

Honour Based Abuse:

*Perspectives from
Lived Experience*

DO YOU OR SOMEONE YOU KNOW NEED HELP?

If you are in an emergency situation, please call 999.

Karma Nirvana National Helpline

If you are at risk, or if you are concerned for someone who is,

please contact Karma Nirvana's National Helpline:
Free / 0800 5999 247 / Mon-Fri 9am-5pm

Forced Marriage Unit

The FMU operates a public helpline to provide advice and support to:

- victims and potential victims of forced marriage
- professionals dealing with cases

The FMU public helpline can help with:

- safety advice
- providing assistance when an unwanted spouse is due to move to the UK ('reluctant sponsor' cases)
- where possible, assistance in repatriation of victims held against their will overseas

Call: +44 (0) 20 7008 0151

In Scotland?

You can also call

Scotland's Domestic Abuse and Forced Marriage Helpline:
0800 027 1234

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Project Background

There has been an increasing call for those with lived experience to be involved in research on the issues which have affected them. It is important to do so in a way that enables people to tell their stories in their own way, and that avoid sensationalism and re-traumatisation.

For this project, the University of Nottingham's Rights Lab, in collaboration with Karma Nirvana and The Survivor Arts Community, engaged survivors of Honour Based Abuse in arts-based workshops, giving them the tools to express themselves and their stories creatively.

It is our belief that art has the power not only to promote recovery and healing, empowering survivors and building a sense of community among those with shared experiences, but also to raise awareness and change the way we think about important social issues and the people they impact.

We invite you to engage with survivors' creations to think about how creative practice can be a medium of communication for survivors of Honour Based Abuse in which they get to tell the stories they want to tell, and an outlet through which they can explore and reflect on their own experiences on their own terms.

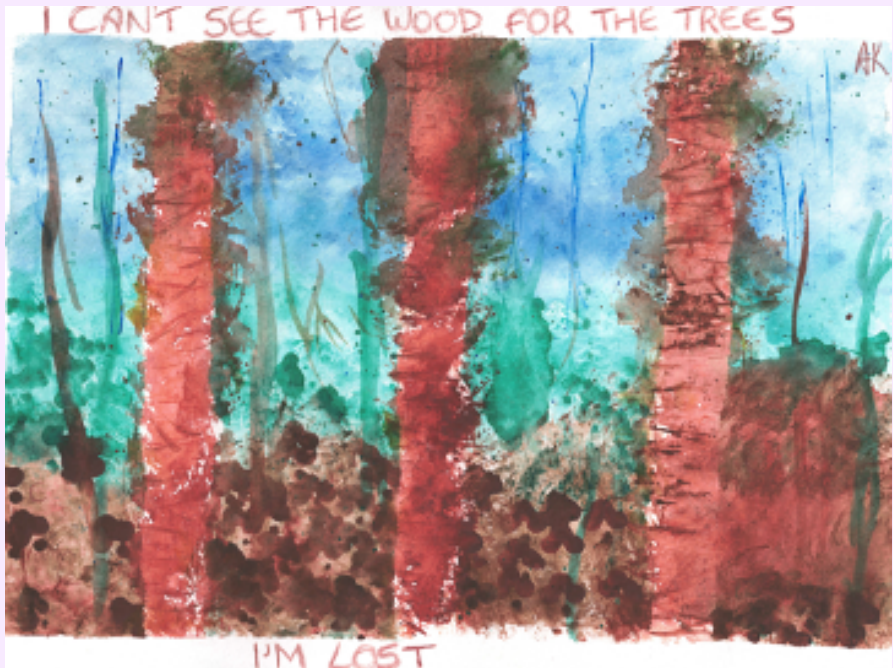
This project was funded by Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC) follow-on funding.



University of
Nottingham
Rights Lab



AK



“The project has impacted me in a positive way, in terms of boosting my confidence and self-esteem. I created a painting, well four paintings! I drew chaos thinking it would cause me stress and anxiety, but instead explored the feelings of uncertainty”



“I had no experience in writing, painting or drawing. I had written the odd blog in the past, but hadn't had it printed anywhere.

