

Written evidence from SafeLives [HBA0037]

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About SafeLives

We are SafeLives, the UK-wide charity dedicated to ending domestic abuse, for everyone and for good.

We work with organisations across the UK to transform the response to domestic abuse. We want what you would want for your best friend. We listen to survivors, putting their voices at the heart of our thinking. We look at the whole picture for each individual and family to get the right help at the right time to make families everywhere safe and well. And we challenge perpetrators to change, asking ‘why doesn’t he stop?’ rather than ‘why doesn’t she leave?’ This applies whatever the gender of the victim or perpetrator and whatever the nature of their relationship.

Last year alone, 8,577 professionals received our training. Over 75,000 adults at risk of serious harm or murder and more than 95,000 children received support through dedicated multi-agency support designed by us and delivered with partners. In the last six years, almost 3,000 perpetrators have been challenged and supported to change by interventions we created with partners.

In responding to this Select Committee Inquiry, we have used data and quotes from our Spotlights report on so-called “honour”-based abuse, *Your Choice*.¹ The Spotlight work included a number of [survivor stories](#), blog posts from frontline practitioners and interviews with experts which may be of interest.² We also consulted with some of the SafeLives Pioneer survivors of domestic abuse, who shared their expertise and experiences with us to inform and enrich our response and recommendations. We are, as always, hugely grateful to them. We would like to signpost towards specialist services supporting victims and survivors of so-called “honour”-based abuse, including [Karma Nirvana](#) and [Sharan](#).³

Recommendations

¹ SafeLives (2017), *Your Choice: ‘honour’-based violence, forced marriage and domestic abuse*. Available at: [https://safelives.org.uk/sites/default/files/resources/Spotlight%20on%20so-called “honour”-based abuse%20and%20forced%20marriage-web.pdf](https://safelives.org.uk/sites/default/files/resources/Spotlight%20on%20so-called%20honour-based%20and%20forced%20marriage-web.pdf)

² Available at: <https://safelives.org.uk/spotlight-4-honour-based-violence-and-forced-marriage>

³ <https://karmanirvana.org.uk/>

<https://sharan.org.uk/services-resources/for-clients/> <https://karmanirvana.org.uk/>

<https://sharan.org.uk/services-resources/for-clients/>

We would point, in particular, towards the case studies available on the Sharan website:

<https://sharan.org.uk/case-studies/>

- The Government should co-produce a definition of so-called “honour”-based abuse with specialist services supporting survivors of so-called “honour-based” abuse such as Karma Nirvana, Sharan and IKWRO.
- Government must provide ringfenced funding for specialist ‘by and for’ domestic abuse services to ensure victims and survivors with insecure immigration status, including those who have experienced so-called “honour”-based abuse, receive the tailored support they need.
- Government must address the current siloed approach to tackling so-called “honour”-based abuse which frequently focuses solely on forced marriage and female genital mutilation (FGM), leading to a lack of recognition of and attention given to other forms of so-called “honour”-based abuse nationally.
- ‘Banaz’s Law,’ to prevent the use of misogynistic cultural or religious practices as a defence against the prosecution of this form of abuse, and the introduction of “honour” as an aggravating factor in sentencing, should be explored as a potential response to the perpetration of so-called “honour”-based abuse.
- All those supporting victims (including domestic abuse services, Maracs, Police, family courts and the Crown Prosecution Service) should collect and analyse data on the so-called “honour”-based abuse cases they engage with, and use this analysis to identify potential gaps. For instance, where cases predominantly involve a current or ex-intimate partner, consider how to work with referring agencies to increase recognition of domestic abuse perpetrated by other family members. Data should be used to contribute to reflective practice across the organisation.
- Agencies delivering training on so-called “honour”-based abuse should ensure that verbal information and training materials use language that victims and survivors will identify with when describing abusive behaviours, in order to help embed this language within frontline practice.
- All agencies making Marac referrals should seek special advice before risk assessing cases in which there is a risk or presence of so-called “honour”-based abuse; this may be from local specialist services or a national helpline.
- Local authorities, statutory agencies, political leaders and community groups should support national awareness raising campaigns that have a focus on so-called “honour”-based abuse, including the national date of remembrance for honour killing and the White Ribbon campaign.
- Multi-agency responses to domestic abuse must ensure they are recognising all forms of domestic abuse, including so-called “honour”-based abuse.
- Local Safeguarding Adult Boards should ensure that local agencies have policies and practices around so-called “honour”-based abuse which are informed by the views and experiences of survivors.
- Family law practitioners and the judiciary should secure specialist training on so-called “honour”-based abuse, including forms such as dowry abuse.
- Well-evidenced, Respect-accredited perpetrator programmes should be developed and rolled out to address and prevent perpetration of so-called “honour”-based abuse.
- Policing progress to implement recommendations set out in the 2015 HMIC report (see below) should be reviewed, and the Home Secretary should consider a re-inspection of the police response to so-called “honour”-based abuse.
- Policies on so-called “honour”-based abuse in statutory agencies, especially the Police, must be accompanied with practice guidance and ‘live’ training which is in-depth and regularly updated to meet the challenge of the constant evolution of all forms of domestic abuse.
- 999 call handlers must receive training from specialist organisations in order to respond to victims of so-called “honour”-based abuse appropriately.
- Police chiefs must consider how frontline police officers can be supported to identify cases of so-called “honour”-based abuse once the DARA risk assessment tool is rolled out nationally.
- Evidence-based improvements should be made to the DARA to make it more useful and effective in identifying multiple types of domestic abuse, including so-called “honour”-based abuse.

Migrant survivors

- The Domestic Violence Rule and Destitution Domestic Violence Concession (DDVC) should be extended to all migrant survivors, regardless of their immigration status.
- The police should ensure that victims of so-called “honour”-based abuse are able to access all special measures available to vulnerable or intimidated victims and are proactively made aware that these special measures are available to protect them from intimidation and further harm.

