Nobody asked me. Nobody heard me.

Where was my voice?

A suite of e-learning modules for safeguarding professionals on 'Honour'-Based Abuse

co-authored with survivors

Karma Nirvana

Project Report - September 2026

Registered Charity Number 1089477

About Karma Nirvana

Karma Nirvana is a leading national charity in the field of 'Honour'-Based Abuse (HBA). Founded in 1993 by Dame Jasvinder Sanghera CBE, DBE, it is the longest established specialist charity supporting and empowering those impacted by HBA and forced marriage across the UK.

Karma Nirvana delivers the government-commissioned national helpline, an HBA Identification Tool and a specialist counselling service. We also provide training for multi-agency professionals and regularly work with police, social services, healthcare staff and education providers to strengthen responses to HBA.

Established in 2014, Karma Nirvana's Survivor Ambassador Panel brings together survivors who use their experience to drive change. Survivor ambassadors are involved across our work, including training and campaigns.

Most recently, Karma Nirvana led the #Push4Change campaign in memory of Fawziyah Javed. Working alongside over sixty sector partners and government officials, the campaign secured a statutory definition of 'Honour'-Based Abuse and accompanying statutory guidance through the Crime and Policing Act, which gained royal assent in April 2026.

Acknowledgements

First and foremost, we thank the survivor co-authors, Aaliyah, Rina, Sughra, Sunny Angel, Surrinder and Zee, for the expertise, courage and commitment they brought to this project. Their experiences have shaped every aspect of the work.

We are grateful to the Home Office for funding the development of these e-learning modules, and to the Home Office HBA Policy Team for their collaboration, feedback and insight throughout the project.

We also thank the 73 professional stakeholders who responded to the consultation and shared their expertise. Particular thanks go to our expert scrutiny panels: Rachel Freeman and Dawn Jotham, colleagues at the Naz and Matt Foundation, Clennell Education Solutions and The Traveller Movement.

Finally, we thank the Learning Curve team for their collaboration and expertise throughout the development process.

> *I'm not going to let my pain be wasted*
> **- Sunny Angel, survivor co-author**

Context: Taking The Chance out of 'The One Chance Rule'

In cases of 'Honour'-Based Abuse, the "one chance" rule is well established: the single opportunity a professional may have to intervene, respond and potentially save a life.

Yet survivors repeatedly tell us that their experiences with professionals came down to chance. Whether they were identified, believed or safeguarded often depends on inconsistent practice and uneven awareness of the steps required. Too often, the one chance passes unrecognised. This training has been developed to change that.

The suite of modules, funded by the Home Office, is designed to equip professionals with the knowledge, confidence and practical understanding needed to recognise 'Honour'-Based Abuse, respond safely and act decisively.

> *I was begging silently, telepathically, begging the doctor to ask me… Are you not suspicious?*
>
> **- Aaliyah, survivor co-author**

The Training Suite at a Glance

At the centre of this work are four new interactive e-learning units, each co-authored with survivors:

- 'Honour'-Based Abuse
- Virginity Testing and Hymenoplasty
- Breast Flattening
- Multi-Agency Working

These units complement two existing modules on Forced Marriage and Female Genital Mutilation (FGM), forming a six-part suite designed to strengthen professional understanding of HBA and related harmful practices.

The training will be freely accessible to safeguarding professionals across England and Wales and signposted within the government's statutory guidance on 'Honour'-Based Abuse.

> *It's just missed at so many levels because people don't understand what Honour-Based Abuse is.*
> **— Rina, survivor co-author**

Survivor Reference Group

Six survivor ambassadors were recruited as co-authors through Karma Nirvana's Survivor Ambassador Panel and paid for their time and expertise.

The survivors acted as co-authors rather than consultants. They shaped the project from the outset through interviews, group discussions and ongoing feedback. Three brought both lived and professional experience, including backgrounds in healthcare, child protection social work and domestic abuse services.

Their experiences informed the learning design, activities and case studies throughout the suite. Composite survivor experiences underpin each scenario and assessment, ensuring the training reflects recurring safeguarding themes while protecting individual privacy. Wellbeing support was available throughout the process.

Each survivor chose how their experiences would be represented and elected to use their first name within the project. Survivors told us that using their own names was an important way of taking ownership of their experiences and a powerful form of advocacy to help protect others.

