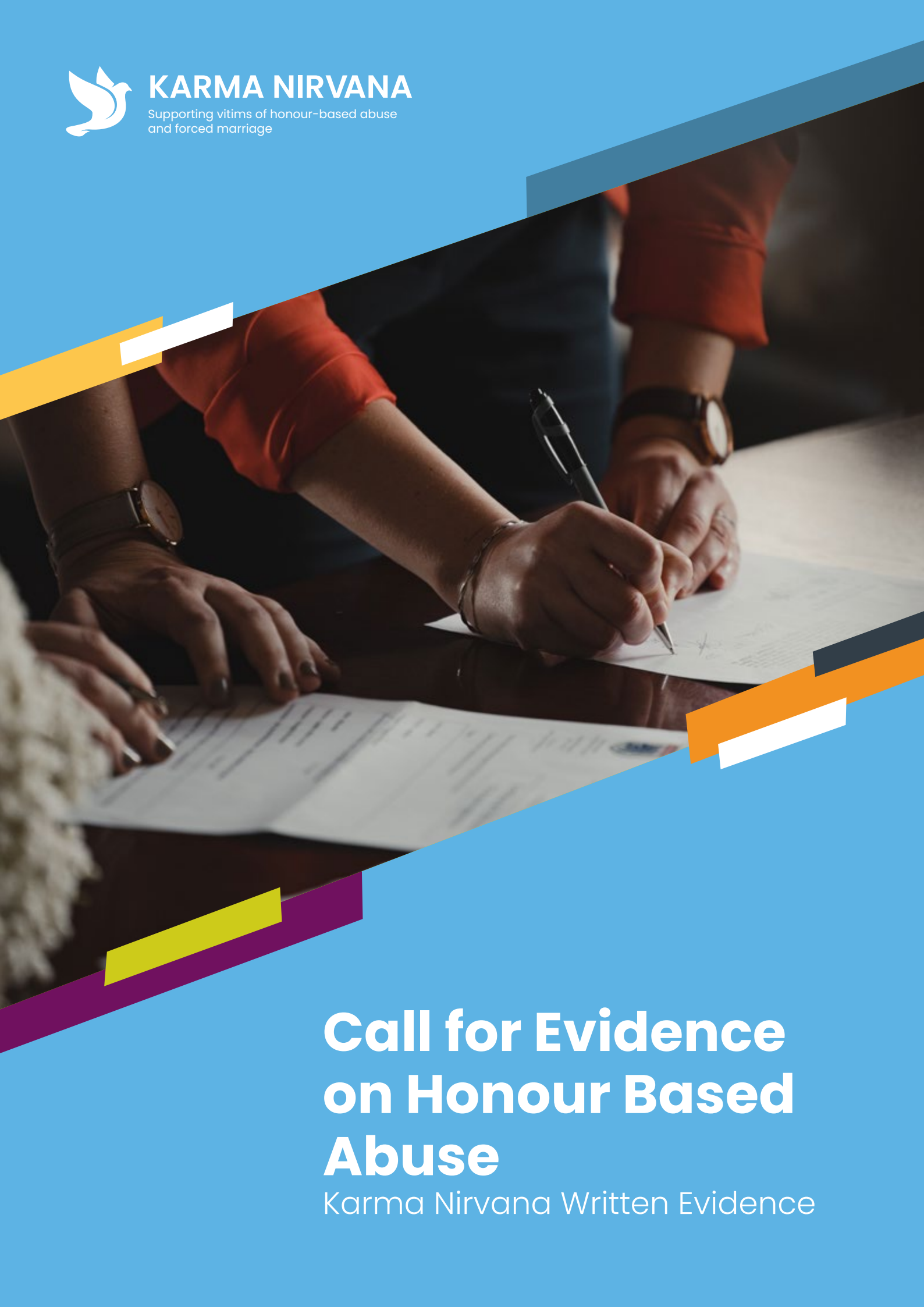




KARMA NIRVANA

Supporting victims of honour-based abuse
and forced marriage



Call for Evidence on Honour Based Abuse

Karma Nirvana Written Evidence

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About Karma Nirvana

Karma Nirvana is a national leading charity in the field of Honour Based Abuse, including Forced Marriage and Female Genital Mutilation. It is the longest established specialist charity supporting and empowering those impacted by Honour Based Abuse throughout the UK.

We work to 'break the silence' on Honour Based Abuse by empowering those affected to speak out and by 'shining the spotlight' on Honour Based Abuse to improve national understanding, detection and practice. We have been working in this field for over 25 years.

We have campaigned for improved legislation on these issues and their effective criminalisation. Karma Nirvana took a leading role in campaigning for; the criminalisation of forced marriage, civil remedy for forced marriage through the Forced Marriage (civil protection) Act 2007, the first thematic national review into policing Honour Based Abuse and most recently for the criminalisation of virginity testing and hymenoplasty and raising the minimum age of marriage as part of the Marriage and Civil Partnership (Minimum Age) Bill.

