really well received. Honour-based abuse is about control. In Wales, when we had a specific campaign around coercive control, South Wales police saw a 90% increase in the reports of coercive control. In Wales, there is also a huge shift to look at bystander campaigns, in which victims can be supported by their own communities and by professionals to report the abuse on behalf of the victim in the safest way possible.

There is good practice, and there are ways and mechanisms of providing that awareness within communities by working with communities—not disengaging them or assuming that one particular community is affected and therefore concentrating on that. A victim who was white British contacted our programme only last week. She is suffering from honour-based abuse. Again, it goes back to the primary question: understanding those communities and how they are affected. I could also talk about the Brethren community and cult communities in the highlands in Scotland, just to give you an example of the diverse range that we are starting to see through our case load.

Q15 **Carolyn Harris:** Is there any other good practice in any of the other devolved nations?

Yasmin Khan: They are really working with survivor groups. Wherever survivors provide the information on what has worked with them, specialist organisations have an absolute knack of developing programmes and being innovative. Because it is trauma-informed, they are best placed to deliver that programme in the communities.

Chair: I thank our three witnesses. This has been really helpful. Please feel free to stay for the second session.

Witnesses: Dr Hannana Siddiqui, Diana Nammi and Surwat Sohail.

Chair: I thank the witnesses on our second panel. We have lost one of them temporarily, but I hope they will make an appearance.

Dr Hannana Siddiqui, head of policy, research and funding, from Southall Black Sisters, is here in person, and Surwat Sohail, chief executive of Roshni Birmingham, is here on Zoom. Thank you so much, Surwat—I know you have had a really disrupted journey and this is not how we were intending to see you. We are also expecting Diana Nammi, the founder and executive director of the Iranian and Kurdish Women's Rights Organisation.

As per the previous panel, questions will come to each of you in turn. We will start with Carolyn Harris again.

Q16 **Carolyn Harris:** This is to both witnesses. Can you briefly tell us what kinds of groups you work with? Is there a victim profile that stands out among the victims?

Dr Siddiqui: We deal with more than 10,000 case inquiries every year. That is the national figure, because we have a national helpline, but we also do a lot of local and strategic casework, which is about 700 or 800 cases a year.

The majority of cases we deal with are women from south Asian backgrounds, because we are based in Southall with a very large south Asian community, but honour-based violence is something that we have experienced from a range of different communities. In particular, middle eastern is the other group—the Turkish community. Sometimes we also get African communities where there is honour-based violence as well.

There are other communities that I have come across that experience honour-based abuse, although there may be differences in how it manifests itself. For example, the Jewish community, the Traveller, Romani and Gypsy communities—any community that has a very conservative, orthodox approach to gender roles and how violence is used to control female behaviour. We have to remember that honour-based abuse is gendered. It is primarily women and girls who are the victims, and it is primarily perpetrated by men within the community. Women can be perpetrators and men can also be victims, but it disproportionately affects women and girls.

In terms of the ethnicity of the cases that are reported, that is not widely reported. The ones that are widely reported are south Asian and middle eastern communities. There are strong notions of honour in some western communities, such as Italian communities, for example, but it is does not manifest itself that strongly in terms of honour-based abuse. It was certainly a very strong concept in British society at one point, but that is certainly not the case now. There are still the notions of reputation and individual and personal honour, but the notion of the collective honour—the honour of the group, the family or the community—is not very strong, and usually that is the basis on which honour-based violence is

perpetrated: the need to protect the codes of honour within the wider collective.

Surwat Sohail: Good afternoon, everyone. I am Surwat Sohail from Roshni Birmingham. It is very similar to what Hannana said. We provide a range of services including a forced marriage and honour-based abuse helpline, domestic abuse refuge and a counselling service. We also do children's services, an IDVA service and professional training to local agencies, as well as workshops in the community.

The profile of the victims is very similar to what Hannana said. The majority of cases that we get are from a south Asian background, but we have also got cases that come from the Iranian community, the Kurdish community, the African community—it cuts across many different communities, including the Travelling community.

Q17 **Carolyn Harris:** How do victims find you? What are the barriers to them finding you and reporting?