- The Home Office should implement an information-sharing firewall between police and immigration enforcement agencies to allow victims and survivors of domestic abuse to safely report without fear of deportation.
- We echo the recommendations of the Domestic Abuse Commissioner from her recent report, *Safety before Status: The Solutions*:
 - *“6.7 The Domestic Abuse commissioner recommends that the Home Office consult closely with the specialist domestic abuse sector, and particularly the specialist by and for sector, in the development and implementation of any new model of support for migrant victims. The through introduction of the DDVC, following the Sojourner project, for example, the Home Office convened a working group with the specialist domestic abuse sector to aid implementation.”*
 - *“6.10 There are a number of different factors to consider in relation to DVILR extension. Firstly, the statutory criteria for awarding DVILR should be amended. In particular the rules criminalising migrants arriving by informal routes (particularly those carried by people smugglers) should be waived in terms of these criminal convictions and bad character provisions of DVILR. The overlapping processes of determining asylum applications and processing applications for ILR under the other visa routes can continue in parallel with the DVILR application, where this is appropriate.*
 - *6.11 With survivors on a range of different visa types having accessing to the DDVC in [the scenario presented in the report], it may be that there are more complex cases where victims require more than 6 months to gather the evidence they need to make an application for DVILR. There may also be limited capacity for legal advice with additional survivors making applications, particularly in the first months of implementation. There should therefore be some flexibility built into this model whereby survivors with particularly complex cases can extend access to DDVC while they gather the additional information they need to make their DVILR application. Flexibility should be granted based on confirmation that the victim intends to make an application to the DVILR, which could be evidence through a supportive letter from a voluntary or statutory agency or from a legal advisor.*
 - *6.12 [Improved access to immigration legal advice and representation] is vital in ensuring victims and survivors can be supported to make applications to the DDVC and DVILR. This should include:*
 - a. Commissioning a national immigration advice line for migrant survivors of domestic abuse;*
 - b. Implementing reforms through the legal aid means test review which ensure all survivors of domestic abuse should be automatically granted an exemption from undergoing the means test in civil and immigration proceedings.”⁴*
- Government must provide additional funding to enable access to specialist legal advice and representation to help such migrant victims and survivors of domestic abuse regularise their immigration status.
- Government should remove the reservation on Article 59 of the Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combatting Violence Against Women and Domestic Violence (the Istanbul Convention) and ensure that migrant survivors of domestic abuse receive the rights afforded to them under the Convention.
- Government should consider how to increase awareness of UK laws regarding the perpetration of abuse, and support for protection from abuse, for migrants arriving in the country.

Recommendations for the domestic abuse sector

- Domestic abuse services need to do more to reach people who are experiencing so-called “honour”-based abuse which falls outside of the better recognised profile of domestic abuse perpetrated by a partner. In cases where the victim of so-called “honour”-based abuse is aged under 18, this could be achieved by making links between children’s services and domestic abuse support services, and also with schools and with healthcare settings including sexual health clinics and GP surgeries.
- Domestic abuse services and local specialist services should work together, for instance arranging reciprocal training, to understand the links between these forms of abuse and ensure appropriate referral pathways between services.

⁴ Domestic Abuse Commissioner (2022), *Safety before Status: The Solutions*. Available at: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1122607/FE02769157_Safety_Before_Status_The_Solutions_Accessible.pdf

- Mainstream support services must work to become more culturally competent, working closely with by and for services who work with marginalised survivors, including Karma Nirvana, Sharan, and many more.
- Mainstream services must work to ensure that they recognise that so-called “honour”-based abuse can take place across a wide range of cultures and communities, including in GRT communities, Jewish communities, Christian communities, and many more.
- Specialist so-called “honour”-based abuse and forced marriage services should work with other local services, such as social workers, teachers and mental health professionals, to increase the confidence of these professionals in identifying risks of so-called “honour”-based abuse and forced marriage. This should include circumstances in which the victim may not be overtly ‘forced’ into an action (such as marriage) by the perpetrator, but does not believe they have the option to say ‘no.’
- Domestic abuse services should review their risk assessment guidance to ensure it reflects the high levels of coercive control that can be achieved without obvious threats or violence, including how this may present in so-called “honour”-based abuse cases.
- Domestic abuse services should use awareness-raising materials (such as posters, videos, written information) which are relevant to a range of scenarios including abuse from family members against young adults. These materials should be displayed in a range of locations including those frequented by young people, such as youth services and educational institutions. Agencies may wish to consider how they can source materials created by reputable organisations overseas.
- Domestic abuse services should consider appointing ‘champions’ or specialists who receive in-depth training on so-called “honour”-based abuse. This should include what we know about the motivations behind so-called “honour”-based abuse, and related circumstances, such as the use of dowries. These professionals should take a lead in ensuring all staff members are aware of how so-called “honour”-based abuse can impact the experience of domestic abuse and the risks to those involved.

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?

There is no Government definition of so called “honour”-based abuse. We refer to the definition used by IKWRO (the Iranian and Kurdish Women’s Rights Organisation“):

“So-called “honour” based abuse covers a range of forms of patriarchal violence, perpetrated mainly against women and girls. It is motivated by enforcing “honour” codes, to punish and prevent behaviour perceived to be shameful, to send a message to the community and silence any potential challengers. [...] “Honour” based abuse is pre-meditated and planned and often includes collective involvement of family and community members, which can include women and, in some cases, hired criminals. Perpetrators of the harmful practice often show no remorse and may demonstrate pride in their actions which they claim protect family “honour”.”⁵

We echo Karma Nirvana’s view shared in response to this inquiry that the lack of a Government or statutory definition of so-called “honour”-based abuse “has multiple adverse consequences,” including limiting the identification of so-called “honour”-based abuse, and recording and collating data on cases of this form of abuse.⁶ Karma Nirvana highlight that the current working definition for so-called “honour”-based abuse, which was developed by the National Police Chiefs Council, “does not authentically represent the experience of victims and survivors” of so-called “honour”-based abuse, “particularly the unique barriers linked to shame and stigma” which many victims of this form of abuse face. **We recommend that the Government co-produce a definition of so-called “honour”-based abuse with specialist services such as Karma Nirvana, Sharan and IKWRO.**

As IKWRO highlight, apparently ‘shameful’ behaviour can include: wearing clothes or make up in a way which the perpetrator/s does/do not approve of, resisting forced marriages, reporting domestic abuse to statutory agencies, seeking divorce (particularly where a dowry may be large⁷), being – or being

⁵ IKWRO (n.d.), “Honour” based abuse. Available at: <https://ikwro.org.uk/honour-based-violence/>

⁶ Karma Nirvana (2022, unpublished), *Call for Evidence on Honour Based Abuse: Karma Nirvana Written Evidence (Summary and Recommendations)*

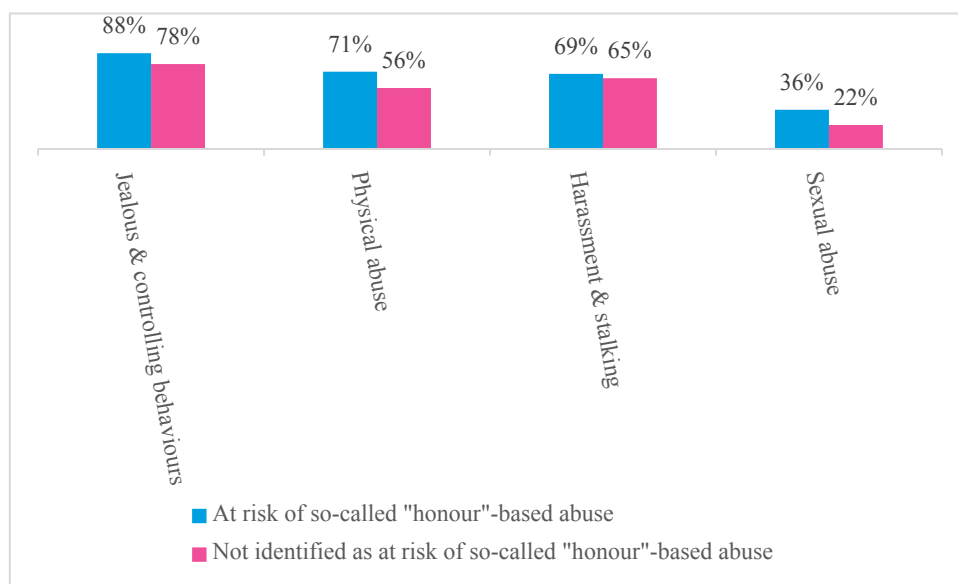
⁷ SafeLives (2017), *Reflections of an Idva on ‘honour’-based violence*. Available at:

suspected of being – LGBT+, choosing not to practice the family’s/community’s religion, being – or being suspected of being – sexually active, and experiencing sexual violence. IKWRO underscore that rumours about a person’s behaviour, whether true or not, can act as a trigger for so-called honour-based abuse.