Karma Nirvana delivers the government-backed Honour Based Abuse helpline, which supports all those impacted by Honour Based Abuse. We also offer training to professionals and regularly work with police, UK Forced Marriage Unit, UK Border Force, NHS, social services, local government and teachers.

We provide a range of educational resources to understand and tackle Honour Based Abuse through accredited training programmes, seminars, conferences and workshops.

We are co-chairs of the UK Girls Not Brides partnership and in 2019, we became secretariat to the All-Party Parliamentary Group chaired by Virendra Sharma MP and Baroness Cox.

Acknowledgement

We thank the Women and Equalities Committee for launching its Inquiry focusing on Honour Based Abuse as part of its work on preventing Violence Against Women and Girls.

This is the first Parliamentary Inquiry with an Honour Based Abuse focus since the Home Affairs Select Committee Inquiry in 2008. It provides a ground-breaking opportunity to understand and review the current picture of Honour Based Abuse within the UK.

Understanding Honour Based Abuse: History

UK women's organisations have been campaigning for an end to Honour Based Abuse for over three decades and it has been a topic of public debate since the late 1990s.

Government and media attention on forms of Honour Based Abuse began in earnest in 1998 after the high-profile cases of nineteen-year-old Rukshana Naz's murder by her mother and brother after becoming pregnant by her boyfriend and seeking a divorce from the man she had been forced to marry at fifteen-years-old; and Jack and Zena Briggs, a young married couple who lived in hiding after receiving death threats from Zena's family after she refused to marry a cousin in Pakistan. In response to these cases, the government set up a Home Office Working Group on Forced Marriage (FM) in 1999 which published its first report, 'A Choice by Right,' in 2000. The report argued that FM must be seen primarily as an issue of Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG), acknowledging that it also affects men and that their experiences should not be ignored and highlighting the relationship between FM and domestic violence.¹

In response to the report, the government established the Community Liaison Unit (CLU) in the Foreign & Commonwealth Office (FCO) to address the overseas dimension of the issue. In 2005 the Forced Marriage Unit (FMU) was created, taking over from the CLU, to lead on forced marriage within and outside the UK. The FMU remains housed in the FCO. Forced marriage law and guidelines have continued to develop, with Forced Marriage Protection Orders (FMPOs) introduced under the Forced Marriage (Civil Protection) Act of 2007 to protect those at risk. Breaches of FMPOs were criminalised in 2011, FM guidelines were put on a statutory footing, and in 2014 it was criminalised under the Anti-Social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act.

In addition to FM, honour killings have received extensive attention. The term honour killing came into widespread use in the British press in 2002 after the murder of sixteen-year old Heshu Yones by her father. Government agencies, once again, acted in response and the Metropolitan Police Service established a Strategic Homicide Prevention Working Group on 'honour killings' in 2003, later creating a national group to deliver training to police across the country. However, in 2006, after the murder of Banaz Mahmood by her father, despite her reaching out to police five times prior, it became clear that service providers failed to treat Honour Based Abuse as a serious crime. A 2008 IPCC inquiry into police treatment of Banaz Mahmood concluded a 'lack of awareness' concerning the 'trigger factor of domestic violence and the impact that cultural issues can have on the outcomes.

In 2008, the Association of Chiefs Police Officers introduced its first-ever national policing strategy on "Honour Based Violence". In its updated 2015 strategy published by the National Police Chief Council (NPCC), police reported achievements including the implementation of HBA/FM and FGM champions in all local police forces, a local, regional and national police meeting structure for learning and sharing best practice; a package of public protection training, which incorporates HBV, FM and FGM, the development of a joint CPS and police training package rolled out in 2014; and HBV matters have been incorporated into UK Protected Person Service Processes.

¹"A Choice by Right: The Report of the Working Group on Forced Marriage," 2000, p.11-15.

Current context

Honour Based Abuse has been positioned within the broader framework of VAWG since the publication of the 2000 'A Choice by Right' report. The NPCC's 2015 Policing strategy on Honour Based Abuse, Forced Marriage and Female Genital Mutilation, acknowledged 'the gendered nature of Honour Based Abuse as the vast majority of victims and those at risk are female and that honour based violence takes place overwhelmingly within families'.² Despite this, 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 inequalities.

In 2017, Conservative MP Nusrat Ghani brought forward a motion proposing to ban the term "honour" to describe Honour Based Abuse. Whilst we recognise the well-intended meaning behind removal of the term "honour", we feel that this positive intention is incredibly short-sighted on the multiple and unintended consequences that will arise in censoring the term "honour". This step will setback the progress in enabling people to understand what Honour Based Abuse is.