Dr Siddiqui: Of course there are barriers, but we are specialist by-and-for organisations that specialise in the needs of Black and minority women and we are community based, so a lot of the survivors find us through word of mouth or through referral through other agencies, because we are quite well known in our local area and we are included in a lot of information sources. There are still a lot of barriers for them to access us, but certainly we are their first port of call. We are usually their main source of support, and we help them to access mainstream services. Because we are community-based, we are more accessible to them.

Because we are a women's organisation and a specialist organisation that does not judge them or reinforce the conservative value systems within the community that justify honour-based violence, a lot of women who are facing that abuse feel confident about coming to us and feel that they can trust us more than any other agencies. They feel we will understand the issues around honour, culture and religion much more easily than a mainstream agency. I think a lot of women are also referred by friends and relatives who are supportive of them. Usually, the community and religious leaders do not tend to refer to us, because they see us as a threat to their power base and to the patriarchal forces within the community, but occasionally we do get those referrals as well. Women come to us because they trust us, and I think that is the most important source of support that they can get.

Q18 **Carolyn Harris:** Surwat, is it similar for you?

Surwat Sohail: Yes, it is. As a specialist service, we know that there are cultural and language barriers, and the ethos we follow is that we have to take that information to victims, so we do a range of campaigns. We work with community TV channels. We have developed videos in different languages. We look at social media, such as TikTok. We also go into universities. We have recently had a big campaign at Aston University, and we do the same at various other universities. The question we ask is: how do we filter that information to those who may be in their homes, with

very limited access to the outside world? We also do radio campaigns, where we go through the information in different languages, because we acknowledge that the communities we work with may not be able to read and write their own language, so the spoken language is the best way that we can get the information across to them.

Carolyn Harris: I could ask a thousand more questions, but I will hand over as I am conscious of the time.

Q19 **Chair:** Could I ask a quick question? I absolutely accept, agree and know that honour-based abuse is gendered and primarily directed at women. Where does a young man go?

Dr Siddiqui: The reputation of the family is primarily based on the behaviour of women, particularly their sexual conduct, so men who may have transgressed social norms may not experience abuse, harassment, ostracism or being disowned. Often, if they are part of an extended family network or a community, they will get support from other members of the community or their families—if they are not very conservative. If they are extremely conservative and reject a man because of honour-based abuse, it is usually smaller pockets of people within the community who would do so.

Men have wider sources of support and resources. They are also more able to access friendships. Women who face honour-based abuse are usually imprisoned and not allowed to go out and make friendships. Often, they are not even allowed to make female friendships, because of the way they are controlled within the home. Men will have a wider network of friendships and support. They are more likely to go out to work, they are more likely to study, and they will have access to wider resources. They are more likely to have money because they are allowed to work or have a career of their choice. It is also easier for them to access mainstream services.

Of course, there are barriers for men as well. There may be language barriers. There may be a lack of understanding of some of the cultural pressures that they may be under, and resources are generally limited for most people. But generally speaking, they have a greater ability to access networks of support within the community as well as outside it.

Q20 **Chair:** What if they are LGBTQ?

Dr Siddiqui: Of course they will experience discrimination. A lot of the time when men experience all those taboos, it is around sexuality and disability; those are two of the main reasons. Another reason may be because they are accused of corrupting a woman's reputation.

If it is around sexuality, they will experience discrimination within the community, and there will be limitations to what they may be able to access or to the understanding by mainstream services of the pressures they experience. There is a need for more resources to deal with LGBT issues as well as disability issues.

If you are looking at intersectionality, women generally experience greater forms of multiple discrimination and overlapping discrimination than men do in accessing services and in the kind of support for problems they experience with their communities.

Q21 **Dame Caroline Dinenage:** Thank you very much for coming in today. I am mindful of what we have heard already about how engagement with the police can provoke a whole range of other potential reprisals or repercussions if not dealt with properly. What practical steps can the police take to safely support victims, particularly when wider family and community networks might be involved?

Dr Siddiqui: There is a lot of guidance for the police at the moment, which they should follow. We helped to produce some of that multi-agency guidance, including for the police, around forced marriage and honour-based violence. We have provided a lot of support to working groups in all sorts of forums to try to improve police practice. I do not think they necessarily involve us in their training, which they should do because I would say their training is inconsistent, poor and needs improving.