Forms of so-called “honour”-based abuse can include: physical, emotional and psychological abuse, and/or coercive control; so-called “honour” killing and forced suicide; forced marriage; virginity testing; hymenoplasty; Female Genital Mutilation (FGM); rape and so-called “corrective” rape; so-called conversion practices; acid attacks; abduction and imprisonment; death threats and blackmail; shunning and disowning; surveillance; forced abortions; and transnational marriage abandonment. Karma Nirvana have long highlighted an overfocus on forced marriage and FGM within existing policies and practices which are aimed at tackling and responding to so-called “honour”-based abuse. This leads to cases being hidden/’masked’ and less effectively identified, as well as to victims of so-called “honour”-based abuse receiving poorer responses from statutory agencies when they have not experienced, or are not at risk of experiencing, forced marriage or FGM. **Agencies must ensure their work to tackle so-called “honour”-based abuse extends to other forms of this abuse alongside forced marriage and FGM.**

Victims of so-called “honour”-based abuse are at high risk of serious harm or murder, accompanied by deeply embedded coercive control

Our Insights data from frontline services suggests that those at risk of so-called “honour”-based abuse were more likely to be at high risk of serious harm or murder than other people accessing domestic abuse support. Over two thirds (68%) of victims of so-called “honour”-based abuse were considered to be at high risk of serious harm or murder, compared to 55% of those not identified as at risk. Similarly, 58% of people at risk of so-called “honour”-based abuse met the threshold for Marac, compared to 48% of those not identified as at risk.⁸



Within these categories of abuse are also culturally specific practices, including FGM and forced marriage. However, research has found that “restrictions on freedom of movement, minimized contact with males, verbal violence and non-lethal physical abuse” are far more common than so-called “honour” killings, forced marriages and Female Genital Mutilation which receive a larger amount of media attention.⁹ Only one in five victims (20%) at risk of so-called “honour”-based abuse in our Insights dataset were also at risk of forced marriage (although this may also reflect their age and relationship status).

https://safelives.org.uk/practice_blog/reflections-idva-honour-based-violence

⁸ SafeLives (2017), *Your Choice: ‘honour’-based violence, forced marriage and domestic abuse*. Available at: [https://safelives.org.uk/sites/default/files/resources/Spotlight%20on%20so-called “honour”-based abuse%20and%20forced%20marriage-web.pdf](https://safelives.org.uk/sites/default/files/resources/Spotlight%20on%20so-called%20honour-based%20abuse%20and%20forced%20marriage-web.pdf)

⁹ Sen, P. (2005), *‘Crimes of honour’, value and meaning*. Available at: <http://dx.doi.org/10.5040/9781350220621.ch-006>

Particularly high levels of jealous and controlling behaviour are well documented within our Spotlight on so-called “honour”-based abuse, forced marriage and FGM.¹⁰ In an interview for the Spotlight, Ariana at [Saheliya](#) (an organisation supporting Black, Asian and racially minoritised women, including asylum seeker and refugee women) highlights how a powerful coercive environment can be constructed without obvious threats or violence against the victim, especially when the victim is a young person. For example, family members may threaten to kill themselves because of the behaviour of the young person. A SafeLives Pioneer survivor of domestic abuse explained to us that, in so-called “honour”-based abuse, a victim may be forced to choose between their own happiness / freedom to choose (for example, in continuing an intimate relationship with someone outside of the community or who their parents do not approve of) and the wellbeing of a parent or family member, who may be threatening to harm or kill themselves if the victim does not end the relationship and/or return to/remain in the family home.

Ada, a survivor of so-called “honour”-based abuse and forced marriage, told us about the restrictions around ‘westernised’ behaviours that she came to realise were part of the abusive control she had experienced: *“I don’t want a lot; I just want to be free. I want to wear jeans if I want to wear jeans, play football if I want to play football, if I don’t want to wear a scarf don’t wear a scarf. Simple things, I don’t want a lot. But when you have these things taken out from you, you feel like wow, like there is something wrong.”*

The role of controlling behaviour is particularly relevant when considering the type of force that may pressure someone into marriage. In a Spotlight interview, Dr Sundari Anitha explained how the choice to say ‘no’ to a marriage can be removed from the victim without violence or threats: *“When people stereotypically think about forced marriage, it’s about their parents or their family members saying you must marry this individual or the consequences are x, y or z, but in other circumstances it could be, I can’t have this abortion, if I have this baby I have to be married, I don’t really have another choice but to do this.”*

This emphasises how the line between a forced and an arranged marriage can be blurred when saying ‘no’ does not feel like a viable option. This reasoning can extend to other freedoms and choices, through the expectations that are created at a very early age. In her Spotlight interview, the founder of Karma Nirvana, Jasvinder Sanghera CBE, explained: “our upbringing meant we were incredibly vulnerable and conditioned to believe that, as women, we were meant to behave in a certain way and our choices were not our own.”

In this way, the coercive control can extend beyond the marriage itself to behaviour within the marriage, whether the marriage was forced, arranged or chosen. A key aspect of these expectations can be domestic servitude; in some cases, not only servitude to a husband and children, but to extended family members. Amala, a survivor of so-called “honour”-based abuse, told us: *“while my husband’s family went to work and school, I was expected to make the lunch, the evening meal, to clean and dust the house, making sure everything was prepared by the time they got back. With eight people living in the house, that’s all it was, day in and day out, picking up and taking away. My husband’s family has all of the control, whatever I did was on their terms.”*

Dr Anitha highlights these expectations can also lead to sexual violence, when the woman’s decision to have sex, become pregnant, and whether or not to undergo an abortion is determined by the expectations of the victim’s husband and/or their family. Although the behaviours involved in so-called “honour”-based abuse can be placed into the broad categories of behaviours typically seen in domestic abuse cases, professionals must be aware of the embedded nature of the coercive control, and the sometimes subtle and specific or apparently ‘atypical’ forms the abuse can take. It will be important not only to look for signs of physical abuse but also for patterns of constrained behaviour which may indicate someone is fearful of harm or altering their behaviour because of the abuse they are experiencing.