It will exacerbate the hidden nature of Honour Based Abuse, in addition to damaging victim and survivor confidence that the government recognises and understands their unique experiences. The most important reason to retain using the term "honour" in describing this type of abuse is because survivors endorse it. A 2021 poll conducted with our survivor ambassador panel highlighted that survivors felt that recognition of the term "honour" helped them to express their experiences. One survivor ambassador stated *"honour is understood by perpetrators... how do we prevent this if we don't call it out for what it is"*.

In 2021, the Home Office altered its strategic approach to tackling VAWG and Domestic Abuse (DA) by separating DA from its VAWG Strategy and creating a separate strategy focused solely on DA. Many organisations, including Karma Nirvana, shared concerns on how a dual strategy approach would risk de-gendering DA and de-prioritising certain forms of VAWG, such as Honour Based Abuse. Previous Home Office VAWG strategies have failed to pay sufficient attention to specific forms of VAWG, but it did provide a framework that could be built on to create a more inclusive and effective foundation for understanding and eradicating all forms of VAWG. The dual strategy approach exacerbates current misunderstandings about the nature of Honour Based Abuse and raises questions about where it should be positioned. While there is general agreement that Honour Based Abuse is a form of VAWG, there remains debate about the extent to which it constitutes a form of DA.

²⁴ NPCC 2015 strategy p.14

Is Honour Based Abuse a form of Domestic Abuse? Should the government respond to it differently?

Some question how closely the characteristics of Honour Based Abuse align with the current definition of Domestic Abuse, arguing that there are key differences that make Honour Based Abuse a fundamentally different harm such as:

- 'Honour dynamics' are not but begin and end with the commission of abuse, 'but as something starting, ideologically, at birth, and lasting the entirety of a woman's life.'
- Honour Based Abuse's collective nature and the involvement of multiple perpetrators and community surveillance of behaviour.³
- Honour Based Abuse involves different victim-perpetrator relationship to that of DA which is generally perceived as involving current or former intimate partners.

However, others argue that Honour Based Abuse has been distinguished from DA purely because of preconceived notions of race: 'when or why does an act of domestic abuse, bullying, stalking, or violence against a woman become an honour crime?' The answer, Qureshi suggests, 'it seems, is when it occurs in an Asian household. When domestic abuse involves an Asian perpetrator and victim, it is almost always labelled an honour crime [...] the crime becomes upheld as a reflection of the otherness of a disdainful culture.'⁴

Similarly, Lis Bates (2020) has noted how 'violence against BME women has been artificially separated from mainstream domestic abuse.'⁵ And Gill and Aujla, (2014), in their analysis of honour killings in Canada, suggest that such abuse should be positioned on a continuum of domestic violence (with honour killing as an extreme form) because both are carried out in private and, irrespective of the motivation behind the crimes, both involve extreme forms of violence against women.⁶

Proponents of positioning Honour Based Abuse as a form of DA highlight their shared gendered nature and roots in patriarchy, arguing that, regardless of motivation, a focus on the characteristics of Honour Based Abuse reveals a plethora of similarities with those who experience DA: the abuse most often occurs in the home; is perpetrated by intimate partners and/or family members; occurs over an extended period of time; and may include psychological, emotional, physical, sexual and financial abuse, controlling, coercive and threatening behaviour.

Karma Nirvana data shows that in 2021, 99% of the contacts made to the National Helpline for Honour Based Abuse fell within the statutory definition of Domestic Abuse. Moreover, recent research by Lis Bates based on a quantitative dataset of 1,312 cases

³ Rebecca Kaur, "Call it what you like, but...This is Different": Exploring How Domestic Abuse Practitioners Understand and Address 'Honour' Based Violence, PhD dissertation, University of Manchester (2018): 111.

⁴Huma Qureshi, "Honour" Crimes are Domestic Abuse, Plain and Simple', The Guardian, 21 March 2012.

⁵Lis Bates, "Honor-Based Abuse in England and Wales: Who Does What to Whom?" Violence Against Women 27, 10 (2021): 1787.

⁶Wendy Aujla and Aisha Gill, "Conceptualizing 'Honour' Killings in Canada: An Extreme Form of Domestic Violence?" International Journal of Criminal Justice Sciences 9, 1 (2014): 161.

of HBA in the UK, identifies three types of perpetrator frameworks that are 'equally likely to meet the risk threshold for the case to be referred to a domestic violence risk assessment conference (MARAC).'⁷

In opposition to arguments that the victim-perpetrator relationships make Honour Based Abuse fundamentally different to DA, data reveals a strong involvement of intimate partners in the perpetration of Honour Based Abuse cases, both alone and with others, and that most often, abuse is perpetrated within the family, and thus a domestic abuse context. It is our position, on this basis, that Honour based abuse should be framed as a form of Domestic Abuse, situated under a broader VAWG framework.

