



House of Commons
Women and Equalities
Committee

**So-called honour-based
abuse: Government
response to the
Committee's Sixth
Report**

**Sixth Special Report of Session 2022–
23**

*Ordered by the House of Commons
to be printed 13 September 2023*

Women and Equalities Committee

The Women and Equalities Committee is appointed by the House of Commons to examine the expenditure, administration and policy of the Government Equalities Office (GEO).

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Sixth Special Report

The Committee published its Sixth Report of Session 2022–23, [So-called honour-based abuse](#) (HC 831), on 19 July 2023. A letter from the Home Secretary and the Government response to the Report were received on 1 September 2023 and are appended below.

Appendix 1: Letter from the Home Secretary, 1 September 2023

Government response to the 'So-called honour-based abuse' inquiry report

The Government recognises that so-called 'honour'-based abuse (HBA) is a terrible form of abuse, and we are clear that we will not allow political or cultural sensitivities to get in the way of tackling it. No-one should suffer because of who they are or what community they are born into.

We are grateful to the Women and Equalities Committee for launching the inquiry on HBA and for thoroughly investigating this very important area that we are committed to tackling.

We know that HBA can have long-lasting impacts on victims. The most recent published annual data shows that across the year to March 2022, the police in England and Wales flagged 2,887 offences as HBA-related, including 141 relating to forced marriage and 77 relating to female genital mutilation (FGM). In the same time period, they also recorded 1,871 HBA-related incidents that had not resulted in the recording of a notifiable crime. Publicly available Ministry of Justice data on the Family Justice Quarterly Series show that 3,523 Forced Marriage Protection Orders were made in the period 25 November 2008 to 31 March 2023 and 840 FGM Protection Orders were made in the period 17 July 2015 to 31 March 2023.

Ending these practices in all their forms is a key priority and commitment in our cross-Government Tackling Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG) Strategy, which we published in July 2021. We have significantly strengthened the law on FGM and forced marriage by introducing a forced marriage offence; expanding the remit of that offence to include causing a child to marry in all circumstances, even if coercion is not used; criminalising the breach of Forced Marriage Protection Orders; and introducing anonymity for victims of FGM and forced marriage. In addition to this, on 1 July 2022, we criminalised 'virginity testing' through the Health and Care Act 2022 and we will be producing a programme of education in community, education and clinical settings to tackle the misperceptions and misbeliefs surrounding the practice.

We welcome the Committee's recognition of our targeted funding at smaller organisations to address the fact that smaller, community based HBA organisations may have less capacity to apply for public funding than larger organisations. In particular, we have tailored the design of commercial competitions accordingly: for example, providing more time than

is standard and promoting consortium bidding arrangements. In November 2022, we launched an £8.3 million fund, covering financial years 2023/24 and 2024/25, for 'by and for' and specialist organisations – categories which cover many HBA organisations.

As the Committee has acknowledged in this report, through the Tackling VAWG Strategy, we engaged the University of Birmingham to conduct a feasibility study on whether it is possible to provide up to date, rigorous estimations of the prevalence of FGM (and forced marriage) in England and Wales, given those crimes' hidden nature and lack of robust estimates. In addition, to increase the understanding of HBA, we are seeking out community advocates who will talk to community audiences to explain why HBA crimes are wrong, and we will provide them with resources to back up the messages.

We are aiming to effect truly systemic and cultural change through the Tackling VAWG Strategy and across a range of related strands of work. We must be honest that it will take time for the benefits of these changes to be felt nationally and be reflected in the data. However, our response to the Committee's report outlines our commitment to deliver positive outcomes for victims of these crimes and terrible forms of abuse.

I thank you and the members of the Women and Equalities Committee for your investigation and report into this vitally important matter.

RT HON SUELLA BRAVERMAN MP

HOME SECRETARY

1 SEPTEMBER 2023

Appendix 2: Government Response

Introduction

The Government is grateful to the Women and Equalities Committee for its consideration of this important issue. We would like to extend gratitude in particular to those witnesses with lived experience of so-called 'honour'-based abuse (HBA) that provided evidence to the Committee.

The Government recognises that HBA is a terrible form of abuse, and we are clear that we will not allow political or cultural sensitivities to get in the way of tackling it. No-one should suffer because of who they are or what community they are born into. To tackle forced marriage, we made forced marriage a criminal offence in 2014 to better protect victims and send a clear message that this practice is unacceptable and will not be tolerated in the UK. And in 2017 we introduced lifelong anonymity for victims of forced marriage to encourage more victims of this hidden crime to come forward.