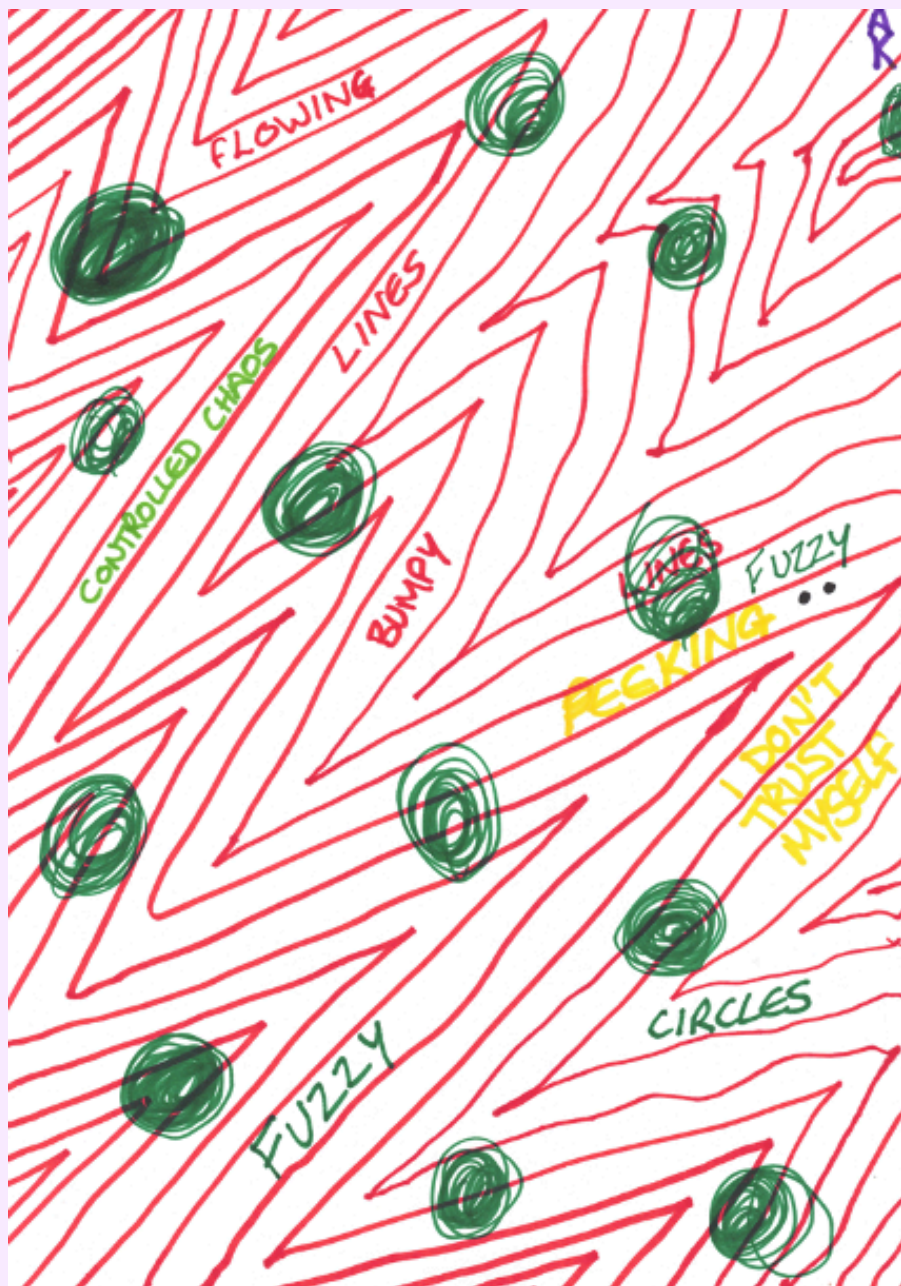
As soon as I realised it didn't matter that I wasn't able to draw or paint, I wanted to take part in the project. I wasn't sure of what to expect from the project, and tried to keep an open mind but I was hoping to learn something creative.”



"I thoroughly enjoyed the project, it was a lovely experience in terms of learning something new, being in the company of other women and being able to forget about real life for a couple of hours and have fun."