Limitations to the advancement of progress in tackling Honour Based Abuse

No statutory definition for Honour Based Abuse

There is currently no statutory definition for Honour Based Abuse. The most widely used and accepted definition has been provided by the NPCC. NPCC defines Honour Based Abuse as:

“an incident or crime involving violence, threats of violence, intimidation coercion or abuse (including psychological, physical, sexual, financial or emotional abuse) which has or may have been committed to protect or defend the honour of an individual, family and/or community for alleged or perceived breaches of the family and/or community’s code of behaviour”

In the absence of an alternative definition, this definition provides a useful starting point to understand 'honour' motivation of a perpetrator(s) but does not provide enough context to understand the characteristics and specific challenges that victims of Honour Based Abuse can face. The definition also inaccurately identifies Honour Based Abuse as an incident or crime (singular), when in reality, akin to domestic abuse, Honour Based Abuse is a *“course of conduct”* and would be better described as a pattern of incidents or crimes.

There are multiple consequences linked to inadequately defining Honour Based Abuse. An obvious implication is that it inauthentically represents the experiences of victims and survivors and also fails to recognise the significant barriers linked to shame and stigma that most victims of Honour Based Abuse face. Through our work, we recognise that many professionals using the existing definition fail to identify Honour Based Abuse, particularly in situations where 'honour' and 'not wanting to bring shame' act as a barrier to a victim leaving, rather than a motive for the abuse taking place.

A statutory definition that represents the experiences of those impacted by Honour Based Abuse is essential to improving how Honour Based Abuse is identified. This will support better self-identification by those experiencing this Honour Based Abuse and better identification by

⁷Lis Bates, "Honor-Based Abuse in England and Wales: Who Does What to Whom?" *Violence Against Women* 27, 10 (2021): 1787

those on the frontline responding to it. It will also improve the quality of data collated and recorded on this issue.

Insufficient and limited data recording

Until the recent inclusion of Honour Based Abuse in the Home Office Annual Data Return (ADR) in 2020, there has not been a requirement for Honour Based Abuse police data to be officially returned with Home Office crime data. Furthermore, Honour Based Abuse is not collated, recorded, or published by any other government department except for in cases of FM or FGM. We recognise how the disproportionality in focusing on FM and FGM has sidelined HBA to such a degree that there is now more research, emerging law and policy relating exclusively to FM and FGM. This can also be seen through government specific initiatives, including the Home Office's FMU and FGM Unit. Through our work, we see how an overfocus upon FM and FGM can mask cases of Honour Based Abuse for statutory professionals where there is no presenting FM or FGM concern.

The ADR policing data has shown an increase in reporting of Honour Based Abuse over the last year (6%), when compared to the previous year. The increase in recorded offences is encouraging, considering the multiple barriers that we know victims of Honour Based Abuse face. We are concerned that the number of identified cases of Honour Based Abuse in future years will regress when police forces across England and Wales are expected adopt the DARA risk assessment tool.

The College of Policing is replacing the existing DASH risk assessment tool, currently used by frontline police responders, with a newer DARA risk assessment tool. In the development of the DARA risk assessment tool, the College of Policing have excluded the screening question for Honour Based Abuse that currently exists in the DASH risk assessment. In the rationale for excluding this question, the College of Policing has suggested "*probing for, and identifying, HBA may be covered by training and enduring understanding*"⁸ instead.

It is important to highlight that in a 2015 HMICFRS thematic inspection looking at policing of Honour Based Abuse, it was recommended that: "*By June 2016, the College of Policing should review the current approach to risk assessment in relation to cases of HBV, FM and FGM. This should include an assessment of the sufficiency of instruments and methods currently available to assess risk in such cases*".⁹ A national move to use the DARA risk assessment tool, which excludes screening for Honour Based Abuse, is a huge regression on this recommendation.

Furthermore, we know through our work that the College of Policing Authorised Professional Practice (APP) on Honour Based Abuse is limited, setting a very low expectation of knowledge on Honour Based Abuse for police officers. Karma Nirvana has delivered our three-day Risk Assessment course¹⁰ on Honour Based Abuse to 26 police forces across England and Wales, and many officers have confided that the College of Policing APP on Honour Based Abuse is far too generic and limited in the guidance that it provides on this complex subject matter.

Karma Nirvana data and the recent Home Office ADR, demonstrate an increase in victim reporting of Honour Based Abuse. Worryingly however, levels of increased reporting are not

⁸ College Of Policing, Domestic Abuse Risk Assessment, Sept 2022

⁹ HMIC, The depths of dishonour, Hidden voices and shameful crimes, December 2015

¹⁰ Karma Nirvana provide a training course to develop Specialist Points of Contact (SPOCs) within police forces. After this course officers are able to use a Karma Nirvana specialist Honour Based Abuse risk assessment to support safeguarding, identification of risk factors and delivery of effective safety management plans.

reflected within criminal justice data. The two main Criminal Justice System (CJS) national data sources for Honour Based Abuse are the police and Crown Prosecution Service (CPS). The CPS first started to flag cases of Honour Based Abuse in 2007. This was established as a consequence of a Scotland Yard re-examination of 109 possible 'honour' killings between 1993 – 2003. In 2020, the CPS decided to cease their formal publication of Honour Based Abuse. In 2021, Karma Nirvana queried the rationale for ceasing the formal publication and were informed that the CPS considered a review of cases of Honour Based Abuse and Forced Marriage which illustrated data integrity concerns, particularly on the accuracy of the application of 'HBA flags'.