The perpetrators of so-called “honour”-based abuse can be an extensive network, heightening the opportunities for abuse and control

Perpetrators of so-called “honour”-based abuse often extend beyond the circle of intimate partners and family members who might be considered perpetrators of domestic abuse in non-“honour”-based

¹⁰ Available at: <https://safelives.org.uk/spotlight-4-honour-based-violence-and-forced-marriage>

abuse.¹¹ Research by Idriss (2017) notes that it would not be an exaggeration to label some cases of so-called “honour”-based abuse as a form of community or gang-related violence, or to approach it in a similar way to organised crime. Even when the community are not directly perpetrating abuse, they may be complicit in the abuse, or condone it. Idriss gathered evidence from Crown Prosecutors, one of whom stated: “*police are often met with a wall of silence from community members who do not wish to discuss honour-based violence.*”¹² Similarly, we heard from an experienced police officer that so-called “honour”-based abuse cases “can be challenging because of the tight knit, cohesive family and religious networks. These networks can sometimes preclude us from easily accessing, and in some cases implement[ing], interventions to protect the victim.”¹³

Our Insights data finds that over half (54%) of victims of domestic abuse at risk of so-called “honour”-based abuse were abused by multiple people, compared to only 7% of those not identified as at risk. This wider network of perpetrators is often *in addition to* intimate partners or family members. A SafeLives Pioneer survivor of domestic abuse also highlighted that the ‘ring’ of people who may be jointly perpetrating so-called “honour”-based abuse may well include highly qualified professionals who are able to challenge any agencies seeking to intervene to stop the abuse and protect the victim. We know that perpetrators of all forms of domestic abuse are likely to manipulate any professionals involved in their or the victim’s/victims’ lives in order to be able to continue to perpetrate the abuse, and this may be especially true when multiple perpetrators are involved. It is crucial that agencies are aware of the potential for perpetrators to manipulate them and are fully equipped to respond in an appropriate way which increases the safety of the victim(s).

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

It must be noted that any figures on the prevalence of so-called “honour”-based abuse in the UK are likely to be extreme underestimates. As Diana Nammi, Executive Director of IKWRO highlights, “*so many crimes are never reported because the perpetrators are the victim’s own families and/or community members, who often have convinced them that going to the police is shameful and they fear retribution.*”¹⁴

According to our most recent Insights data, 3% of Idva clients in 2021/22 had experienced so-called “honour”-based abuse in the preceding 12 months and 1% had experienced forced marriage.¹⁵ Among outreach clients, 2% had experienced so-called “honour”-based abuse in the previous 12 months, and 1% had experienced forced marriage.¹⁶

So-called “honour”-based abuse can be seen across countries, cultures and religions.

Cases of so-called “honour”-based abuse have been identified in a wide range of populations including South Asian communities, “African, Middle Eastern, Turkish, Kurdish, Afghan, [European], American, Australian and Canadian” communities and cultures.¹⁷

In the UK, the majority of cases (56%) seen by the Forced Marriage Unit in 2021 were from South Asian communities (this is likely to be partly due to the large South Asian community in the UK) and the unit dealt with cases involving 32 ‘focus countries.’¹⁸ SafeLives’ Insights data for those at risk of so-called

¹¹ Idriss, M. M., (2017), *Not domestic violence or cultural tradition: is honour-based violence distinct from domestic violence?* Available at: <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/09649069.2016.1272755>

¹² *Ibid.* p13

¹³ SafeLives (2017, unpublished), Interview for Spotlight #4.

¹⁴ SafeLives (2017), *Your Choice: ‘honour’-based violence, forced marriage and domestic abuse.* Available at: [https://safelives.org.uk/sites/default/files/resources/Spotlight%20on%20so-called “honour”-based abuse%20and%20forced%20marriage-web.pdf](https://safelives.org.uk/sites/default/files/resources/Spotlight%20on%20so-called%20honour-based%20and%20forced%20marriage-web.pdf)

¹⁵ SafeLives (2022), *Insights Idva dataset 2021-22: Adult Independent domestic violence advisor (Idva) services.* Available at:

https://safelives.org.uk/sites/default/files/resources/Idva%20Dataset%202022_FINAL.pdf

¹⁶ SafeLives (2022), *Insights outreach dataset 2021-22: Adult outreach services.* Available at: https://safelives.org.uk/sites/default/files/resources/Outreach%20Dataset%202022_FINAL.pdf

¹⁷ HMIC (2015), *The depths of dishonour: Hidden voices and shameful crimes.* Available at: <https://www.justiceinspectorates.gov.uk/hmicfrs/wp-content/uploads/the-depths-of-dishonour.pdf>

“honour”-based abuse shows a similar trend, with 58% of victims identifying as Asian, although it should be noted that demographics within the Insights dataset will largely reflect the local populations of the services that contribute to it, which may differ to the national population.¹⁹

Abuse motivated by so-called “honour” has also been found among most major religions, including Christianity, Hinduism, Judaism, Islam, and Sikhism.²⁰ Although much of the popular media coverage of so-called “honour”-based abuse links it to Islam, research finds no evidence to prove this link, and highlights that specific manifestations of so-called “honour”-based abuse are not mentioned in the Quran and are not condoned by religious authorities.²¹

Our 2017 Marac scrutiny panel on behalf of the Home Office, which looked at cases involving Black, Asian and racially minoritised victims, highlighted that practitioners need to be aware of the wide range of communities affected by so-called “honour”-based abuse: *“issues of so-called ‘honour’-based abuse were compounded by a lack of awareness and confidence on the part of many agencies, including a lack of recognition of these issues being present in a number of communities, not being the exclusive preserve of one community or ethnic group.”*²²

In their response to this inquiry, Karma Nirvana point out that “policy and practice aimed at combatting Honour Based Abuse often continues to be based on a distorted lens of race, culture, or religion rather than structural gender inequality. This artificially separates Honour Based Abuse from mainstream Domestic Abuse, exacerbating misunderstandings of Honour Based Abuse linked to ‘culture’ and ‘tradition’.” It is crucial to recognise that so-called “honour”-based abuse is rooted in patriarchal values, and that culture and religion are not defences for perpetrating so-called “honour”-based abuse. We point to Southall Black Sisters and Bekhal Mahmud’s call for the introduction of ‘Banaz’s Law’ (named after Banaz Mahmud, victim of a so-called “honour” killing in 2006) to prevent the use of misogynistic cultural or religious practices as a defence against the prosecution of this form of abuse, and the introduction of “honour” as an aggravating factor in sentencing, as a potential response which should be explored.

So-called “honour”-based abuse is experienced by men and women, but for the risk for women is much higher.

Data from the Crown Prosecution Service on cases flagged as so-called “honour”-based abuse reveals that (where gender was recorded) 66% of victims were female.²³ Of all UK reported cases of so-called “honour” killings in the five years to 2015, the majority of victims (22 out of 29) were women.²⁴ The figure for forced marriages was similar, with the Forced Marriage Unit reporting that four out of five cases involved a female victim in 2016.²⁵

Our Insights dataset found that, of those identified as at risk of so-called “honour”-based abuse while accessing support for domestic abuse, almost all (96%) were female. The higher percentage of female victims supported by the domestic abuse sector may reflect the type of support that these services provide. However, as above, this could be influenced by a traditional perception of domestic abuse between partners, and indicate that some male victims are not visible to services.