“I've learned that it's not scary to go out of your comfort zone and learn something new, that it can be an enjoyable experience but you have to be in the right frame of mind.”





The Workshops

In 2023, Survivors of Honour Based Abuse in the UK took part in six creative workshops focussing on watercolour painting, creative writing, and illustration. In each workshop, activities were open for survivors to engage in different ways, whether that related to any personal experiences or not.

Juliana Capes kicked off the project by leading two watercolour painting sessions. These relaxing, slow-paced workshops focussed on painting nature scenes; both forests and seas. Survivors learned to use everyday objects, including cotton buds, cling film, toothpicks and salt, to experiment with shapes and textures in their paintings.

The third and fourth workshops were led by Heather H. Yeung and engaged participants in creative writing. Again, nature was the focus of the first creative writing workshop, which took inspiration from the gorgeous historic plant specimens from the Herbarium Collections at the University of Dundee. With particular emphasis on one pressing of a Wild Carrot, survivors began a writing process out of close and distant observation. Then, in week four, activities took inspiration from weaving. Survivors took a simple thread as the starting point for writing and considered two mythic weavers, Arachne and Penelope.



For the final two workshops, Julia Syrzistie built on the themes that Heather introduced, engaging survivors in the art of illustration. In this way, survivors had the opportunity to illustrate their own writing, or to take inspiration from prompts shared by Julia.



The first illustration workshop looked at the rich history of botanical illustration, considering colours, forms and textures. Then, the final workshop of this project used fibre arts as inspiration for creating patterned illustrations, drawing from the rich history of quilts, weavings, and tapestries.

PROJECT TEAM

Dr Lauren Eglen – Rights Lab, Project Lead
Eloise Birtwhistle – The Survivor Arts Community Lead
Rowena Fletcher – Karma Nirvana Lead
Members of the Karma Nirvana
Survivor Ambassador Panel
Ali Kerr – Support Worker
Workshop Leads
Juliana Capes – Painting
Heather H. Yeung – Creative Writing
Julia Syrzistie – Illustration

Social Media

@rightsbeacon

@KNFMHBV

@LaurenEglen

@survivorartscommunity

Find Out More

<https://www.nottingham.ac.uk/research/beacons-ofexcellence/>

rights-lab/index.aspx

<https://karmanirvana.org.uk/>

<https://www.survivorartscommunity.co.uk/>

WHAT IS HONOUR-BASED ABUSE?

Honour-based abuse is a complex issue that includes a range of harms and abuses; and can be perpetrated by a range of people. While there is currently no statutory definition of Honour Based Abuse, it is defined as:

Any incident or pattern of controlling; coercive; manipulative; intimidating; or threatening behaviour, violence, or abuse perpetrated by one of more family, extended family, and/or community members, and/ or current/former intimate partners in response to perceived or alleged transgressions of accepted behaviours. While most often perpetrated against women and girls, anyone can experience honour-based abuse regardless of age, ethnicity, sexuality, religion, or gender, including men and boys.

It can encompass but is not limited to: psychological, emotional, physical, sexual, spiritual and faith-related, economic, financial, and hate-aggravated abuse; forced marriage; female genital mutilation; abduction; isolation; threats; murder; and other acts of domestic abuse.

People living in the context of an honour dynamic face additional barriers to their ability to speak out against and report abuse for fear of repercussions including further and more severe abuse; shame; stigma; and being shunned/ostracised.

This definition was created by Karma Nirvana's Survivor Ambassador Panel supported by Dr Lauren Eglan, Rights Lab, University of Nottingham. It was launched by Karma Nirvana on the National Day of Memory, 14th July 2023.

The Concept of Honour

For some communities and individuals, the concept of 'honour' is prized above the safety and wellbeing of people. To compromise family, community, or spousal honour is to bring dishonour and shame – which can have severe consequences.

It can lead to the justification of emotional and physical abuse, disownment, and in extreme cases, even murder to preserve honour and avoid shame.

Why is this definition important?

While there has been progress on HBA in the last three decades, including in government and stakeholder response, there remains much to be done. To date, development have most often been reactive and underpinned by problematic attitudes and beliefs about race, culture and religion.