In the last 6 years for which CPS data is publicly available (2013 – 2019), there has been a significant decline in the number of charges and prosecutions for Honour Based Abuse cases, and, as a result, fewer convictions. Karma Nirvana have shared concerns with both the Home Office and CPS but have received no reassurance that there is a plan to address our concerns. We know through our work that victims and the organisations that support them have felt let down by criminal justice responses to Honour Based Abuse. The government needs to drive urgency and focus on this agenda, to give confidence that justice will be served, helping maintain victim confidence, and ensuring that more perpetrators are brought to justice.

Finally, as referenced earlier, an inadequate definition also has wider implications for how data and statistics on Honour Based Abuse is collated and recorded. Collating and recording data using the current definition inhibits a true reflection of how Honour Based Abuse takes place in the UK; making Honour Based Abuse appear to be 'a small issue' when relying upon statistics and data alone. Through our work, we know the vital role that data plays in determining how government resources are allocated, which demonstrates how inadequate data recording on Honour Based Abuse can, and does, directly contribute to the poor sustainability of specialist services.

Overfocus on culture and religion in responses to Honour Based Abuse

While there has undeniably been progress on government responses to Honour Based Abuse, there remains much to be done. To date, developments have most often been reactive and remain underpinned by problematic attitudes and beliefs around race, culture, and religion. Despite assertions from women's organisations, academics, and government reports, there remains an assumption among some service providers and the general public that Honour Based Abuse only occurs in certain communities, and that it is a 'cultural', 'traditional' or 'religious' problem. Yet Honour Based Abuse is not sanctioned by any major religion, and, while it is more prevalent among South Asian communities in the UK (due to the large South Asian population), crimes and harms cut across all cultures, nationalities, faith groups and communities.

Through our work, we see how pre-conceived ideas about the cultural and religious roots of Honour Based Abuse continue to shape responses, with statutory agencies not always engaging appropriately, impacting victim confidence and contributing to under-reporting. A focus on race, culture and religion has also led to an overidentification of Honour Based Abuse in some cases, and an under identification in others, where service providers fear offending people and communities and being accused of racism. It has led to a situation in which the gendered nature of Honour Based Abuse as a form of VAWG has received inefficient attention.

Positioning of HBA within government strategies to tackle VAWG and DA

Since the Government launched its first strategy to address VAWG in 2010, the absence of calling out all forms of Honour Based Abuse within government strategies has been very noticeable. The government has adopted a siloed approach to tackling Honour Based Abuse, seeking only to address Honour Based Abuse so far as it relates to FM and FGM. This lack of recognition within government has had wider repercussions for how Honour Based Abuse is recognised and understood by frontline practitioners nationally.

Through our national helpline, we hear from many professionals struggling to recognise Honour Based Abuse, unless this victim has also experienced forced marriage or FGM. For example, a teenage victim may be experiencing extreme coercive control at the hands of her family due to notions of 'upholding honour' and reputation, however the "need" to safeguard is not recognised by professionals until a much later point, usually when there is a threat of forced marriage.

Through our work on the helpline, we recognise frequent missed opportunities for agencies to respond sooner to clear safeguarding 'red flags', with many missing obvious signs of Honour Based Abuse. Many professionals lack confidence to recognise Honour Based Abuse, particularly where it is disguised by a victim normalising 'coercive and controlling' behaviour, emphasising a clear need for greater professional confidence on these issues to support victim self-identification.

It is important for any strategy addressing VAWG to recognise the broader impact that 'upholding honour' can have upon women and girls. Through our work we have supported many victims of Honour Based Abuse that have been expected to take on 'gender biased roles' normalised through coercive control and through a fear of facing backlash from multiple perpetrators if they do not comply. This is often endorsed by a community narrative reiterating the need to behave in a particular way that conforms to expectations and that does not 'bring shame'.

Our national helpline has heard of countless practices in the name of 'honour' that have penalised families with girls, such as dowry and virginity testing, and customs of encouragement to accept or tolerate abusive relationships to 'preserve honour' and prevent shame. Many callers to the helpline have disclosed experiencing martial coercive control and being prevented from accessing help/speaking out linked to honour-related stigma and perceived shame that seeking help will bring. The majority of callers share pressures to conform to familial, community and societal expectations rooted in 'upholding honour' and 'preventing shame', which can include child marriage, hymenoplasties, concealed 'honour' babies and enforced abortions where a 'gender scan' reveals that a mother is carrying a daughter.