¹⁸ FCDO & Home Office (2022), *Forced Marriage Unit statistics 2021*. Available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/forced-marriage-unit-statistics-2021/forced-marriage-unit-statistics-2021>

¹⁹ SafeLives (2017), *Your Choice: ‘honour’-based violence, forced marriage and domestic abuse*.

²⁰ Bhanbhro, S., Cronin de Chavez, A., Lusambili, A. (2016). *Honour based violence as a global public health problem: a critical review of literature*. International Journal of Human Rights in Healthcare, 9 (3), 198-215.

²¹ Ibid.

²² SafeLives (2017), *Guidance for Multi-agency forums: Cases involving victims who are black or minority ethnic*.

²³ CPS (2019), *Violence Against Women and Girls Report 2018-9*. Available at: <https://www.cps.gov.uk/sites/default/files/documents/publications/cps-vawg-report-2019.pdf>

²⁴ Dyer (2015), *‘Honour’ killings in the UK*. Available at: <http://henryjacksonsociety.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/01/Honour-Killings-in-the-UK.pdf>

²⁵ Home Office (2017), *Forced Marriage Unit Statistics*. Available at: https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/597869/Forced_Marriage_Unit_statistics-_2016.pdf

In addition to these numbers, research shows that the experience of victims of so-called “honour”-based abuse, and the nature of the abuse, is linked to gender. Two contributors to our Spotlight on so-called “honour”-based abuse, Lia Latchford (Imkaan) and Dr Sundari Anitha (University of Lincoln), discussed how the intersection of multiple forms of abuse heightens the abuse for women at risk of so-called “honour”-based abuse. Latchford explained that women and girls are likely to experience multiple forms of abuse: *“this could include physical and sexual violence, stalking, female genital mutilation, trafficking or child abuse, alongside forced marriage, for example.”* She emphasised that so-called “honour”-based abuse perpetrated against women must be seen within the wider context of VAWG. Many contributors to our Spotlight highlighted the links between so-called “honour”-based abuse and patriarchy, with women being tasked with carrying the ‘honour’ of their fathers, their husbands and their sons. Research suggests these patriarchal roots could be heightened when migrant families are living in ‘Western’ cultures, because migration can result in downward occupational mobility and social status.²⁶

Dr Anitha explained how an intersectional lens is crucial to responding to victims of so-called “honour”-based abuse, using the example of forced marriage. She highlighted that men and women are forced into marriage for different reasons, which then go on to affect their experience of that marriage. For instance, a gay man may be forced into a marriage with a woman but, once married, he may not be expected to ‘live the marriage in full;’ for instance, he may be able to pursue other relationships covertly. A woman in a forced marriage may, instead, be expected to ‘live the marriage in full,’ meeting expectations of sexual availability, childbearing and childcare, and domestic labour.

In addition to recognising the gendered aspect of this abuse, it is important to recognise the factors which put men at increased risk of experiencing so-called “honour”-based abuse. In fact, statistics from the Forced Marriage Unit in 2016 showed that, of the cases involving a victim with a learning disability 61% were men.²⁷ Understanding the specific risks for men will be as important as understanding the overlap between so-called “honour”-based abuse and other forms of violence against women and girls. As highlighted above, victims of so-called “honour”-based abuse are more likely than victims of other forms of abuse to have multiple perpetrators.

Amala, a survivor of so-called “honour”-based abuse described how her husband was the primary perpetrator but his abusive behaviour originated from other family members. *“They manipulated my husband and my children. I began to see the change in my husband. There was soon no financial support and the first time there was physical abuse, it came from my husband.”*

Our Insights data also suggests that, where partners are involved, they are likely to be current partners rather than ex-partners. Victims of domestic abuse who are at risk of so-called “honour”-based abuse are much more likely to be in a current relationship with the perpetrator (43%) than those not identified as at risk (29%).

Data on CPS cases flagged as so-called “honour”-based abuse reveals that, where gender of defendants was recorded, the vast majority (89%) were male.²⁸ Insights data is similar, with a male perpetrator recorded in 88% of cases; however the percentage of female perpetrators was higher in cases identified as so-called “honour”-based abuse (9%) compared to those not (5%).²⁹ Research has illustrated how women may perpetuate the ‘honour’ system by ‘monitoring one another’s behaviour.’³⁰ However, often these women are both survivors *and* perpetrators of abuse, perhaps because they have now moved up the hierarchy; for instance, as a mother in-law they ‘have earned and can wield significant power.’³¹

Dr Geetanjali Gangoli of the University of Bristol Centre for Gender and Violence Research highlighted that police need to have an understanding that other family members who may be present at conversations with the victim may also be perpetrators. It will be important for those responding to

²⁶ Mayeda, D.T., Vijaykuma, R. (2016), *A Review of the Literature on Honor-based Violence*. Sociology Compass, 10(5), 353-363. <https://doi.org/10.1111/soc4.12367>

²⁷ Home Office (2017), *Forced Marriage Unit Statistics*.

²⁸ CPS (2019), *Violence Against Women and Girls Report 2018-9*. Available at: <https://www.cps.gov.uk/sites/default/files/documents/publications/cps-vawg-report-2019.pdf>

²⁹ SafeLives (2017), *Your Choice: ‘honour’-based violence, forced marriage and domestic abuse*.

³⁰ Mayeda, D.T., Vijaykuma, R. (2016), *A Review of the Literature on Honor-based Violence*. Sociology Compass, 10(5), 353-363. <https://doi.org/10.1111/soc4.12367>

³¹ Ibid.

domestic abuse where there is a risk of so-called “honour”-based abuse to understand the potential for all family members – and the wider community – to be perpetrators of abuse, in order to understand the extent of the risk for the victim, and how to keep them safe while providing support.

As Amala explained in her quote above, children can also be drawn into the abusive behaviour. Shigufta Khan, CEO of the Wish Centre, explained how children are often used as a way of monitoring or continuing to control the mother after they have moved away from the perpetrators of abuse. She told us: “*we had another case, for example, this was an extended family where the father was using the children. He had given the 12-year-old cameras to put in the property and given the 12-year-old sleeping tablets to put into the mother’s food.*”³² The extreme manipulation of children and the impact this behaviour will have on their wellbeing must be recognised, especially now the Domestic Abuse Act 2021 recognises children as victims of domestic abuse in their own right. **As such teachers, GPs, social workers and other professionals who come into contact with these children must be able to respond to child victims appropriately. For social workers and those working in the justice system, as well as recognising this behaviour as a form of child abuse, they must recognise the impact of the behaviour on the adult victim’s ability to parent their child and protect them from the behaviour of others. The accountability for the safety of the children must be placed on the perpetrator. It will be particularly important for the Family Courts to fully understand the potential for a wider circle of perpetrators when considering child residency and contact arrangements.** For example, in cases of so-called “honour”-based abuse, it is more likely that involving the family in arrangements, or facilitating a Family Conference, would be highly inappropriate and entail risk for the adult and child victims.