The Government has demonstrated its commitment to strengthening the response to violence against women and girls. In July 2021, the Government published its new Tackling Violence Against Women and Girls Strategy (VAWG), which was shaped by the public's views, with over 180,000 people responding to a public call for evidence. The Strategy focuses on delivering lasting change in the pursuit of perpetrators, the support of victims, and the prevention of crimes that disproportionately affect women and girls. Through the Tackling VAWG Strategy, we have already supported the appointment of a full-time National Policing Lead for VAWG, DCC Maggie Blyth. A key part of DCC Blyth's role is effecting change in the way that VAWG crimes are policed and building women's trust and confidence in policing.

Through the Tackling VAWG Strategy, we have committed to ending these practices in all their forms and we have significantly strengthened the law on female genital mutilation (FGM) and forced marriage.

On 1 July 2022, we criminalised 'virginity testing' through the Health and Care Act 2022. The ban was accompanied by a programme of education in community, education and clinical settings to tackle the misperceptions and misbeliefs surrounding the practice.

On 27 February 2023 we brought into force legislation which raises the minimum age of marriage and civil partnership in England and Wales to 18 and expands the offence of forced marriage such that it is illegal to do anything to cause a child to marry before they turn 18, even if coercion is not used.

The joint Home Office and Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office Forced Marriage Unit (FMU) provides support and advice for victims, those at risk, and professionals, through its public helpline. The Unit can provide advice and assistance to victims both before and after reporting to the police, and if they choose not to report at all. The support offered ranges from providing information and guidance to organising repatriation to the UK (for victims overseas).

The FMU's ongoing outreach programme delivers training and awareness raising sessions for professionals and communities across the country. The FMU carries out regular

training sessions for police officers and for social workers. In 2022 it delivered training and awareness-raising activity to 1,537 police officers, social workers and other professionals. In addition, there is statutory multi-agency guidance for professionals, to which we published extensive updates in March 2022, and free e-learning to help professionals to recognise the warning signs of forced marriage and ensure that the right action is taken to help protect those at risk. The FMU has also produced a leaflet aimed directly at victims – [“What Is Forced Marriage?”](#) – in 12 languages.

The FMU also provides £25,000 a year to Southall Black Sisters to support victims of forced marriage who have returned to the UK from overseas. The funding covers being met at a London airport, temporary accommodation, food and personal items in the initial weeks, and support in dealing with statutory services.

The Government has also funded Karma Nirvana's national HBA helpline for many years. Most recently we have been providing up to £165,000, which enabled Karma Nirvana to provide support to 2,547 victims between April 2022 and March 2023.

Lastly, in November 2022, we launched an £8.3 million fund, covering financial years 2023/24 and 2024/25, for 'by and for' and specialist organisations – categories which cover many HBA organisations.

Our response to each of the Committee's recommendations posed to the Government and its partners are set out below.

Challenges in recording honour-based abuse

Recommendation 1 (Page 14)

The Home Office, National Police Chiefs' Council and College of Policing should publish refreshed guidance for forces on how to accurately and consistently record incidents of honour-based abuse. The Home Office should instruct police forces across England and Wales to collect specific information on victims and perpetrators of honour-based abuse, including data on their protected characteristics, and to report this to the Home Office as part of the existing Annual Data Requirement.

The Home Office's vision is that all police forces in England and Wales have the best crime recording system in the world: one that is consistently applied; delivers accurate statistics that are trusted by the public and puts the needs of victims at its core.

The Home Office publishes Crime Recording Rules to help to ensure that crimes are recorded consistently and accurately and has recently revised the rules making them less bureaucratic and providing clearer, up-to-date guidance to officers. In direct response to this recommendation, a specific area is being developed within the document providing greater clarity around what information and data should be collected from victims of HBA. This will also support officers and staff in better understanding HBA. Once completed this will be communicated to all forces in England and Wales.

The Home Office encourages forces to collect information on the protected characteristics of victims and suspects where it is practical and appropriate to do so. We will continue to keep this under review.

We recognise that the recording of high-quality data is critical to police performance and public confidence. We know that the police are already taking action in this area and are working with partners to agree national data standards for recording protected characteristics, including ethnicity and race.