Karma Nirvana call for future government strategies addressing VAWG to acknowledge the different ways in which Honour Based Abuse can manifest, beyond FM and FGM. We call for recognition that central to the prevention of Honour Based Abuse is raising the status of women and girls that are silenced by concepts of honour and shame, enabling them to recognise the abuse that they experience is a form of 'Domestic Abuse' and that safe spaces exist for them too.

Insufficient specialist funding for victims of HBA

Through our work, we know that there are limited specialist safe spaces available for victims and survivors of Honour Based Abuse to reach out and receive support. We see how a limited understanding of the prevalence and scope of Honour Based Abuse influences government prioritisation of Honour Based Abuse within strategic VAWG frameworks, and how this in turn reflects upon poor resourcing and sustainability of specialist safe spaces. We call on the government to resource and commission by-and-for services appropriately to ensure that specialist services for victims of Honour Based Abuse are sustained and able to continue to grow in capacity.

Honour Based Abuse: Existing Data Sources Available

We know through our work, and the work of our sector partners, that Honour Based Abuse is very common, however this is often difficult to accurately quantify. Honour Based Abuse is a largely hidden crime. It has significant levels of under-reporting linked to poor victim confidence and in many cases, a normalisation of abuse, particularly where coercive control has featured within a familial / wider community setting.

Victims of Honour Based Abuse frequently share that they feel like a “perpetrator” for speaking up, often against multiple perpetrators, including family members, and are made to feel “guilty” and/or “shameful” for doing so. In addition to under-reporting, we know from our work that there is little data being collected and recorded to represent the scale and prevalence of Honour Based Abuse across the UK. Of the limited ‘official’ data that is being recorded, the disjointed and inconsistent approaches undertaken to capture this makes the data highly unreliable, and often impossible to analyse for emerging trends and/or patterns.

This submission will highlight existing data sources currently available for Honour Based Abuse, addressing the limitations of this and the wider impact that this has upon progressing the agenda to tackle Honour Based Abuse.

Where do Honour Based Abuse statistics come from?

The national Honour Based Abuse helpline

Up until the policing ADR, the national Honour Based Abuse helpline has been the only source of consistent data on Honour Based Abuse for the UK. The national Honour Based Abuse helpline is the only supporting all victims (women and men) of Honour Based Abuse, and since its inception in 2008 it has responded to over 100,000 contacts. Helpline data for 2021 evidences:

- For the year ending 2021, the helpline responded to 9596 contacts, supporting 2343 victims of Honour Based Abuse.
- 266 victims were facing the threat of Forced Marriage

- We supported 184 children, 39 were at risk of being forced into marriage by their parents.
- 24 children were at risk of being taken overseas and forced into marriage by their parents
- 1317 (56%) of victims were experiencing Honour Based Abuse at the hands of multiple perpetrators, from parents, to in-laws, siblings, uncles, aunties, and community members.
- 2022 year to date, child marriage cases have increased by 60% compared with the same period in 2021.

Forced Marriage Unit Helpline

The government's FMU publishes annual statistics on the cases reported to their national helpline and email inbox. In 2022, the FMU changed its recording practices for its Forced Marriage statistics, which now means that data can no longer be compared to previous years and emerging trends and patterns for forced marriage are now more difficult to detect. Despite the FMU's inception in 2005, data recording for the unit started in 2011. The most recent publication for the FMU's statistics showcased the lowest number of cases in which the FMU gave advice or support. (2011 – 1468 cases compared to 2021 – 337 cases).

Office for National Statistics (ONS) – Victim Services

In Karma Nirvana's latest strategy, we committed to developing stronger and reliable data to represent Honour Based Abuse across the UK. We believe that this will support better representation and understanding of the issues that victims of Honour Based Abuse experience. As part of this commitment, we have been working closely with ONS to include the national Honour Based Abuse helpline data in the annual ONS Domestic Abuse victim services publication. We were pleased to have successfully influenced ONS to include our helpline data in their annual Domestic Abuse publication, which featured for the first time, in September 2022.¹¹

Police: Annual Data Return

As alluded to earlier, the Home Office published its first annual policing statistics on Honour Based Abuse Offences in 2020. The requirement to publish annual data on Honour Based Abuse arose from a 2015 HMICFRS inspection which revealed that police are not sufficiently prepared to effectively protect victims of Honour Based Abuse, including FM and FGM.

This inspection was the first by HMICFRS of the police service in England and Wales to focus on Honour Based Abuse and called upon every police force to improve its understanding and response to Honour Based Abuse. The inspection made fourteen recommendations, with 'Recommendation 2' calling upon the Home Office, in conjunction with the National Police Chief's Council, to develop an approach to the collection of data recorded by police forces in relation to Honour Based Abuse. The recommendation also asked for consideration to be given to this data being recorded as part of the policing ADR.

This year, the ADR revealed that recorded Honour Based Abuse Offences (2,887) had increased by 6% when compared to the previous year (2,725). The highest number of offences were related to controlling and coercive behaviour (17%), assault with injury (14%) and without injury (14%).