We have come across good practice, where officers would take the issue seriously, see the warning signs straightaway, and understand the notion of the "one chance" rule, and the subtle, emotional blackmail pressures that perhaps are not so obvious—the coercive control that is culturally specific. That is what honour-based violence is: a culturally specific form of coercive control.

All the subtle pressures that a victim or survivor experiences are not always recognised by professionals. Where a professional does recognise them, or even if they are just treated as a domestic abuse case that requires protection, that is good practice. Even if they are not quite sure about all the issues and nuances of honour-based abuse and how it plays out, they can consult experts, but initially, in the first instance, they should be safeguarding and investigating.

We talked about the case of Banaz Mahmod, who was killed in an honour killing in 2006. She went to the police six times to try to get help to prevent her death. At that time, the police said, "We haven't had enough training. We still have to learn a lot." We supported her sister to give evidence, and she had all the problems with the police and social services herself.

Since then, a more recent case is the Solihull double murder, where we have also been supporting the family. Although that was reported as a domestic abuse case, it also had elements of honour-based abuse within it. That was not widely reported. The husband was very conservative and orthodox, and he wanted to control. On their wedding day, he said that in their culture they do not accept divorce and the only way that she would ever be free was when he killed her. Raneem Oudeh was killed, along with her mother, Khaola Saleem, who tried to defend her.

In that case, at the inquest the coroner found that the police materially contributed to their deaths, which means they failed at every level. There were eight incidences of 999 calls over a period of time. They failed to link up different reports. They were all seen as isolated incidents and not as a form of escalating abuse. Even though the DASH risk assessment is not very good on honour-based abuse, it was not even carried out properly at a very basic level for domestic abuse. They failed from the very beginning and they did not use the "one chance" rule.

There is supposed to be mandatory training on domestic abuse, but the officers did not actually attend. They do not understand honour-based violence. Only supervisors get trained in honour-based violence, and that is supposed to trickle down to the frontline response officers, but that just did not happen. I think the policing is still very problematic.

Even the 2015 inspectorate report said there were problems around recording and no-criming, and that is exactly what happened in Solihull: no-criming, no investigation, no safeguarding. That is something that we see. This is a more extreme case, but, on a routine basis, there is no-criming, no proper investigation, and a failure to safeguard. While we get some good practice by officers, more generally the problem is that there is an inconsistent response from the police, which leaves women vulnerable to honour-based abuse.

Q22 **Dame Caroline Dinenage:** Surwat, it seems to me that there are multiple opportunities for other agencies or statutory services to identify and intervene, particularly since we have heard that quite often the victims do not always recognise themselves as victims. How do you think services like schools and GP practices could better identify and support victims of honour-based violence? I hate calling it honour-based violence. It should be called shame—

Dr Siddiqui: "So-called honour" is what we call it.

Surwat Sohail: On the key issue that we are facing, there is training available for professionals, but it is very much a tick-box exercise. It does not really cover the different forms of honour-based abuse. The professionals are looking for the key words "honour-based abuse". The victims are not coming forward and saying, "I am a victim of honour-based abuse", and the issues are not being picked up.

I recently dealt with a case where a young girl came to us saying, "They are not picking up the high risk and what I am going through." In no way in those police records or social services was there mention of honour-based abuse. It was only when I sat down with her and took some information that I realised she had suffered honour-based abuse. When we took that information back to social services and the police, at that point they identified the high risk and then gave her full support.

The training is very much, as I said, a tick-box exercise. Some areas do have training; others don't. The training needs to be proper training that is delivered across the board. We are finding that you could have some very

good frontline response, but, equally, you have very poor response in some services.

Q23 **Dame Caroline Dinenage:** That is the police, but what about other statutory services? How can schools and GP services get involved and support potential victims?