Recommendation 2 (Page 14)

The Department of Health and Social Care and the Department of Education should add options for honour-based abuse to both the ‘primary need at first social work assessment’ and ‘factors identified at the end of the assessment’ categories in the ‘Children in need’ census.

The Department for Education is responsible for the annual children in need census - which collects individual assessment information and child characteristics for each child that has been referred to children’s social care services in England - and is considering the Committee’s feedback and recommendation for future collections.

Recognising honour-based abuse

Recommendation 3 (Page 20)

In response to this Report, the Government should set out the progress made in implementing the national training package for frontline police officers on recognising so-called honour-based abuse. The Government must also set out the steps it will take to ensure those working in other safeguarding roles, including in social services and education, are trained to recognise honour-based abuse and not deterred from tackling it by cultural sensitivity.

We recognise the importance of professionals having the right skills and understanding to respond effectively to HBA. We are clear that cultural sensitivities must not be a barrier to tackling these crimes.

That is why the Home Office provides free e-learning courses on FGM¹ and forced marriage² for professionals (including police officers, social workers, and teachers), with specific chapters for a range of professions to help them recognise the warning signs and ensure that the right action is taken to help protect those at risk. In 2022, 5,209 people from a wide range of professions completed the “Awareness of Forced Marriage” course and 51,298 people completed the “Recognising and Preventing FGM” course. We have also published statutory multi-agency guidance for both FGM³ and forced marriage⁴, as well as publishing an FGM⁵ and forced marriage⁶ resource pack which features specific guidance for a range of professionals including police, teachers, social workers and health care professionals.

In addition, the College of Policing has developed a briefing note to support first responders in addressing HBA. The College issued a call for practice to all forces in 2020 and developed

1 <https://www.virtual-college.co.uk/resources/free-courses/recognising-and-preventing-fgm>

2 <https://www.virtual-college.co.uk/resources/free-courses/awareness-of-forced-marriage>

3 [Multi-agency statutory guidance on female genital mutilation - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/101444/multi-agency-guidance-on-female-genital-mutilation.pdf)

4 [Multi-agency statutory guidance for dealing with forced marriage and multi-agency practice guidelines: Handling cases of forced marriage \(accessible version\) - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/101444/multi-agency-guidance-for-dealing-with-forced-marriage-and-multi-agency-practice-guidelines-handling-cases-of-forced-marriage-accessible-version.pdf)

5 [Female genital mutilation: resource pack - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/101444/female-genital-mutilation-resource-pack.pdf)

6 [Forced marriage resource pack - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/101444/forced-marriage-resource-pack.pdf)

a paper setting out approaches used by different forces – this enables all forces to learn from the experience of colleagues. The College has also developed a national training package called 'Family Disturbance'. It is focused on HBA, forced marriage and female genital mutilation (FGM). It has been available for two years.

All information about College products is available on a single page on the College website along with links to other sources of information, such as [CPS Forced marriage and honour based abuse | College of Policing](#).

The joint Home Office and Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office Forced Marriage Unit's (FMU) delivers training sessions for police officers, social workers and others. In 2022 it delivered training and awareness-raising activity to 1,537 police officers, social workers and other professionals. The FMU has also developed a bespoke training package for registrars, in collaboration with the General Registry Office and this is being delivered nationally every quarter.

Responsibility for the Social Work profession is shared between the Department of Health and Social Care (DHSC) and the Department for Education (DfE). The Departments share a policy of increasing the quality of social work education and training (and thereby social workers), alongside a joint commitment to maintaining a sufficient supply of social workers with the right skills, knowledge and values to work with adults, children and families.

Social work is an academic and practice-based degree. Qualification is via a 3-year undergraduate degree or a 1–2-year postgraduate degree. Course modules include case studies and practice placements which are designed to provide students with essential practice skills and knowledge to work with people, young children, and families with a range of needs applying theoretical and legislative frameworks.

Students learn the different types of abuse and neglect, how to identify and report concerns, and how to work with other professionals to protect children, young people, and adults. All courses are accredited by the regulator Social Work England, responsible for professional education and accreditation of courses and practice standards.

Once qualified, social workers need to maintain their professional credibility and qualification through undertaking annual Continuous Professional Development (CPD) activities which includes safeguarding and registering with the profession regulator Social Work England.