¹¹ ons, Domestic Abuse victim services, England and Wales: 2022, 7 September 2022

The Honour Based Abuse ADR publication evokes a mixture of emotions for Karma Nirvana. Whilst we are keen to not negate the positive step of mandated published government data, we remain concerned the published data does little to improve national understanding of the problem or influence change to improve outcomes for victims. The data only draws upon the number of offences and does not reveal how many victims are coming forward to the police.

Earlier this year, Karma Nirvana submitted a Freedom Of Information Request (FOIR) to all police forces across England and Wales to ascertain how many individual victims were supported in connected to recorded offence. From this request, 24 of the 43 police forces responded to identify 1,339 victims connected to 1,423 offences during 2021. Disappointingly, the existing ADR does not routinely capture the number of victim meaning that currently this data can only be obtained through extensive and length FOIR's. It highlights one of many missed opportunities to improve understanding on how many impacted by Honour Based Abuse report to the police. We continue to champion the need for the Home Office to capture and publish clear and meaningful policing data on Honour Based Abuse.

Crown Prosecution Service

Despite an overall picture of increased reporting of Honour Based Abuse to women sector organisations, the CJS represents a different picture all together. As referred to earlier in this report, the two main criminal justice national data sources on HBA are police and CPS. CPS data reveals between 2013 – 2019, this being the period of time for which data is publicly available up until, the number of:

- flagged HBA referrals,
- suspects charged,
- prosecutions; and
- convictions have dropped each consecutive year

Karma Nirvana have shared our concerns directly with the Home Office and CPS, and have called upon HMICFRS, Home Office and HMICPS to review progress in policing on Honour Based Abuse, particularly in light of concerning CJS trends for.

Local Authorities

Local authority (LA) Children's Social Care (CSC) departments across the UK make up 17% of professional contacts to the national Honour Based Abuse helpline. In September 2021, we submitted a FOIR to each local authority to ask if their case management systems facilitated tagging or marking case files for victims identified as at risk of or experiencing Honour Based Abuse. From our initial request, 130 of the 224 LA's responded to our FOIR. An analysis of the responses highlighted:

- 35 LA's tag Honour Based Abuse case files
- 87 LA's do not tag Honour Based Abuse cases files
- 15 LA's did not process the FOIR under section (12) – Exceeds cost
- 87 LA's did not provide any response to the FOIR

Early findings from our FOIR's highlight a 'postcode lottery' system for tagging cases of Honour Based Abuse across the UK, with 22% of responses indicating that tagging was in practice. Analysis of our early findings has revealed that a small number of LA's have incorrectly tagged Honour Based Abuse case under a category of 'Abuse linked to faith or belief'. This is despite reporting guidance¹² being very clear that Honour Based Abuse and FM are not always linked in context to faith or belief.

Some FOIR responses stated that because Honour Based Abuse is not a factor for assessment within the Department of Education Child in Need Census¹³ there has not been a requirement for LA's to tag files or collate any data on Honour Based Abuse. This indicates that the lack of central government steer on capturing Honour Based Abuse data within the Child in Need census is a contributing factor to the national 'postcode lottery' picture' from LA's. Our research has shown that of the LA's that are tagging cases of Honour Based Abuse, this tends to be due to the volume of cases that their LA come across.

Through our work on the helpline, we know that many CSC Departments have supported cases of Honour Based Abuse. In the last year, 202 social workers contacted the national Honour Based Abuse helpline, many supporting multiple victims. Although we know many cases of Honour Based Abuse are supported by social workers, existing data frameworks within LA's cannot collate case data to track prevalence, trends, and victim profiles.

Furthermore, there is no statutory requirement to complete Honour Based Abuse safeguarding training by frontline staff, leaving decision making and risk assessing open to individual interpretation, and/or limited to the statutory assessment framework criteria.

Limitations of Data

Through our work, we recognise that all Honour Based Abuse data sources are currently working in silo. We also know that relying on 'official' existing data sources makes it impossible to track a victim's journey and the different services and experiences that they encounter. Data that is captured is heavily reliant upon either a victim explicitly highlighting Honour Based Abuse or a professional's knowledge and confidence to recognise Honour Based Abuse. Even in circumstances where this has been identified, current internal data infrastructures do not enable agencies to collate or record this.

It is this limited 'data picture' that contributes to the complacency of how Honour Based Abuse is prioritised within government strategies to tackle VAWG and in determining how government resources are allocated to this issue. This has wider implications on the number of specialist safe spaces that victims and survivors have to reach out. Limited data puts Honour Based Abuse into an endless loop, going round in circles, rather than moving up as a government priority.