Surwat Sohail: The same applies to other agencies. First, we must make sure that the teachers receive the training, and also young people. We have to go in early and ensure they understand. I did sessions with 750 children, and 95% of them could not even identify what is a forced marriage, what is honour-based abuse, and why it is abuse. That is quite concerning. During that session, a young person said, "If I have an issue I will turn to my teacher." When we said to the teacher, "Who would you turn to?", she said, "I would speak to the parents." Those comments are very concerning because, in those circumstances, contacting the parents puts the young person at heightened risk.

Dame Caroline Dinenage: Do you have anything to add, Hannana?

Dr Siddiqui: One agency that is responsible for safeguarding is social services, and they get involved in many cases where there are children. I find that there is a central contradiction in what social services are trying to do. On the one hand they try to keep the family together, and on the other hand they are supposed to be safeguarding. Usually, when it comes to harmful practices like forced marriage or the oppressive behaviour that young women or girls experience—for example, they are not allowed to go out or wear what they want—it as seen as teenagers who want too much freedom, and those practices are not seen as abusive or oppressive ones that are based around honour. Even if it is forced marriage, it is seen as an arranged marriage, which they see as culturally acceptable. They do not acknowledge the subtle pressures—or sometimes the not-so-subtle pressures—that may be involved in a forced marriage.

They do not want to see it as a form of abuse, because they do not want to be seen as culturally or religiously insensitive. They do not want to be seen as criticising minority cultures, and this happens across a lot of agencies. They need to do more to recognise honour-based abuse and to safeguard particularly teenagers and young women, but children generally, as well as supporting mothers, who may well be experiencing honour-based abuse and domestic abuse themselves. Usually, there is a failure to acknowledge their need to safeguard the adult as well as the child.

I think they do get involved in very dangerous practices, such as mediation and reconciliation, which reproduces what happens within the community: elders get involved in trying to keep the couples together, not challenging the abuse or protecting the victim. Increasingly, with the rise of religious fundamentalism, you have also seen the growth of religious arbitration within communities, and social services either get involved in those practices, collude in them, or turn a blind eye to them. They allow the communities to resolve their own problems. They need to be able to

address it as a child abuse issue, not get involved in mediation and reconciliation.

In fact, in Bekhal Mahmod's case—the sister of Banaz Mahmod—they actually mediated between her parents and Bekhal when she was in foster care, having escaped a forced marriage and abuse from her family. They handed over a tape from the father that was in Kurdish, which they had not checked, because the social worker wanted her to go back home and had been very friendly with her parents, who said "All we want to do is protect our daughters" and denied any form of abuse. When Bekhal listened to that tape, he was threatening to kill her and the whole family if she did not come home, and she then did go home, because she was frightened that her whole family would be killed. This is how social services—even if it is unwittingly done—get involved in the mediation process.

In another case, the social services had taken a young woman into care because she was experiencing violence from her mother, who also wanted to force her into marriage. In fact, they had taken the young woman and the boy into care; one daughter, who was a bit older, had stayed at home. Now, the mother persuaded the children to go back home, social services allowed that, and then the mother persuaded them to go overseas. Even though the social worker knew that there was a possibility that they could be forced into marriage, they did nothing to stop them going overseas after they had been into care. They could have got a forced marriage protection order. They didn't even have to put them into care—they could have just got the order and prevented them—so again, there was just a failure to take that proactive approach in order to protect victims.

Q24 **Dame Caroline Dinenage:** Hannana, what are the key differences that the authorities and the services need to look out for? We heard earlier from some of the witnesses—I think you were here—that sometimes, so-called honour-based violence gets misclassified as domestic violence, and therefore the data collection may not all be right. What are the key differences that people need to look out for?

Dr Siddiqui: Obviously, you have to establish that the motivation was around honour—was that abuse, whatever it was, justified or perpetrated in the name of honour? When it comes to the key differences that we have found, it usually involves the collective. It is not necessarily just an individual trying to force someone into a forced marriage; usually, it is the wider group. It could be the wider extended family or the community. Usually there are multiple perpetrators, not necessarily just one perpetrator, and that is why they are also high risk. They are higher risk than normal domestic abuse cases because there are multiple perpetrators and there can also be multiple victims.