Social Work England (SWE) set out the professional standards a social worker must know, understand and be able to put into effect. SWE has implemented new, tougher, education and training standards and is assessing and approving all social work education and training courses against those standards.

Local authorities are responsible for developing their workforces, including social workers. To support child and family social workers to continuously improve their practice, the Department for Education (DfE) has developed the Post Qualifying Standards for child and family social work, which set out the skills, knowledge and behaviours social workers need to protect vulnerable children and families. Knowledge and Skills Statement Five specifically refers to considering the possibility of FGM and forced marriage, and the range of adult behaviours which pose a risk to children. The new Early Career Framework,

which will build on the post-qualifying standards, will significantly extend the training and support social workers receive in the early stages of their career, helping to equip them with the knowledge skills they need to support children and families.

Recommendation 4 (Page 20)

The Government must include specific questions on honour-based abuse in the Domestic Abuse Risk Assessment tool to help both victims and police officers identify risks confidently and accurately.

The College of Policing's Evidence Based Guidelines highlight that risk assessment should be seen as an investigative exercise based on using 'professional Curiosity and excellent Communication to identify Clues' (the '3Cs'). Risk assessment tools should be viewed as aids to assist in investigation but cannot provide definitive question sets for every abusive scenario. Police responders and investigators need to use their skills and knowledge to investigate vulnerability and risk, using risk assessment tools to support their professional judgement. Confidently and accurately identifying HBA may best be achieved through understanding of underlying behaviours and threats than through questions on a risk assessment.

Police forces are adopting the Domestic Abuse Risk Assessment (DARA) following recommendation by the College of Policing and the National Police Chiefs' Council.

Research by the College of Policing and Cardiff University has suggested the existing honour-based violence risk identification, assessment and management model DASH – is less suited to first response. The question set for DARA was established and refined following research and evaluation that is publicly available in the [National Police Library](#).

A key aim of the DARA is to help victims disclose and officers better identify coercive or controlling behaviour. As HBA is frequently underpinned by coercive control, a greater focus on these abusive behaviours will help officers to identify risk.

The decision not to include questions referencing HBA in DARA was discussed with practitioners and academic experts. The College concluded that there should not be specific questions because:

- some victims do not identify with terms such as 'honour';
- a question or questions specifically referencing HBA would not be applicable to the vast majority of domestic abuse victims, and when such questions are included in risk assessments officers can become cynical about it being a 'tick box exercise'; and
- coercive or controlling behaviour underpins much domestic abuse and HBA and behavioural questions can be operationalised effectively across the majority of cases.

Officers are prompted to consider HBA when detailing their general assessment of the threat posed to the victim at the end of the DARA. Forces who tested the DARA did not report any significant impact on recorded cases of HBA.

The Home Office will continue to engage with the College of Policing on this.

Education and RSHE

Recommendation 5 (Page 21)

The Government is currently reviewing the content of relationships, sex and health education (RSHE) taught in schools. It is clear from the evidence we received that the teaching of honour-based abuse is currently inadequate. The ongoing review of RSHE should consider how the teaching of honour-based abuse should be improved across educational settings.

The review of the RSHE statutory guidance, originally planned for September 2023, has been brought forward due to concerns about inappropriate materials being used to teach sex education in schools.

The first phase of the review of the RSHE statutory guidance started in March 2023. The review is looking at whether the coverage of the statutory guidance is right, both in terms of ensuring teaching is safe and age-appropriate and whether it can be strengthened on certain topics, such as suicide prevention, sexual harassment and the dangers of vaping.

The existing statutory guidance includes content on delivery and teaching strategies and DfE has contracted with IFF Research to undertake quantitative and qualitative research to understand the quality of implementation, including teacher confidence in teaching the statutory requirements. This research will help us to understand barriers and facilities to quality implementation, to inform any further support offers. We anticipate that the final report from IFF Research will be published in early 2024.

HBA is taught about as part of the 'being safe topic' which says pupils should know the concepts of, and laws relating to forced marriage, honour-based violence and FGM. The Department for Education's teacher training module [Teacher training: being safe - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/teacher-training-being-safe) includes the detail of what teachers should be covering, including types of honour based violence, forces marriage, forced marriage and the law and how to get help.