¹²National Action plan to tackle child abuse linked to faith or belief

¹³ Child in Need Census

Summary of Key Issues

The following summary draws attention to the main key issues as highlighted throughout this submission. These key issues are not exhaustive but seek to highlight twelve key issues that **Karma Nirvana believe the Women and Equalities Committee should be particularly alert to for the purposes of this Inquiry:**

1. Development and responses to Honour Based Abuse have most often been reactive and remain underpinned by problematic attitudes and beliefs around race, culture and religion.
2. 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'.
3. The government has adopted a siloed approach to tackling Honour Based Abuse, seeking only to address Honour Based Abuse so far as it relates to Forced Marriage and FGM. The lack of recognition of Honour Based Abuse, beyond FM and FGM, has had wider repercussions as to how Honour Based Abuse is recognised and understood nationally.
4. Within existing policy and practice aimed at tackling Honour Based Abuse, there is an overfocus on FM and FGM. In working practice, this 'masks' cases of Honour Based Abuse and can lead to poorer statutory responses being provided to victims of Honour Based Abuse where there is no forced marriage or FGM.
5. In the UK there is no statutory definition for Honour Based Abuse. This has multiple negative consequences upon how Honour Based Abuse is identified, and how data on Honour Based Abuse is collated and recorded.
6. The current working definition for Honour Based Abuse, created by NPCC, does not authentically represent the experience of victims and survivors of Honour Based Abuse, particularly the unique barriers linked to shame and stigma that many victims face.
7. Until the recent inclusion of Honour Based Abuse on the policing Annual Data Return (ADR) in 2020, there has not been a requirement for Honour Based Abuse police data to be officially returned to the Home Office.
8. Data on Honour Based Abuse is not collated, recorded, or published by any other government department except in some circumstances for cases of FM or FGM. No national dataset is available to provide the scope, scale and prevalence of Honour Based Abuse in the UK.
9. Karma Nirvana data and the recent Home Office ADR demonstrate an increase in Honour Based Abuse victim reporting. Worryingly, levels of increased reporting are not reflected in criminal justice data. In the last six years for which Crown Prosecution Service data is publicly available (2013 – 2019), there has been a significant decline in the number of charges and

prosecutions for Honour Based Abuse cases, and, as a result, fewer convictions.

10. The rollout of the DARA risk assessment tool risks future cases of Honour Based Abuse being missed by frontline police officers.
11. College of Policing Authorised Professional Practice (APP) on Honour Based Abuse is limited, setting a very low expectation of knowledge on Honour Based Abuse for police officers.
12. There are limited specialist safe spaces available for victims and survivors of Honour Based Abuse to reach out and receive support. Specialist services for victims and survivors of Honour Based Abuse are inadequately resourced and sustained.

Recommendations

We have set out our recommendations under four overarching headings, responding directly to the highlighted barriers referenced within this report, that we know through our work, limit progress in tackling Honour Based Abuse.

1. Improve cross-governmental accountability in responding to Honour Based Abuse as a form of domestic abuse, within the wider Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG) framework, to influence policy, law and practice responses.

a) Introduce a statutory definition for Honour Based Abuse that is recognised and endorsed by survivors. The statutory definition should be supplemented with practice guidelines to support frontline statutory professionals responding to Honour Based Abuse.

b) Stronger representation of Honour Based Abuse as a form of Domestic Abuse in all public-facing government strategies and policies responding to domestic abuse. This includes the Home Offices VAWG Strategy, Domestic Abuse Strategy and Domestic Abuse Statutory Guidance.

c) As part of the governments work on tackling VAWG, it should consider a campaign to deliver strong key messages to victims and survivors of Honour Based Abuse that 'upholding honour' and 'preventing shame' does not legitimise coercive control and abuse. This campaign should be influenced 'by and for' survivors of Honour Based Abuse.

d) Home Office must urgently publish the findings of its consultation exploring the introduction of new mandatory duty relating to cases of forced marriage. This consultation closed in January 2019.

e) A review of the progress in policing Honour Based Abuse since the HMICFRS thematic inspection in 2015. We call upon the Home Secretary to give due consideration to a re-inspection on Honour Based Abuse by HMICFRS.

2. Improve identification, understanding and responses to Honour Based Abuse by frontline professionals.

a) Development of a cross governmental VAWG training framework for all frontline statutory professionals, to include Honour Based Abuse. This will support better identification, understanding and responses to Honour Based Abuse, in addition to increasing the number of 'safe spaces' for victim and survivors to speak out.

b) Police Chiefs to 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 screening question for Honour Based Abuse that is on the DASH risk assessment.

3. 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 government datasets collated on Honour Based Abuse, and to 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.

4. Increase the number of specialist safe spaces that exist for victims and survivors of Honour Based Abuse to speak out.

a) Government should ring fence funding for specialist services supporting victims of Honour Based Abuse, ensuring appropriate safe spaces exist for victims to seek specialist help. Equally, more safe spaces should be created through training frontline practitioners to understand the issues connected to Honour Based Abuse to ensure that victims receive appropriate support the first time and in compliance with the 'one chance rule'.

b) Central government should continue funding for the national Honour Based Abuse helpline.