So-called “honour”-based abuse can begin at a very early age. Jasvinder Sanghera, founder of Karma Nivana and survivor of a forced marriage, explains that from the age of eight she was ‘promised to a man’ for marriage. At 15, she was removed from school and held prisoner in her home until she agreed to the marriage. Age is particularly significant in relation to forced marriage because, regardless of the abuse or controlling behaviour used as ‘force’, children cannot consent to the arrangement and any such behaviour presents a serious safeguarding concern. Statistics from the Forced Marriage Unit for 2016 showed that 15% of cases involved a victim below the age of 16, and a further 11% of cases involved those aged 16-17.³³ According to our Spotlights report on so-called “honour”-based abuse, only 3% of victims of so-called “honour”-based abuse who accessed domestic abuse services in our Insights dataset were aged 16-17, and a further 9% were aged 18-20. These lower figures suggest that **domestic abuse services need to do more to reach people who are experiencing so-called “honour”-based abuse which falls outside of the better recognised profile of domestic abuse perpetrated by a partner. In cases where the victim of so-called “honour”-based abuse is aged under 18, this could be achieved by making links between children’s services and domestic abuse support services, and also with schools and with healthcare settings including sexual health clinics and GP surgeries.**

The forms of abuse seen within so-called “honour”-based abuse are evolving. It is increasingly recognised that perpetrators may take victims abroad where they will leave them with no means of returning or accessing support (known as ‘transnational marriage abandonment’). In some cases, the victim may be taken abroad with their children, in other cases, they may be deliberately separated from them. In her Spotlight interview, Dr Sundari Anithra at the University of Lincoln highlighted that the legal system needs to consider how to respond to such forms of abuse. Currently, once stranded within another country, victims are denied the visa that would enable them to return to the UK to initiate court proceedings or access the Destitution Domestic Violence Concession (DDVC). **We strongly recommend the removal of this barrier. It will also be important to ensure there is awareness of such issues among border and immigration staff, who can play a role in identifying these circumstances and responding to those who seek help.**

We recommend that the Domestic Violence Rule and Destitution Domestic Violence Concession (DDVC) should be extended to all migrant survivors, regardless of their immigration status. Moreover, the Home Office should implement an information-sharing firewall between police and immigration enforcement agencies to allow victims and survivors of domestic abuse to safely report without fear of deportation.

³² Available at: <https://safelives.org.uk/spotlight-4-honour-based-violence-and-forced-marriage>

³³ Home Office (2017), *Forced Marriage Unit Statistics*. Available at: https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/597869/Forced_Marriage_Unit_statistics-_2016.pdf

We echo the recommendations of the Domestic Abuse Commissioner from her recent report, *Safety before Status: The solutions*:

“6.7 The Domestic Abuse commissioner recommends that the Home Office consult closely with the specialist domestic abuse sector, and particularly the specialist by and for sector, in the development and implementation of any new model of support for migrant victims. The through introduction of the DDVC, following the Sojourner project, for example, the Home Office convened a working group with the specialist domestic abuse sector to aid implementation.”

“6.10 There are a number of different factors to consider in relation to DVILR extension. Firstly, the statutory criteria for awarding DVILR should be amended. In particular the rules criminalising migrants arriving by informal routes (particularly those carried by people smugglers) should be waived in terms of these criminal convictions and bad character provisions of DVILR. The overlapping processes of determining asylum applications and processing applications for ILR under the other visa routes can continue in parallel with the DVILR application, where this is appropriate.

6.11 With survivors on a range of different visa types having accessing to the DDVC in [the scenario presented in the report], it may be that there are more complex cases where victims require more than 6 months to gather the evidence they need to make an application for DVILR. There may also be limited capacity for legal advice with additional survivors making applications, particularly in the first months of implementation. There should therefore be some flexibility built into this model whereby survivors with particularly complex cases can extend access to DDVC while they gather the additional information they need to make their DVILR application. Flexibility should be granted based on confirmation that the victim intends to make an application to the DVILR, which could be evidence through a supportive letter from a voluntary or statutory agency or from a legal advisor.

6.12 [Improved access to immigration legal advice and representation] is vital in ensuring victims and survivors can be supported to make applications to the DDVC and DVILR. This should include:

- a. Commissioning a national immigration advice line for migrant survivors of domestic abuse;*
- b. Implementing reforms through the legal aid means test review which ensure all survivors of domestic abuse should be automatically granted an exemption from undergoing the means test in civil and immigration proceedings.”³⁴*

Police should ensure that victims of so-called “honour”-based abuse are able to access all special measures available to vulnerable or intimidated victims and are proactively made aware that these special measures are available to protect them from intimidation and further harm.

In her interview for our Spotlight on so-called “honour”-based abuse, Jasvinder Sanghera highlighted that there has been substantial policy development since she founded Karma Nirvana over 25 years ago.³⁵ Government agencies now have a toolbox of resources, support and legal mechanisms to tackle so-called “honour”-based abuse and forced marriage. This progress should be celebrated **but it will be important to keep expanding this ‘toolbox’, and to ensure that frontline staff, from all agencies who may come into contact with victims and survivors, are both aware of the systems and support available and are confident in using them.** We must do this while also making the policy and legislative changes necessary both to prevent so-called “honour”-based abuse and better support victims.

SafeLives’ Insights dataset finds that the average length of abuse before seeking support was five years for those at risk of so-called “honour”-based abuse.³⁶ This is far longer than the three-year average for those not identified as at risk of so-called “honour”-based abuse.

Our SafeLives Pioneer survivors of domestic abuse pointed out a lack of research and knowledge around perpetrators of so-called “honour”-based abuse. We have been unable to identify any behaviour change programmes specifically relevant to perpetrators of so-called “honour”-based abuse; as such, **we recommend the development and roll-out of well-evidenced, Respect-accredited programmes designed to address and prevent perpetration of so-called “honour”-based abuse.**

³⁴ Domestic Abuse Commissioner (2022), *Safety before Status: The Solutions*. Available at: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1122607/FE02769157_Safety_Before_Status_The_Solutions_Accessible.pdf

³⁵ Interview available at: <https://safelives.org.uk/spotlight-4-honour-based-violence-and-forced-marriage>

³⁶ SafeLives (2017), *Your Choice: ‘honour’-based violence, forced marriage and domestic abuse*.

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?

We echo Karma Nirvana's recommendation:

“Develop stronger national data to better understand the scope, scale and prevalence of – and appropriate responses to – Honour Based Abuse.