There remains an assumption among some that HBA only occurs in certain communities and that it is a 'cultural,' 'traditional,' or 'religious' problem. But HBA is not sanctioned by any major religion and crimes and harms cut across all cultures, nationalities, faith groups and communities.

These assumptions affect how HBA is dealt with by service providers and government, as well as shaping public understanding about the issue. The result is people not always engaging appropriately which has led to under-reporting and a lack of victim and survivor confidence.

It has created a situation that intensifies HBA's hidden nature and fails to tackle the root causes of these issues – beliefs, values, and attitudes that devalue women and girls that are present in all communities around the world.

HBA remains misunderstood by those directly impacted and those with a duty to protect and safeguard. A focus on race, culture and religion has led to over-identification of HBA in some cases, an under-identification in others, and a situation in which HBA as a form of Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG) has received inefficient attention.

The definition presented in this zine was created with survivors of HBA, some of whom have also created artwork and creative writing for its content.

We hope that this definition reflects the ongoing nature of abuse people face, who the perpetrators are, and the root causes of why people perpetrate in a way that does not reduce motivation to culture and/or religion but positions HBA as a form of a deeper systemic issue that impacts all communities – ideas about how men and women should behave and the roles they should play in society.

HBA can affect anyone regardless of their age, ethnicity, sexuality, religion or gender.

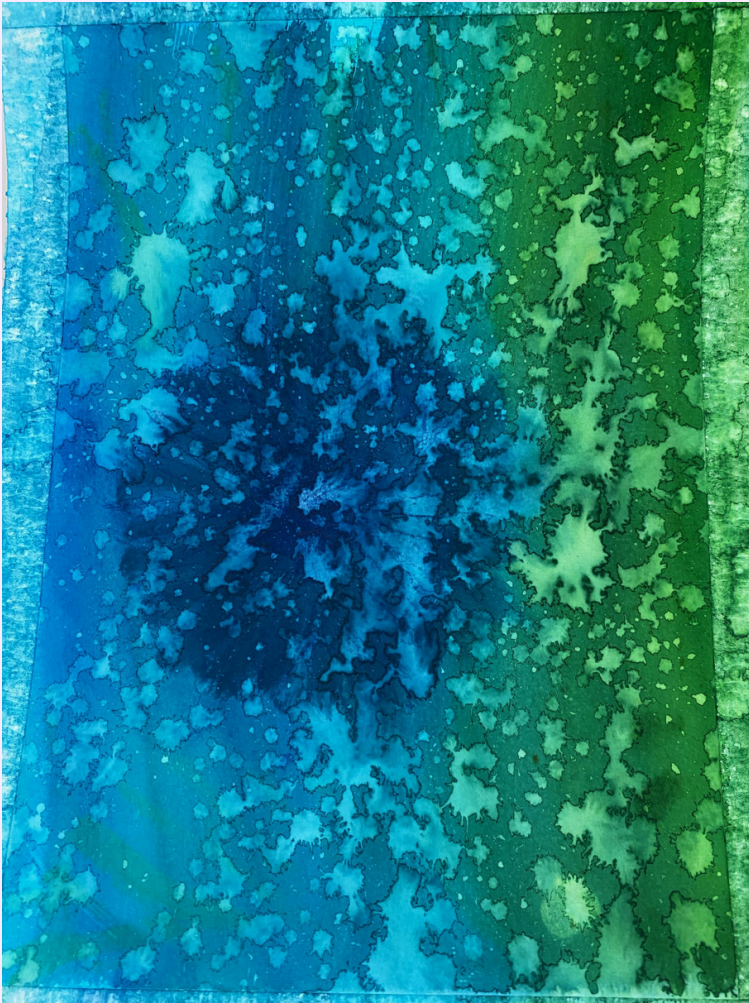
We hope that this definition will serve as a starting point for better understanding and identifying HBA.

KP



“I really enjoyed taking part, I found it relaxing and informative as an approach and surprised myself at how emotional I felt in the sessions. Especially the creative writing piece. It made me delve deeper into myself and reflect on my own personal past experiences.

I really enjoyed exploring my creative abilities, it's something I have continued since as a way to relax and also make time for myself in a busy life. So thank you for letting me be a part of it.”