> *My body, my everything, my identity - you guys didn't honour it... I can choose and mix it how I want because that's who I am. I'm a product of all these worlds.*
> **— Sughra, survivor co-author**

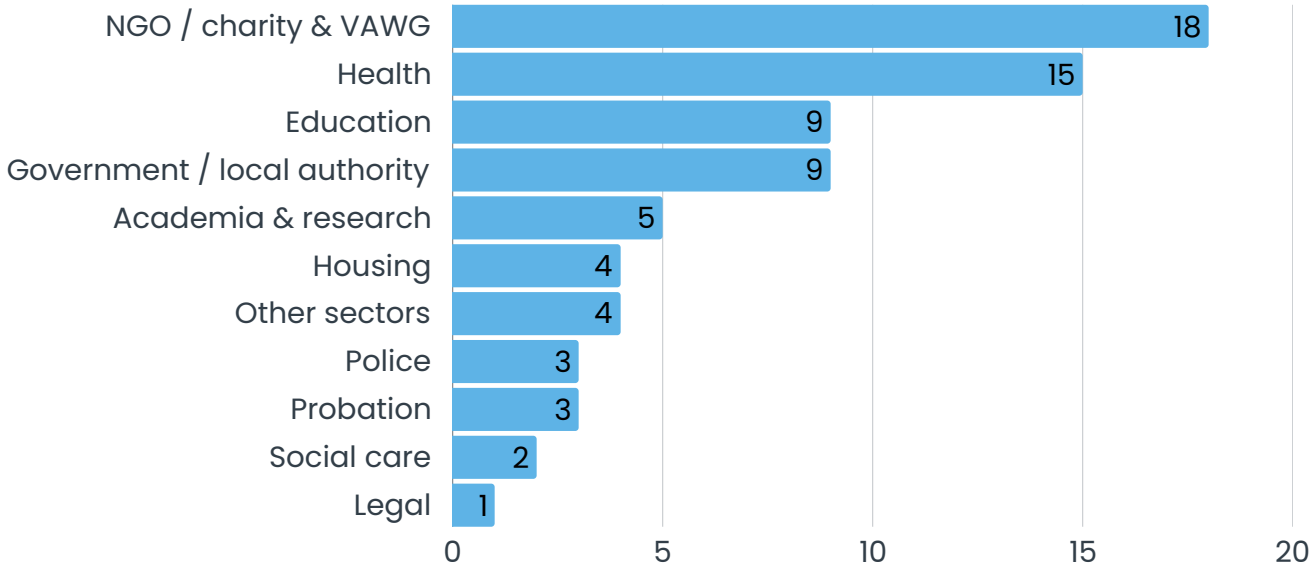
Professional Stakeholders and Expert Panels

To ensure the training reflected the realities of safeguarding practice, Karma Nirvana carried out a national consultation with 73 professionals across policing, healthcare, social care, education, NGOs and legal services.

Stakeholders identified priorities for the e-learning, examples of effective practice and areas where safeguarding responses continue to fall short. Academics also contributed research and contextual expertise.

Breakdown of respondents by sector

73 professionals responded to the national consultation



The consultation shaped the development of the case studies and led to focused scrutiny panels covering:

- Safeguarding in schools and early years
- The experiences of men and boys
- LGBTQIA+ communities
- Policing
- Healthcare
- Romani (Gypsy), Roma and Irish Traveller communities

"...Because I didn't know how to say it"

Across both survivor interviews and the professional consultation, similar themes emerged around barriers to disclosure and timely safeguarding responses.

Common Themes from Survivors and the Sector

Theme	From survivors	From professional stakeholders
Collective risk and multiple perpetration	*"I was told that if we did not behave in an honourable way, we would be killed by family in the UK or abroad. I had no doubt they meant it"* ***— Surrinder***	*"Too much focus on individual perpetrators or seeing people as protective factors, when they could present a risk."* ***— NGO professional***
Community Standing	*"They assume that it links to their honour and their respect in their community, their status in their community."* ***— Sughra***	*"...understanding family and community pressures, completing a proper risk assessment."* ***— VAWG professional***
Speak to the victim alone	*"But nobody spoke to me alone."* ***— Zee***	*"The practitioner failed to speak with the victim privately and allowed a family member to stay in the room, which limited the victim's ability to disclose safely."* ***— Legal professional***

Barriers to disclosure	*"I was begging silently, telepathically, begging the doctor to ask me…"* ***— Aaliyah***	*"…when EDs are over capacity and clinical care prioritised this may be missed as staff do not always practice 'professional curiosity' as this may "open a can of worms" that they feel too busy to deal with."* ***— Healthcare professional***
Assumptions based on culture are damaging	*"People just assume 'oh well, it's a cultural thing. Or it's a religious thing'… it happens behind closed doors."* ***— Rina***	*"What not to do or assume is as important as what to do."* ***— Education professional***
Recognising 'Honour'-Based Abuse breaks cycles	*"I' want to use my pain and what I went through, to keep others safe."* ***— Sunny Angel***	*"If you can catch it and stop it, you may have stopped an intergenerational cycle of abuse and violence."* ***— Social care professional***

Working with Statutory Guidance and Legislation

A wide range of statutory guidance informed the development of the suite, including the Forced Marriage Guidance, FGM Guidance, Domestic Abuse Act guidance and the Health and Care Act. Stakeholders also highlighted sector-specific frameworks, including Working Together to Safeguard Children and Keeping Children Safe in Education.