- a) *We call upon the government to re-evaluate existing datasets collated on Honour Based Abuse, and to the review to what extent this data influences policy decision making and resource allocations.*
- b) *Future crime datasets on Honour Based Abuse should be included in the crime Survey that the Office for National Statistics (ONS) undertake on Domestic Abuse to enable greater accountability for how all forms of Domestic Abuse are recorded. Currently, Honour Based Abuse data is being artificially separated from ONS Domestic Abuse publications, linked to problematic connotations of Honour Based Abuse being a ‘cultural’ problem rather than a ‘Domestic Abuse’ problem.*
- c) *The Department of Education to include categories for Honour Based Abuse and Forced Marriage under ‘factors identified at the end of assessment’ within the annual Child in Need and Child Protection census. This will enable the first baseline dataset capture for Honour Based Abuse from Children Social Care.”³⁷*

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

There are circumstances commonly found in cases of so-called “honour”-based abuse which can entail additional risks and barriers to help-seeking. For example, many victims of so-called “honour”-based abuse are migrants to the UK and may need an interpreter or may be reliant on a perpetrator for a visa. Our Insights dataset found that a quarter (23%) of victims of so-called “honour”-based abuse accessing Insights services had no recourse to public funds (NRPF) and a quarter (26%) required an interpreter. Victims of so-called “honour”-based abuse may find that the police, other statutory agencies, or support services do not provide an interpreter, or they may simply assume that they cannot speak to frontline professionals due to their not speaking English. When an interpreter is available, a victim of so-called “honour”-based abuse may not use the same terminology as professionals, which can act as a barrier to victims’ help-seeking and professionals’ ability to identify abuse, or may come from a country in which what they are experiencing is not a crime. Migrants to this country may lack knowledge of the help available to them or a safe support network, and may decide not to report the abuse for fear of information sharing practices between the police and Immigration Enforcement. We know that perpetrators may use a migrant victim’s immigration status against them, for example, using threats to report the victim to the Home Office, refusing to apply for visa extensions to push the victim into undocumented status, or using spousal visa requirements to prevent the victim from ending the relationship. In her Spotlights interview, Dr Gangoli highlighted that *“First generation immigrant women, they either didn’t know how to contact the police; they didn’t know that they could just dial 999, for instance, sometimes they didn’t have a phone with them, for instance.”³⁸* Again, **we recommend that the Domestic Violence Rule and Destitution Domestic Violence Concession (DDVC) should be extended to all migrant survivors, regardless of their immigration status. Moreover, the Home Office should implement an information-sharing firewall between police and immigration enforcement agencies to allow victims and survivors of domestic abuse to safely report without fear of deportation. Moreover, Police should ensure that victims of so-called “honour”-based abuse are able to access all special measures available to vulnerable or intimidated victims and are proactively made aware that these special measures are available to protect them from intimidation and further harm.**

There are also common difficulties relating to housing and finance. In some instances, the victim and perpetrator(s) may have jointly owned a home for a long time. This can be challenging, making it harder

³⁷ Karma Nirvana (2022, unpublished), *Call for Evidence on Honour Based Abuse: Karma Nirvana Written Evidence (Summary and Recommendations)*

³⁸ Ibid.

for the victim to move away, especially if they have long-term support networks nearby. Financial issues can exacerbate this situation, with the victim never having been financially independent, or the perpetrator(s) controlling finances as part of the abuse. Financial and benefit issues also relate to immigration status, which in some cases will be unresolved or dependent on the perpetrator(s). Some victims/survivors will be living in larger households, sharing living space with other families. This may contravene tenancy regulations, exacerbating the problem of a victim of so-called “honour”-based abuse being able to seek help from people considered to be acting in an official capacity. The role of the community in perpetrating or condoning abuse means that survivors are often unable to return to their communities even after the immediate risk has been addressed. As with survivors of all domestic abuse, for survivors of so-called “honour”-based abuse, the impact on their wellbeing, their sense of belonging, and their day-to-day life can be severe and long lasting.

Victims of so-called “honour”-based abuse may find it difficult to engage even when the immediate risk is reduced

It is important to remember that many of the barriers that prevent victims from reporting the abuse in the first instance are still present at the point at which they are in contact with services. These barriers may cause survivors of so-called “honour”-based abuse to choose not to take offers of support at all, or to do so gradually or inconsistently.

Where so-called “honour”-based abuse has been identified, it is important to understand that further actions may be perceived as “dishonourable” or “shameful”. This can hinder the ability of victims of so-called “honour”-based abuse to engage with agencies, and the ability of agencies to identify further risks and keep victims safe.

In addition, the website for Karma Nirvana’s Survivor Ambassadors Programme features a number of frequently asked questions which reveal many survivors’ fears and concerns once they have left their perpetrator(s).³⁹ Questions include: “I have ended up lonely, maybe it was better to stay at home;” “they are telling me to come home, they say my mother is sick;” “it’s my birthday and no one cares if I am dead or alive;” “my children don’t have their family anymore now, have I ruined their future?” Such concerns may be all the more prevalent for victims of so-called “honour”-based abuse than for victims of other forms of domestic abuse given the increased likelihood that the former will have multiple perpetrators and that family members will be involved in perpetrating abuse.

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

The 2015 HMIC report on the police response to so-called “honour”-based abuse found that there was a very low level of readiness to respond to this form of abuse, with only 3 out of 43 forces assessed as ready to respond across all areas of the inspection.⁴⁰ Moreover, the inspection found that, while 40 forces were prepared to respond to some extent, the majority of these were equipped only to respond to the early stages of reports, but were unprepared for enforcement and prevention. This reflects the findings of the participatory research carried out by the University of Bristol alongside the report, which was described by Dr Gangoli in her Spotlights interview. This research found that 20 out of 34 participants in the study were happy with the police’s initial response to their report of so-called “honour”-based abuse, but only 9 of the 34 were happy with their overall experience: *“there was a sense among some participants that the role of the police was to move women to safe accommodation and then withdraw.”*⁴¹

We echo Karma Nirvana’s calls for a review of policing progress to implement recommendations set out in the 2015 report, and for the Home Secretary to consider a re-inspection of the police response to so-called “honour”-based abuse.

³⁹ Karma Nirvana (n.d.), *Dear Jasvinder Q&A*. Available at: <https://knsap.org.uk/survivor-faqs>

⁴⁰ HMIC (2015), *The depths of dishonour: Hidden voices and shameful crimes*.

A force is described as being prepared overall for protecting people from harm caused by so-called “honour”-based abuse if it was assessed by the HMIC as prepared in all areas of ‘leadership’, ‘awareness and understanding’, ‘protection’ and ‘enforcement and prevention’

⁴¹ HMIC (2015), *The depths of dishonour: Hidden voices and shameful crimes*.

Speaking to SafeLives about this research, Dr Gangoli explained that cultural awareness was a key part of this; for instance, the lack of understanding on the part of police about why other women in the family may not be speaking out about their knowledge of the abuse: so-called “honour”-based abuse *“adds a different level of complexity where you’re trying to understand issues and scenarios that are not common place... there is a skills gap between police training and real practice.”*

A SafeLives Pioneer survivor of domestic abuse who is also a police officer told us about her experiences of the police response. She highlighted that most domestic abuse training for police officers and staff does not cover so-called “honour”-based abuse, and domestic abuse training is provided infrequently and not regularly updated. The Pioneer had undertaken a day’s course on so-called “honour”-based abuse which included a 45-minute video on the case of the so-called “honour” killing of Banaz Mahmood, but fellow learners on the course shared that they felt the course was too long. This is despite much longer and more in-depth courses being the norm for crimes such as non-“honour”-based murder. The Pioneer shared that the inequality in the time dedicated to different crimes highlights a lack of genuine understanding around the severity of so-called “honour”-based abuse and the experiences of victims of this form of abuse.