A shared definition and shared understanding

Recommendation 6 (Page 24)

The Government should introduce a statutory definition of honour-based abuse. It should consult a wide range of experts, specialist by-and-for services and survivors of honour-based abuse on framing the definition using the existing Crown Prosecution Service definition as a starting point. The definition, once finalised, should be accompanied by statutory multi-agency guidance.

The Government recognises the importance of ensuring that professionals recognise and understand HBA. There is a clear non-statutory definition which both the Home Office and the CPS already use: *"an incident or crime involving violence, threats of violence, intimidation, coercion or abuse (including psychological, physical, sexual, financial or emotional abuse) which has or may have been committed to protect or defend the honour of an individual, family and/or community for alleged or perceived breaches of the family and/or community's code of behaviour"*. In addition we have published statutory guidance on

both FGM and forced marriage which professionals are legally required to have regard to. It is not clear that making the definition statutory would improve understanding of or the response to these crimes, however, we will continue to keep this under review.

Supporting victims and reforming the law - migrant victims

Recommendation 7 (Page 28)

The Government should establish an appropriate firewall-type mechanism between the police and the Home Office to prevent data sharing for the purposes of enforcing immigration rules against victims of abuse. The firewall should be designed to ensure the police only share information with Immigration Enforcement on victims in exceptional circumstances, which must be narrowly defined and be for the purposes of assisting in the safeguarding of the individual or taking action against their abuser. If and when police become aware a victim has irregular immigration status, they should provide that person with information about local support services (including legal advice) and encourage them to seek advice on regularising their status. The National Police Chiefs' Council guidance should be updated to reflect this.

The Immigration and Asylum Act 1999 permits the Home Office to share and receive information, including with public authorities and law enforcement partners for the purpose of crime prevention, detection and effective immigration control, respectively. Keeping our communities and the vulnerable safe is work that those within the Home Office are proud to prioritise on a daily basis.

It is in the public interest that individuals without lawful status are brought into the immigration system to enable their status to be resolved. It may also protect the public, including vulnerable migrants, from individuals who are considered a harm to their local communities.

The immediate priority is always the welfare of the individual and to ensure that all vulnerable migrants receive the support and assistance they need regardless of their immigration status. Victims of crime must be treated first and foremost as victims. Before any enforcement action is taken on a person who is found to have no legal basis to remain in the UK, the details of the case are carefully considered.

It would not be appropriate to introduce such restrictions on data sharing as it is important to preserve the police's ability to work with the Home Office to help resolve a victim's uncertainty about their immigration status and so remove the perpetrator's ability to control and manipulate them because of their status. A firewall would not prevent a perpetrator referring a victim directly to immigration enforcement.

The Home Office remains committed to introducing an Immigration Enforcement Migrant Victims Protocol for migrant victims of crime. The protocol will give greater transparency to migrant victims and their dependents on how their data will be shared and will set out that no immigration enforcement action should be taken against that victim while investigation and prosecution proceedings are ongoing, and the victim is receiving support and advice to make an application to regularise their stay. The Protocol will be implemented later this year.

The NPCC guidance *[Information sharing with the Home Office where a victim or witness of crime is a suspected immigration offender](#)* already sets out under what circumstances police should share information with Immigration Enforcement and specifies that when someone reports a crime, the police must always, first and foremost, treat them as a victim, and that police must never check a database solely to establish a victim's immigration status.

The guidance also sets out that when an individual reports as a victim of crime the focus will always be to investigate the allegation and put in place reasonable measures to protect the victim from harm. It refers officers to the College of Policing's guidance on initiating support and protection for victims of domestic abuse within the Major Investigations and Public Protection Authorised Professional Practice⁷ which guides officers to measures to protect the victim and signpost to local support services. It would not be practical for the police to encourage victims to seek advice on regularising their stay if they are unaware of the victim's status due to a firewall.

Funding for specialist services

Recommendation 8 (Page 30)

The Government should increase the funding available to by-and-for services that support victims of honour-based abuse. The Government should commit to providing this funding across multiple years. It should also assess the merits of that funding being made available in a simple grant form so it is accessible to smaller organisations which lack the resources to compete with larger providers in complex commissioning processes.

The Government is grateful to HBA charities for the vital work they do. We understand the particular difficulties faced by HBA charities in bidding for funding, so we have sought to make it easier for them, for example, by promoting consortium bidding arrangements and providing more time than is standard for applications.