If one woman is being forced into a marriage, her siblings may be as well. A number of people are affected, as perpetrators and as victims. Usually it is more organised; it is more conspiratorial, because of the codes of honour that the family or the community are trying to protect. It can involve the whole extended family and it can involve members of the

community who may not be part of the family. Sometimes it can involve community leaders. It is about trying to pick up on all those warning signs so you can see that this is actually part of a wider code of honour that is being used to justify the violence. The main aim is restoring and maintaining honour; you may kill someone, force them into suicide or be violent toward them because you are trying to protect or restore the honour of the family.

Sometimes pressures are very subtle. They could be social expectations and emotional blackmail, such as, "You will be disowned by the family", "You are bringing disrespect on to your parents, who are dying of old age or have a bad heart", "You should go abroad". Another big sign is if they are being persuaded to go abroad. People do not always realise that there is a very strong international, transnational connection in many of these cases, particularly around forced marriage, honour-based abuse, abandonment, abduction, FGM, dowry abuse and, of course, honour killings and honour-based violence. A lot of the time women are taken abroad; they are abandoned or subjected to violence there, and they are not allowed to come back into this country. They could then be killed there or imprisoned, held or abandoned there. Those elements are usually not recognised; they are the hardest elements to deal with.

The British police often feel that, when something happens overseas, they have no responsibility for it here, but they may do; the perpetrators might have conspired from the UK and may be living in the UK. They may have been part of the planning, or even carrying out the abuse on that visit when they went overseas. The British police do have a responsibility, as does the Foreign Office.

We often find in some transnational cases—for example, honour killings—that the Foreign Office feels it cannot do anything even if the person is a British national. Families who are trying to get the victim back into the UK and who are supportive—or maybe bereaved, because the victim died and they want some kind of justice—feel that they do not get support from the British police or the British Government when someone dies or is hurt overseas. These are big areas that are big gaps in terms of how the Government or the state are failing to deal with honour-based abuse.

Dame Caroline Dinenage: I have a couple of questions left, Chair, but now that Diana has joined us I thought I would pass back to you.

Q25 **Chair:** I was going to say, can we bring Diana in? Thank you so much for making it; I gather that transport has been challenging out there today. Can I ask you to briefly outline the groups you work with, and the challenges that both you and they face?

Diana Nammi: Thank you everyone; I sincerely apologise for being late. I am the director and founder of IKWRO, a women's rights organisation. The organisation was set up in 2002, when my interpreter became a victim of honour killing. At that time, when I called the police, they told me, "This is your culture" when I told them that it was an honour killing. Her husband took her back from the UK—she was a British citizen—and they killed her

there in Iraq. When I told police about this story, they told me, "This is your culture. We have to respect that, otherwise you will call us racist".

I was thinking, "A woman such as my interpreter, who could speak English very well—she had no problem—and even had access to the police was killed, and now they are telling me, 'It is your culture.'" This issue has been justified in the name of culture, whereas in my opinion it was a crime and should be considered as such—not the culture.

That was why I established IKWRO. At that time, we called it the Iranian and Kurdish Women's Rights Organisation to help only Iranian and Kurdish women, but our clients have become much wider. We have received women from all over the middle east and south Asia. We decided we had to take out the barrier in the name and now we serve all women from middle eastern, north African and Afghan backgrounds, in the languages Farsi, Kurdish, Dari, Arabic and Turkish.

The women we are serving are all at risk of or have been harmed by honour-based abuse, forced marriage, child marriage, female genital mutilation, virginity testing, and any other form of violence, as Hannana mentioned.

Q26 **Chair:** How good do you feel that the police are in identifying the difference—making the distinction between honour-based abuse and other forms of domestic abuse?

Diana Nammi: It is not an easy task for police officers. It is a lottery for many women to find a police officer who is up to date. I am talking here after nearly 20 years of our organisation fighting in this field for this to be identified as a form of violence against women.

Recently, we had a case, not in London but in another city, when the police went in for a woman who had been beaten by her husband. The neighbours called the police twice—she did not call them. Both times, when the police came to the home, the husband ordered her to cover herself with a blanket and tell the police that she was ill. The police did not take her to another room; they asked her, in front of her husband, if she was okay or not. Things like that still happen. It is scary. In London, it is a bit better, but in many other cities, this is a huge problem, and it has damaged the trust in the police, and in other people.