The Pioneer raised that, where there are policies to address so-called “honour”-based abuse, these have little impact on the day-to-day of policing. Though such policies may be signposted to as the answer to addressing the police response to so-called “honour”-based abuse, many people simply do not learn from reading policies, for example, if they are dyslexic or learn best from ‘live’ training. The Pioneer felt that there is little translation from policy to daily practice in policing, with a lack of understanding around local demographics, and what “understanding cultural issues” actually looks like. Moreover, she raised a lack of knowledge around how to respond to the outcomes of a so-called “honour”-based abuse risk assessment; for example, what does an officer do once an assessment has identified multiple perpetrators? Concerningly, in the Pioneer’s experience, she identified an attitude among some colleagues of wanting to look the other way: *“if you don’t know the information, you don’t need to act on it.”* Police officers, and staff from other agencies, must have a working knowledge of local communities’ cultures and religions in order to be able to address so-called “honour”-based abuse; the Pioneer suggested a service providing cultural insights could be useful: a cultural version of the translation service, Language Line. **Policies on so-called “honour”-based abuse must be accompanied with practice guidance and ‘live’ training which is in-depth and regularly updated to meet the challenge of the constant evolution of all forms of domestic abuse.**

We note that Karma Nirvana have shared concerns that the rollout of the police DARA (Domestic Abuse Risk Assessment) tool risks future cases of so-called “honour”-based abuse being missed by frontline police officers. We echo their call that ***“Police Chiefs [must] consider how frontline police officers can be supported to identify cases of Honour Based Abuse as/when the DARA risk assessment tool is rolled out nationally. The DARA risk assessment tool excludes the screen question for Honour Based Abuse that is on the DASH risk assessment.”***⁴² **We recommend that evidence-based improvements are made to the DARA to make it more useful and effective in identifying multiple types of domestic abuse.** Questions remain around the roll out of training for frontline officers in the DARA tool: training must include the identification of and response to so-called “honour”-based abuse.

The issue of training extends beyond police officers and includes staff working in the control rooms. The Pioneer shared the “one chance rule,” telling us: *“if you don’t respond properly the first time, they’re unlikely to call back.”* She shared her experience of spending hours with a victim of so-called “honour”-based abuse in an attempt to rebuild trust after the victim had a poor experience when they first contacted the police. As such, **999 call handlers must also receive training from specialist organisations in order to be able to respond to victims of so-called “honour”-based abuse appropriately.**

The SafeLives Pioneer recommended that police should be able to give useful and potentially life-saving advice to victims of so-called “honour”-based abuse around their passports or airports, etc, at the point of first contact with the victim. In addition, she recommended that the pack on so-called “honour”-based abuse, developed by Karma Nirvana, be carried by all first responders.

⁴² Karma Nirvana (2022, unpublished), *Call for Evidence on Honour Based Abuse: Karma Nirvana Written Evidence (Summary and Recommendations)*

The police should ensure that victims of so-called “honour”-based abuse are able to access all special measures available to vulnerable or intimidated victims and are proactively made aware that these special measures are available to protect them from intimidation and further harm.

Our Insights data found that, despite the barriers to reporting to the police, the percentage of victims of so-called “honour”-based abuse referred to domestic abuse services by the police (34%) was similar to other clients (39%), as was the percentage of self-referrals for victims at risk of so-called “honour”-based abuse (19% compared with 23%). This suggests that those who are not disclosing to the police are also not disclosing to other agencies nor seeking support directly, meaning frontline professionals must do more to enable and encourage these disclosures, as well as be equipped to respond to them and signpost or refer victims/survivors on to specialist support.

Therefore, as well as addressing the barriers to reporting to the police, it will be important that other professionals who may be better placed to identify victims of so-called “honour”-based abuse (such as health professionals, teachers or social workers) are equipped to identify, respond and refer them to domestic abuse services. For instance, according to Insights data, over half (57%) of victims at risk of so-called “honour”-based abuse had visited their GP in past 12 months, and 19% had attended A&E as a direct result of the abuse. Despite this only 6% of clients were referred to the domestic abuse services from health professionals.⁴³

Our Spotlights contributors stressed the importance of all agencies building the confidence to fully understand what is happening for victims of so-called “honour”-based abuse. In an interview, Shigufta Khan, CEO of the Wish Centre, highlighted that sometimes professionals may recognise what is happening but be deterred by culturally specific circumstances that they may not feel equipped to deal with: *“It’s in the ‘too difficult to deal with’ box, so let’s not open that box... but if you’ve got these additional factors that are happening or going on, unless you open that box up and look at it and actually unpick everything that is going on, you are not going to deal with the root cause of the problem.”*

The cultural context may influence the way that the victim experiences the abuse and should be explored and understood carefully. However, it will also be important for professionals to remember that cultural circumstances should not affect the criminal or safeguarding response to suspected abuse; it does not alter the fact that the behaviour is harmful and unacceptable.

It will also be up to professionals to identify so-called “honour”-based abuse when a victim does not feel able to come forward despite knowing the support is available. **If all professionals are given the confidence to identify so-called “honour”-based abuse, to help victims to overcome the barriers to reporting the abuse, this will be an important step in ensuring those who need it are referred to domestic abuse services for support.**

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

The SafeLives Pioneer survivors of domestic abuse highlighted a knowledge gap in the Violence Against Women and Girls sector, which can act as a barrier for victims of so-called “honour”-based abuse seeking help and support, and as a barrier to professionals identifying those at risk. One Pioneer highlighted that services with a founder or CEO who is, themselves, a survivor of so-called “honour”-based abuse are more likely to be trusted to have a good understanding of this form of abuse throughout the organisation. One Pioneer felt that accredited Idva (Independent domestic violence advisors) training, of which SafeLives is a major provider, should give greater emphasis and time to the issue of so-called “honour”-based abuse, and cover cultural issues in greater detail. A formal review of the current course content related to so-called “honour”-based abuse for our Accredited Courses will be conducted ahead of the Autumn 2023 delivery. Additionally, SafeLives are working alongside Hafan Cymru, to develop a one-day course focusing on Harmful Cultural Practices, funded by Welsh Government as part of their National Training Framework.

Mainstream support services must work to become more culturally competent, working closely with by and for services who work with marginalised survivors, including Karma Nirvana,

⁴³ SafeLives (2017), *Your Choice: ‘honour’-based violence, forced marriage and domestic abuse*.

Sharan, and many more. Mainstream services must work to ensure that they recognise that so-called “honour”-based abuse can take place across a wide range of cultures and communities, including in GRT communities, Jewish communities, Christian communities, and many more.

December 2022