The project coincided with Karma Nirvana's #Push4Change campaign for a statutory definition of 'Honour'-Based Abuse. Following royal assent of the Crime and Policing Act in April 2026, the definition was incorporated into the training during the final stages of development. Karma Nirvana continues to work with the government and sector partners on the accompanying statutory guidance.

Every survivor co-author contributed to the campaign for a statutory definition through Karma Nirvana's Survivor Ambassador Panel. The legislation they helped secure now underpins the training they helped author.

> *We've finally got a legal framework to tell the family what you're doing is wrong. Don't put the onus on the child to make a decision.*
>
> **— Zee, survivor co-author**

Learning Design

The e-learning was designed to be interactive, while deliberately avoiding gamification. The aim was to build professional confidence through activities that support practical learning without losing sight of the realities of abuse and safeguarding.

Activities include:

- body-map exercises exploring the physical and emotional impact of harmful practices
- sector-specific learning pathways
- matching tasks and branching decision trees
- scenario-based assessments
- professional challenge and escalation activities
- 'Control Disguised as Care' exercises drawn from survivor testimony

Each learning segment combines survivor testimony with legislation and statutory guidance, ensuring safeguarding responsibilities remain connected to lived experience.

Many activities are rooted directly in survivors' own words. Body-map activities draw on descriptions of bodily control and autonomy:

> *They feel like they own your womb... It's not up to you what you do with your body.*
>
> **— Sunny Angel, survivor co-author**

The scenarios and decision trees also reinforce that risk often extends beyond a single perpetrator to wider family and community networks:

> *I had the nosy neighbour, Mrs Marple down the road, who knew everything about you, that the news would get home before you would.*
>
> **— Zee, survivor co-author**

Case Studies and Themes

Each unit is built around a composite case study drawn from survivor testimony, Survivor Ambassador Panel input and the professional consultation. No scenario represents one individual story; instead, each reflects recurring patterns, risks and safeguarding challenges identified across the project.

Unit 1 — 'Honour'-Based Abuse: Samira

Samira, 14, experiences increasing family surveillance and control following puberty, with concerns also extending to her siblings.

Key learning: collective perpetration; risks across genders and ages; professional interpreters; information-sharing; multi-agency safeguarding responses.

Themes: masculinity and sexuality; puberty-triggered control; racism and race anxiety; multi-agency working.

Unit 2 — Virginity Testing and Hymenoplasty: Meena

Meena, 21, discloses family pressure to undergo virginity testing or hymenoplasty ahead of a forced marriage.

Key learning: harmful practices as normalised abuse; consent and coercion; adult safeguarding; healthcare responses; specialist signposting.

Themes: purity culture; collective family enforcement; forced marriage; legal understanding and misconceptions.

Unit 3 — Breast Flattening: Grace

Grace, 12, is subjected to breast flattening by female relatives who frame the abuse as protective and caring.

Key learning: abuse disguised as care; barriers to disclosure; trust-building; immigration-related fears; safeguarding children without requiring disclosure or evidence.

Themes: women as perpetrators; normalisation of abuse; children and consent; NRPF and immigration concerns.

Unit 4 — Multi-Agency Responses: Tara

Tara, 19, from an Irish Traveller background, is admitted to hospital after fleeing forced marriage and HBA.

Key learning: timely escalation; professional challenge; safety planning; multi-agency coordination; legal protections and specialist support.

Themes: forced marriage; coercive control; network mobilisation; LGBTQI+ vulnerability; effective safeguarding responses.

Personal Reflections on the Project

"It is vital that professionals completing the e-learning modules understand the nuances victims often cannot recognise themselves."

- Aaliyah, Survivor co-author

"As a survivor, helping write the Home Office 'Honour' Based Abuse E-Learning Programme was an act of rescue. When professionals hesitate out of lack of knowledge and fear of causing offence, it is the victim who pays the ultimate price. That is exactly why this E-learning is so vital and why Survivor Co-authorship was absolutely necessary.

- Sunny Angel, Survivor co-author

Next Steps

Karma Nirvana is committed to promoting the widespread uptake and embedding of this e-learning suite across safeguarding systems in England and Wales. We will continue working with statutory agencies, charities and multi-agency partners to encourage organisations to pledge engagement with the training and promote completion amongst their teams.

We are also committed to monitoring and evaluating the impact of the training over time, including learner engagement, professional confidence and its contribution to improved safeguarding responses and outcomes for victims and survivors of 'Honour'-Based Abuse and harmful practices. As safeguarding practice and statutory guidance continue to evolve, the suite will remain under review to ensure the learning stays current, responsive and survivor-informed.

Contact and links and resources

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