“It’s been really positive on the whole, it’s also brought up feelings from my past that I feel aren’t as fully resolved as I had thought, I’ve loved meeting and connecting with fellow SAP members and the Karma Nirvana team through the sessions. It’s also shown me that painting and writing is a way to express my feelings and emotions in a way that’s really personal and without explanation.”

Sunny Angel



HOW MANY PEOPLE DOES HONOUR-BASED ABUSE AFFECT?

Honour-Based Abuse is a greatly under-reported issue and existing statistics are unlikely to represent its true scale and prevalence.

Since the beginning of the National Helpline for Honour-Based Abuse in 2008, Karma Nirvana have received 120,000 contacts.

So far this year:

Karma Nirvana have supported 2,540 victims of Honour Based Abuse

456 individuals fled Honour Based Abuse

176 callers were at threat of forced marriage overseas

210 children were supported

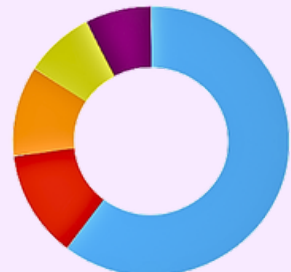
17 cases from the LGBTQI+ community

Who can call?

Anyone can call Karma Nirvana's helpline if you are concerned that you or someone else might be facing or at risk of Honour-Based Abuse.

Referral Source

- Single Victim
- Police
- Third Party
- Children Social Care Services
- Voluntary Domestic Abuse Service



Ikra



“I was interested because after reading the information sheet, I agreed there should be a greater understanding about honour-based abuse and forced marriage, particularly the difference between arranged and forced marriages amongst stakeholders and the public. I really felt it was important for this to be understood from a survivor’s perspective. Furthermore, I have always enjoyed getting stuck into creative mediums – so the fact that I got to engage in the workshops that involved painting, creative writing and illustrations was a bonus! I thought the use of creative workshops really helped me to express how I felt. “



What have you gotten out of the project?

“The chance to express myself and socialise/connect with others in the same position as myself.”

How has the project impacted you?

“I have greater confidence in my creative skills and feel I can use a variety of different mediums. I also realised poetry really inspires me with creative ideas – I had not tried/tested this before!”



Freedom

I know that I am strong and able to move forward.

I am my own Champion, Cheerleader, and Strength.

I have only ever needed me.

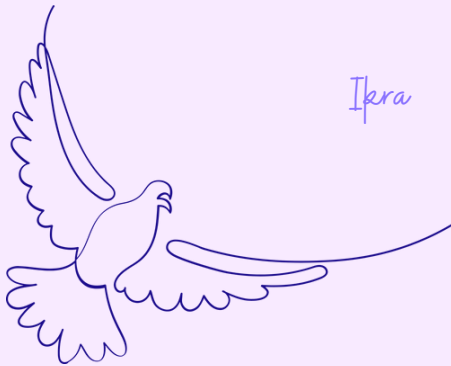
I got myself to where I am today and feel proud of what I have achieved.