In November 2022, we commenced an open commercial competition – the VAWG Specialist and Support Services Fund - which included £8.3m of funding for 'by and for' and specialist services, across financial years 2023/24 and 2024/25. These services cover many HBA organisations: for example, we are funding the Police and Crime Commissioner for Cheshire who are working with Savera UK to increase reporting of FGM and forced marriage. In addition, Refuge are being funded to work collaboratively with specialist by-and-for organisations to support them in responding effectively to the risks of facilitated abuse through training, which will also include support for victims of HBA. This will enable vital services, which are based in the communities they serve, to support victims often facing the greatest barriers to getting the help they need.

The Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG) National Statement of Expectations and Commissioning Toolkit⁸, which we published in March 2022, provides support to those commissioning services at a local level, this includes guidance to help them understand the importance of and considerations which apply in relation to the provision of 'by and for' and specialist services.

7 [First response | College of Policing](#)

8 [Commissioning services to tackle violence against women and girls - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)

Support for victims with no recourse to public funds

Recommendation 9 (Page 34)

The Support for Migrant Victims Scheme pilot has been valuable and we welcome its extension to 2025. However, there are shortfalls in funding to support victims with no recourse to public funds. We are concerned this is aggravated by the Government's reservation on Article 59 of the Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence (the 'Istanbul Convention'). In order to help limit perpetrators' ability to use a victim's immigration status as a tool for control, the Government should reconsider its reservation to Article 59 of the Istanbul Convention. It should also consider extending eligibility to the Destitute Domestic Violence Concession scheme and Domestic Violence Indefinite Leave to Remain to all migrant victims.

We are carefully considering the findings of the Support for Migrant Victims Scheme pilot evaluation. Once we have considered all the evidence in the round, we will communicate our decision on the Article 59 reservation.

In the interim, we have provided £1.4million of funding per year since April 2021 and will continue to fund the scheme and support migrant victims until 2024–25.

Male victims

Recommendation 10 (Page 37)

We recognise the overwhelming majority of victims of honour-based abuse are female, but this must not detract from the experiences of male victims. We are concerned the inclusion of men and boys in strategies primarily aimed at women and girls fails to empower male victims and can contribute to underreporting. The Government should consider introducing a distinct honour-based abuse strategy aimed at male victims, parallel to that aimed at women and girls. Such a strategy might empower male victims to report the crimes committed against them and to seek support.

We recognise that men can also be victims of these crimes and are committed to ensuring that all victims and survivors of HBA receive the support they deserve.

Both the cross-Government Tackling Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG) Strategy⁹ published in July 2021, and the Tackling Domestic Abuse Plan¹⁰ published in March 2022 are clear that the commitments they include apply equally to all victims and survivors of these crimes, including male victims.

The Government recognises that male victims of these crimes may face specific challenges. That is why in March 2022, we published the Supporting Male Victims¹¹ document which includes a number of additional commitments to address some of the specific challenges encountered by men and boys in relation to these crimes, including HBA. It also emphasises

9 [Tackling violence against women and girls strategy - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/97121/tackling-violence-against-women-and-girls-strategy.pdf)

10 [Tackling Domestic Abuse Plan - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/103121/tackling-domestic-abuse-plan.pdf)

11 [Supporting male victims - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/103121/supporting-male-victims.pdf)

importance of specialist services, information on the myths and stereotypes that can act as a barrier to reporting for male victims and case studies to provide examples of best practice.

The Government therefore does not consider an additional Strategy for male victims is necessary.

Law Reform

Recommendation 11 (Page 39)

It is reassuring to hear judges have robustly rejected any attempts to use 'honour' to reduce a sentence. Explicitly recognising so-called honour in sentencing guidelines would go further; it would strengthen the understanding that honour-based abuse is taken seriously by the criminal justice system and only ever as an aggravating factor. We recommend the Sentencing Council considers including motivations.

As recognised by the Committee, the 'domestic abuse overarching guideline' makes clear that HBA is a form of domestic abuse. This makes the offending more serious because it represents a violation of the trust and security that normally exists between people in an intimate or family relationship.

The Sentencing Council is independent of Government and decides its own priorities and work plan for producing and amending guidelines. The Council has been alerted to this recommendation and will be considering whether the existing reference to HBA requires any amendment as part of a planned review of the guideline. We will continue to engage with them on this important matter.