It is not only the police. It is social services. That is another big organisation that does not do the recording. In research we did in 2020, we noted that social services did not record 50% of forced marriages in the UK. That means that forced marriages and child marriages happened and they knew about them, but they did not record them. That is another area that we need to look at. Housing is another one.

Q27 **Dame Caroline Dinenage:** To what extent are your organisations and others funded by the Government, and via which funding streams? The violence against women and girls strategy states the need to work with community advocates. I want to know whether that is happening, and what your view is on that—whether you are working with the Government

and local government, and to what extent they are asking for your expertise, and what more the Government could do to better support specialist service providers like yourselves. Diana, can we start with you?

Diana Nammi: Yes, of course. About 45% of our funding is from government, which is very good—that is very helpful—but mainly it is from London Councils, which very much encourages us to focus on London. We have good funds from other projects, specifically for counselling and for our refuge. We have a refuge and we have a team of counsellors. This funding is great—we are grateful—and it is very helpful in terms of having our professional advisers and workers in place to be able to help and, in reality, save lives.

One of the problems is that our organisations need national funding. Nearly 50% of our clients are from outside London, but our funding restricts us to London. We cannot tell them just to go to another organisation. Especially if they trust your organisation and speak the same language, you cannot just turn them down. The other problem is that all the Government funding is either for one or two years, so small organisations like us spend lots of energy and resources worrying about fundraising, applying for funds and reporting.

I think funding is crucial. It needs to be for a longer period. We need funding especially for Black and minoritised communities, which are really suffering much harder, especially during corona and now due to the cost of living crisis, which affects our clients very badly. We are a fairly small middle eastern community that has been established in the UK for about 40 years, so our clients are more isolated. In the case of honour killing, they haven't got community support or the support of friends. They live on small amounts of money from charities like us, Southall Black Sisters and other organisations.

With no recourse to public funds, it is even harder. Every month, we pay nearly £1,500 just to support women from minority communities in hotels or refuges. The problem is that many refuges don't take them easily because they have no recourse to public funds. Because the funding from the Government is for a very short time, most refuges are worried about losing money, so they don't accept them. We pay from our reserves or from the donations we get from people to support women. They spend about two weeks in a hotel before we find them a safe place. All that funding, from the no recourse fund to other needs that women have—we might fund small, old computers for them—costs money, which puts a strain on small organisations like us.

Surwat Sohail: To add to what Diana said, funding for smaller providers, especially specialist by-and-for organisations, is a huge issue. We have seen two thirds of the specialist sector just vanish, and those that are left are under extreme pressure because we cannot deal with the number of cases that come forward. Last year, we had an increase of 435. The result of that was that we lost staff, because there were no other services that we could refer them on to.

Our refuge service has been without any local authority funding for over 15 years. We rely on small pockets of funding from various funders, including the National Lottery and the Tudor Trust, which is very short term. When there is no security for the staff, because it could be a year's or two years' funding, we lose them and then we have retention issues.

Funding for smaller specialised projects that support forced marriage and honour-based abuse is a huge issue. Our local West Midlands PCC has come forward and provided a lot of support. We have now set up the UK's first forced marriage and honour-based abuse hub, where we have specialised staff delivering a range of services.

Dame Caroline Dinenage: Thank you. Hannana, very quickly.

Dr Siddiqui: We have about 20 different sources of funding. Some of it includes Government funding, but we have really had to fight for it every time. It is really hard to get that money consistently and for a longer period of time. We think holistic services are crucial in order to help women with a range of issues that they need to address.

We have a no recourse fund, which again, is dependent on donations. We are currently running the Home Office pilot, which is due to end at the end of March 2023. After that, we don't know how we are going to fund cases with no recourse to public funds.

Nationally, there needs to be ringfenced central Government funding that is focused on by-and-for services. At the moment there is a pot, but it is not a very large amount and it does not necessarily focus just on Black and minority women's organisations like ourselves; it is a much wider fund for other by-and-for services. Imkaan has estimated that we need about £97 million per year for by-and-for specialist services for women in respect of gender-based violence in Black and minority communities in order to really meet the need out there.