I wake up every morning and feel free,

I allow my wings to fly,

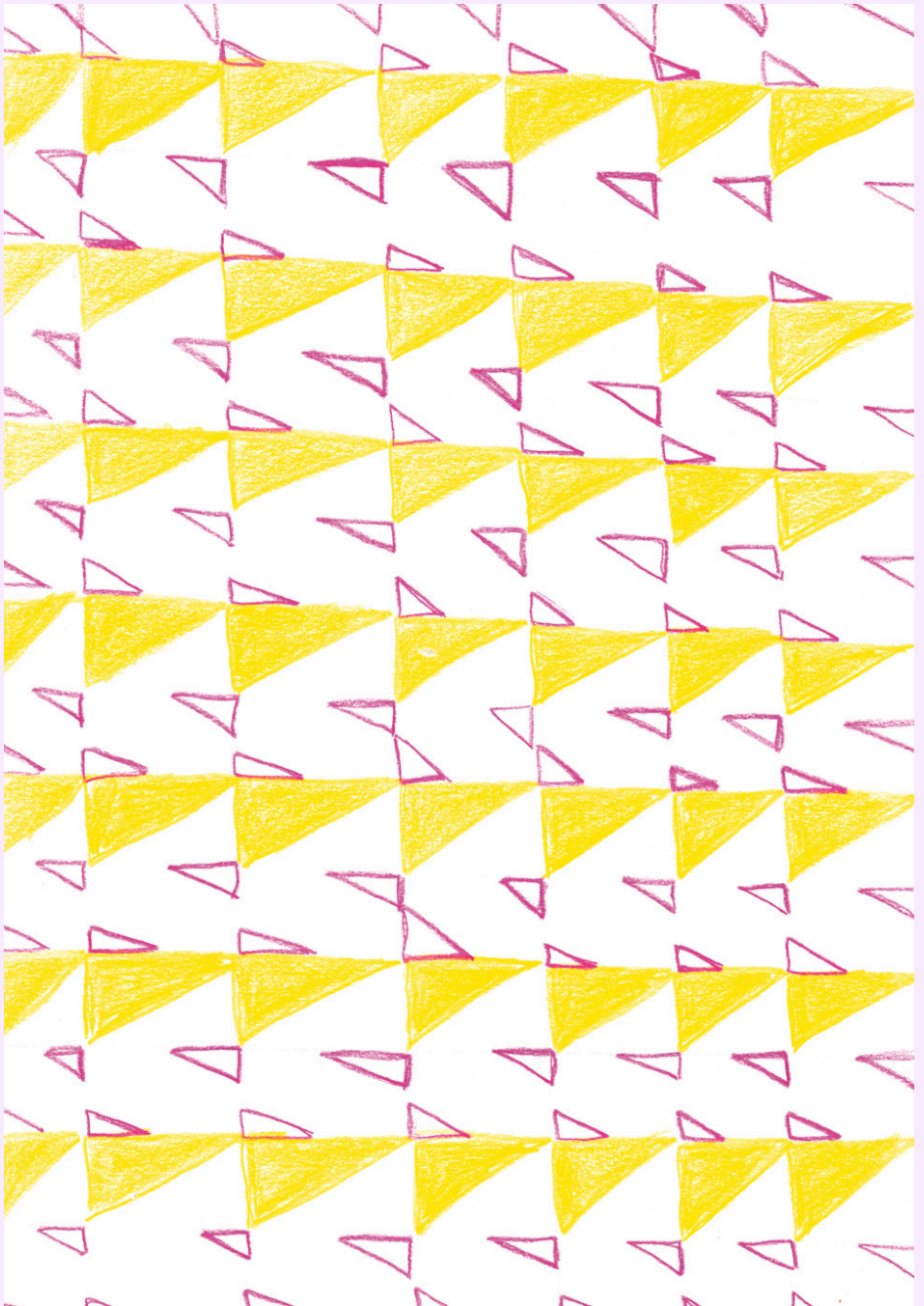
Soar and reach new heights!

Life is beautiful and full of light.



Ikra





Where does Honour-Based Abuse happen?

Honour Based Abuse affects people all over the UK from a range of different communities.

The map shows where calls to Karma Nirvana's helpline are coming from.

When living in on honour dynamic, people can face additional barriers to seeking help which means that even Karma Nirvana's helpline data is unlikely to show the true extent and prevalence of HBA in the UK.



Sughra Saleem

“I feel it's been a positive impact, discussing different viewpoints with others during the sessions. Observing objects from many new angles and then to relate it back to my own experiences was very therapeutic and calming.

I feel I already have started to incorporate these new skills into my life, I have started doing creative writing more often. Observing objects and life around me in a more caring, kind and relaxed manner, appreciating all the little beauties of life.”

Flower

A long slim stem with small blossoms of individual beauty mounted on the top.

A leafy stem to the left, an arm with lots of little hands.

Embedded into this book, captured for others to enjoy over years, time and time again.

Gently picked and laid on to this page, straightened and smartened lined up next to another.

I am left to rest my body, my arms, hands and head.

I lay here waiting and then the book is shut and I have been embedded and kept for years as remains.

The embedded remains have left a ghostly image on my page, bed and on my covers.



