

**Written evidence from Derbyshire OPCC, Derbyshire Constabulary and victim service providers  
[HBA0019]**

*In the 3 years to March 2021, 158 honour-based abuse crimes were recorded by the Police with 81.8% involving a female victim. One in every 9 female victims was under 16 years old.*

**What forms of violence against women and girls are motivated by so-called honour? Are these different forms understood by the Government, police and other agencies?**

All forms of domestic abuse can be motivated by so-called honour – assaults, sexual offences, controlling and coercive behaviour, stalking/harassment, etc. The forms of abuse are understood, but in some cases there is little knowledge about the impact of cultural and religious issues on these offences and the behaviours that can constitute them.

In the past couple of years, a local refuge has seen 8 cases that have been identified as HBA. Five of these are from the Indian subcontinent, with Muslim backgrounds. They are mainly fleeing forced marriage and the perpetrators are named as family members. In one of these cases she fled because she was being kept in the extended family's home and was expected to act as maid / carer but she wanted to attend university.

The majority have fled family rather than a partner, as they are at risk of a forced marriage or are being punished for exhibiting "western" ideals eg wanting to go to university, exploring their sexuality.

More extreme examples have come from North African backgrounds.

As well as the above controlling behaviour and limits on movement / freedom, there has also been ritual punishments, abuse from the community, abuse from cultural leaders, poisoning "to remove the djin", sacrifice of animals to save "lost soul". Both of the latter are from two separate cases both North African in origin.

Methods of control: Refusal to release immigration papers, threats of deportation if they leave, being told they couldn't get support because they are not British (unfortunately this is often true). Threat to commit a terrorist act if they left (this was reported via Prevent).

**How prevalent is honour-based abuse? What do we know about the background or characteristics of victims and perpetrators?**

Unknown as very hidden – can occur in specific cultural practices.

HBA is seldom reported. In Derbyshire we see single figure reports each month, but the true impact will be much greater than that, as HBA is a vastly under-reported issue. This is down to the vulnerability of those that suffer this type of abuse in the main. Of note, general Domestic Abuse relates to a single perpetrator – HBA frequently occurs in communities where people live with extended families, meaning there are often multiple perpetrators. In addition, there are other communities that face honour related abuse, such as traveller communities who are extremely difficult to reach and engage with.

As a very small service provider we see only a small sample. Majority of perpetrators are partners or family who use culture to control women.

**What is known about abuse practised under the pretext of upholding cultural norms? Is there available data and/or research on the prevalence of these practices?**

In Derbyshire this is not recorded separately, so there is little or no information about this as a separate issue.

**What are the challenges or barriers faced by victims of honour-based abuse in seeking support or protection?**

Inappropriate responses from organisations as perceived to be culturally acceptable, victims face additional stigma and fear in coming forward for help.

Issues experienced can include:

- Lack of knowledge of how to report
- Lack of knowledge of available support
- Lack of understanding by police
- Fear of repercussions
- Fear of community links within the police
- Language barriers
- Fear of criminalising their loved ones

All the usual barriers to anyone fleeing abuse, with the addition of the threat of deportation being held over them. Also the difficulty for women with no recourse as they are told they won't be allowed to go to refuge.

One Victim Service-Provider has had to spend much time with the family due to the very real fear they have around social workers, which seems embedded from a young age. The family face many challenges, not least because the children have never been schooled in a formal setting and now the LA are insisting this should be happening, being in refuge has put the family on the radar so-to-speak and they are all finding it challenging, mum doesn't read or write well, so requires a lot of support with admin, housing communication, benefits etc. She has no knowledge of bills, budgeting etc, so in effect seeking protection has opened up a real 'can of worms' for this mum and her children. Due to the low levels of literacy within some traveller families, I feel the paperwork needed, and fear of authority figures for criminal justice or court order would be so hard to traverse, and create a very real barrier to protection.

**How would you assess the police response to honour-based abuse? How could it be improved?**

In Derbyshire, the police response is generally good, and is improving all the time. Better understanding is needed, particular in areas where HBA is less prevalent. The last national inspection for HBA by the HMIC was in 2015.

A response from our Service Provider states they have had good experiences of the NRM, police special units etc, but haven't had much experience of working with Derbyshire Police as most of the HBV clients we support are from outside of Derbyshire.

**Is the current law in relation to honour-based abuse adequate to protect victims? If not, what should change?**

Laws are improving, such as the new virginity testing and hymenoplasty laws, and the change to the minimum age for marriage.

Removing the barrier of No Recourse is vital to support women. Current DV Assist / Leave to remain legislation is complex and overwhelming.

Remove the ban – women seeking asylum who have been victims of abuse really struggle financially and with their mental health due to being unable to work.

**What are the challenges for services supporting victims of honour-based abuse? How could those challenges be mitigated or overcome?**

Victims face fear and stigma in coming forward and need robust protection and appropriate ways in which to report.

Charities report that the Government funding made available for them is 'woefully inadequate' to meet the increasing demand for their services particular during and post COVID.

Supporting women through the immigration / DV Assist / Asylum system is extremely complex and time consuming. More support needed. As a small service by the time we have learnt how to support one woman the law / regulations have changed and we have to learn all over again. Agencies such as Rights of Women and GMIAU are invaluable but overstretched.

Funding for translation services.

As above, one of our Victim Service Providers have had to spend much time with the family due to the very real fear they have around social workers, which seems embedded from a young age.

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