The Domestic Abuse Commissioner's recent report said that by-and-for services are six times less likely to get funding from Government than other services more generally. Historically, they have been underfunded, so it is really important that for those services to survive, develop and thrive, they need more funding. They need not only state funding but more political support, because sometimes, due to discrimination, those services do not get the political support that they need. It is also problematic that if the state fails to give us support, we do not get it from the community or from religious leaders within our own communities. We need that support in order to say that these services need to exist because they enable survivors and victims to escape honour-based abuse.

Q28 **Chair:** Can I ask you to expand on the comment that due to discrimination—that was the term you used—services for Black and minoritised communities do not get the funding they need?

Dr Siddiqui: To give you an example, in 2008 we had to go to court because our local authority tried to cut the specialist services for Black and minority women and domestic abuse that we were providing. They wanted

a more generic service. They said that race inequality no longer existed so they did not need specialist services—but race inequality has increased, particularly in a borough with a large south Asian community, and a whole range of other minority communities whose needs they were not really addressing. The courts found in our favour: they said that the council had failed to carry out a full equality impact assessment and that the council was actually racially discriminating against women who face domestic abuse.

Q29 **Chair:** I have a quick question to finish. On the impact of both covid and the cost of living crisis, can you all briefly tell me whether that has seen an increase in honour-based abuse? How has that manifested itself? Let us start with Diana.

Diana Nammi: Yes, it has definitely had an effect. During coronavirus we had a considerable increase in the number of clients coming to us, especially during lockdown when the family were together. The cases of HBV increased. Also, because of the cost of living crisis many men especially become more aggressive towards women because of the stress and everything. So it has been increasing and I am sure it will increase in future as well.

Chair: Thank you. Surwat?

Surwat Sohail: The cases increased. One of the things we did was speak to some of the victims who came forward, and it was alarming to hear a lot of them say, "I've always been a victim but I put up with it because he used to go to work and I had to put up with him for only a few hours. Because he is now home 24 hours I can no longer put up with it and that is why I have come forward to get help." It is sad that somebody has lived for many years with the abuse and left only because it was prolonged for the whole of the day. We saw a very significant increase. Some of the figures I shared before were from during the pandemic, when we had a 435% increase in the number of cases coming forward.

Chair: Thank you. Hannana?

Dr Siddiqui: We saw a surge during covid. I think there was an increase of about 46% in our overall figures for the first year of covid. We found a particular problem for women who were facing domestic abuse and honour-based abuse and who were migrant women who had insecure immigration status and no recourse to public funds. They do not always take in refugees, because they have no recourse, but even if we funded their placement for a while it was really hard to get them into a refuge, because they were over-subscribed. Women could not move out because of covid and the lockdown. We had to set up our own hotel project, for which eventually we luckily got funded by MOPAC—national Government would not fund it—to house women with no recourse to public funds, because there was just a surge in demand in those cases. We had to set up a specialist project to avoid destitution and homelessness and to encourage them to come out and come forward.

Of course the cost of living crisis is having an impact, and not only on our no recourse fund. We have had to increase the amount of money we can give to women. It is still below universal credit rates and is therefore not sufficient. Women, and particularly migrant women, still do not have enough money to deal with day-to-day living. One of the saddest comments that one of the women made was when she said to me, "I only eat in the evenings. I only eat toast and I have hot chocolate because I cannot afford not to feed the children or keep them warm." She is depriving herself and sacrificing her own need for the needs of her children. That story is repeated everywhere.

Q30 **Chair:** Thank you. If there is any more information that you want to send to the Committee, please do so in writing. We would be pleased to hear from you if there is anything that you feel we have not asked that we should have asked, so please do let us know.

Dr Siddiqui: Can I just say something about the law? Banaz's law is one of the things we are campaigning for. It is based on the case of Banaz Mahmod. Her sister is campaigning for Banaz's law to prevent the use of religious and cultural defences to justify violence against women and girls. We want to see it as an aggravating factor in sentencing. We think that it will prevent agencies from ignoring the problem in order to be culturally sensitive. We also think it will change norms and values within the community. We will send you more information about that.

Chair: Brilliant. Thank you very much.