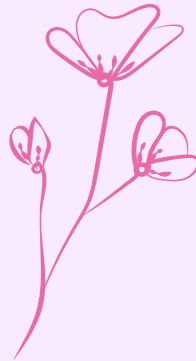
My whole image can still be seen clearly.

My tall slim stem, my arms and many hands.

My beautiful blossom flowered head has left a ghostly
image to show exactly where I laid on this bed.

Embedded into this page, into this book, of many lives like mine.

Many lives like mine.
Sughra Saleem

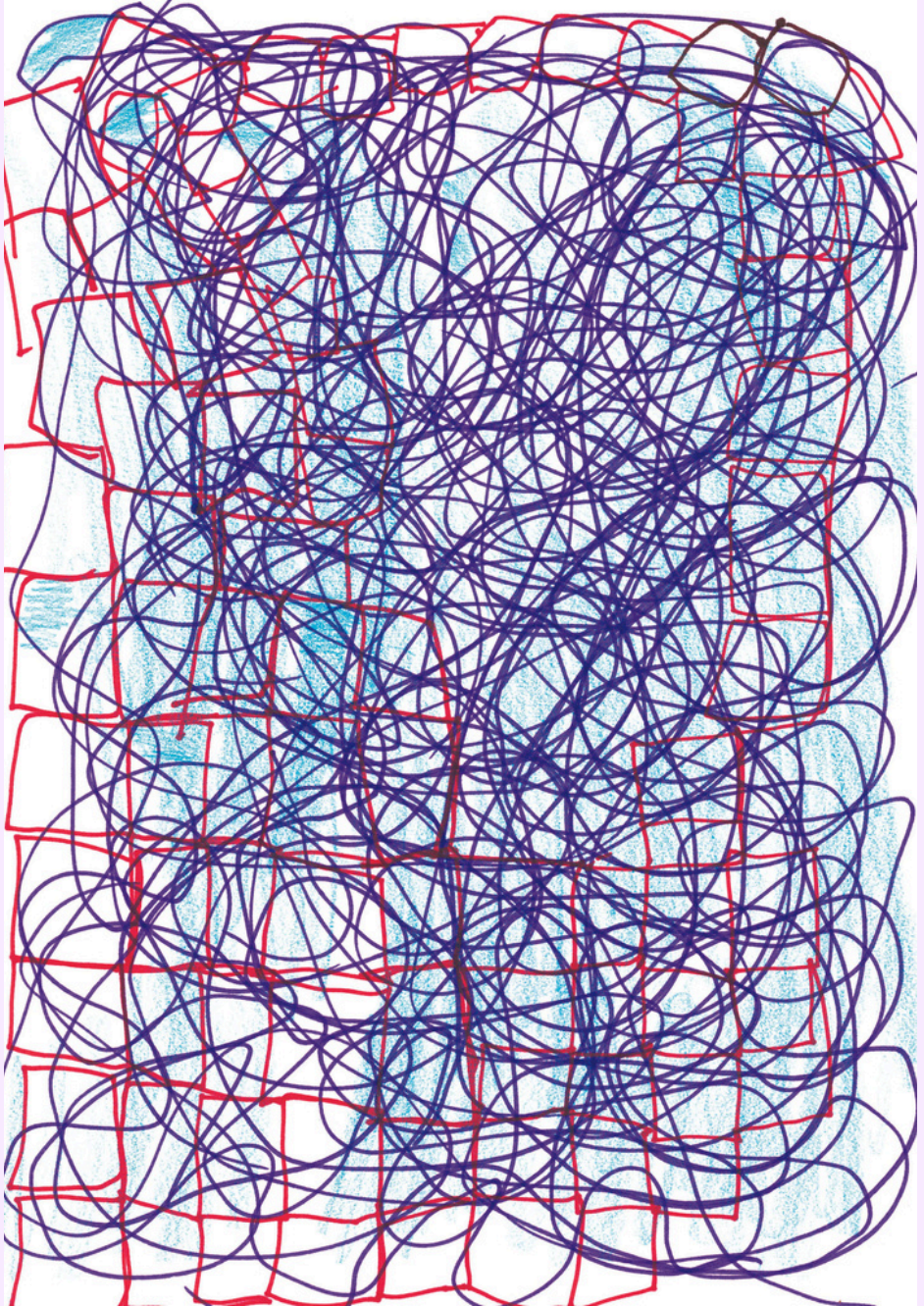


URK



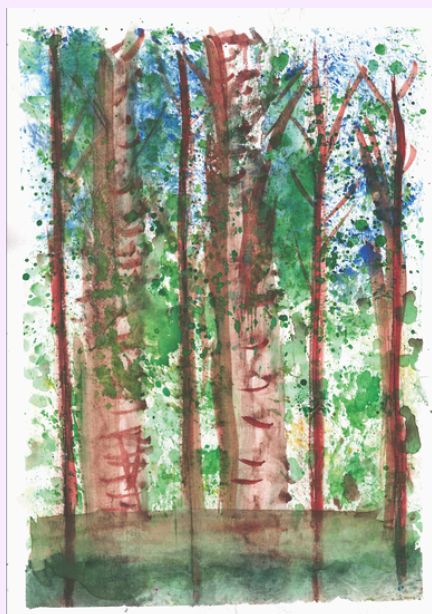
“There are parts of the project I have enjoyed. For instance, using different materials, like salt, clingfilm to add texture to paintings. Also learning about how to create the frame as a border around the paintings, which creates a really clean and professional finished product.

What have you gotten out of the project?
A chance to set aside time to be creative and learn some new skills working with professional artists. An opportunity to work collaboratively with other survivors of honour based abuse and forced marriage, around the country. Time to reflect on experiences.”



How has the project impacted you?

“It has made me even more determined to do whatever I can to raise awareness of the issues around Honour Based Abuse. It is really good to be part of contributing to the Zine which will be accessible digitally for the wider world as an informative resource. I think creating poetry highlighted for me how victims of honour based abuse and forced marriage are robbed of the opportunities of becoming the people they want to be. Their freedom of choice is taken away, so their path in life is determined by others and not themselves. This is like a life sentence as is the experience of disownment (often a consequence of not going along with those enforced decisions).”



The Wild Carrot

So many years ago I was plucked
Pressed between two heavy parts of a book
So many years ago possibilities ended
And over the years my identity mistook.

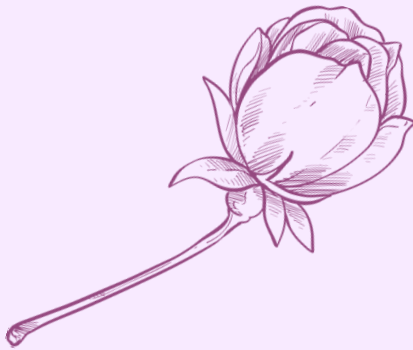
Left on the page is the shadow of what I was
The vibrant and vivid colours are gone for good
I do not recognise this version of me I see
Captured, caught and transferred into a book.

I dream of life that is happy and free
Where the breeze is still felt all over my leaves
My petals sit in the warmth and glow of the sun
With all others like me, together, we have fun.



Fear, pain and sadness is here
This aloneness, it never seems to disappear
You did not ask before you plucked
And pressed me between two heavy parts of a book.

I had new buds just waiting to open
My seeds the wind was going to carry away
Freely then they could have landed
And flourished to grow another year, another day.



KEY LEGISLATION

Female Genital Mutilation Act

made FGM a criminal offence with a maximum penalty of 14-years imprisonment

2003

2007

Forced Marriage (Civil Protection) Act

introduced forced marriage protection orders as a legal means to protect and safeguard victims and potential victims of forced marriage.

Anti-Social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014.

made forced marriage a criminal offence punishable by up to seven years in prison.

2014

2015

The Serious Crime Act

made it an offence to fail to protect a girl from FGM.

Domestic Abuse Act

introduced new criminal offences of non-fatal strangulation, post-separation coercive control, and threats to disclose private sexual images.

2021

Health and Care Act

made it illegal to carry out, offer or aid and abet virginity testing and hymenoplasty in any part of the UK.

2022

The Marriage and Civil Partnership Act

made it a criminal offence to arrange anyone under 18. years old, regardless of parental consent, to marry whether forced is used or not

2022



