

Women and Equalities Committee

So-called honour-based abuse

Sixth Report of Session 2022–23

HC 831



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relating to the report

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Women and Equalities Committee

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Summary

Victims of so-called honour-based abuse can be of any age, race, religion or sex. However, the true extent of honour-based abuse in the UK is not known. Action is required in a number of key areas, to address this issue and ensure that victims of honour-based abuse receive the support they need and deserve.

First, the limited and inconsistent data collection by police forces across the country makes it difficult to understand who is most at risk of honour-based abuse, in which communities it most often occurs in what forms it occurs, and how those communities are being served by the police and other agencies. The Government should ensure that police forces collect specific information about victims and perpetrators of honour-based abuse, including on their protected characteristics.

Secondly, victims of honour-based abuse are often scared to seek help from authorities for fear of retribution. They take huge risks in reporting the crimes against them, and it is critical that the public services in place to protect them are able to recognise that abuse at the first opportunity. The Government should set out the progress made in rolling out a national training package for frontline officers on recognising honour-based abuse.

Thirdly, our inquiry has highlighted that there is significant variation in the understanding of honour-based abuse, not least across statutory agencies. We have seen significant support for a statutory definition of honour-based abuse to be introduced by the Government, in the same way it did for the term 'domestic abuse' under the Domestic Abuse Act 2021. In order to tackle honour-based abuse, it is essential that there is a shared understanding of the term across all agencies. To enable this, the Government should introduce a statutory definition of honour-based abuse, accompanied by statutory multi-agency guidance.

Finally, the issue of abusers using a victim's insecure immigration status as a tool of control, exploiting the fear that reporting a crime against them will lead to action by Immigration Enforcement, must be tackled. In order to prevent perpetrators taking advantage of a victim's immigration status, the Government should establish a firewall-type mechanism between the police and the Home Office to prevent data sharing for the purpose of immigration enforcement against victims of abuse, except in exceptional circumstances which must be narrowly defined.

The Government recently announced an extension to its 'Support for Migrant Victims' pilot, but this pilot does not address the shortfalls in funding for migrants with no recourse to public funds. This issue is also aggravated by the Government's reservation on Article 59 of the Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence, more commonly known as the 'Istanbul Convention'. Removing this reservation would help limit perpetrators' ability to use a victim's immigration status as a tool for control, and we call on the Government to reconsider its position.

In addition to these four key areas, our Report also considers support for by-and-for services, which are an essential mechanism for assisting victims of honour-based abuse, the inclusion of honour-based abuse in the UK's relationship, sex and health education curriculum, and the concept of honour-based abuse as an aggravating factor in law.

Introduction

1. So-called honour-based abuse can take a variety of forms, including female genital mutilation (FGM), forced marriage, honour killings, abandonment, breast flattening and other forms of domestic abuse perpetrated in a perceived defence of ‘honour’. It is the motivating factors behind the abuse that identifies it as honour-based, rather than the abuse itself, and that it is usually carried out with the collusion or approval from family and/or community members.¹
2. Whilst some forms of honour-based abuse are perceived and reported as occurring in certain communities, we heard it can occur within any community and is not a mainstream practice of any specific religion or culture.² Perpetrators may be the victim’s partner or former partner, parent or relative, a community member or someone unknown to the victim—some perpetrators may be or have been victims themselves.³ It can also involve an international dimension. The majority of victims are female, though a significant minority of victims can be men, particularly in instances of forced marriage.⁴ Victims of honour-based abuse may face some or all of the following barriers to reporting their experiences:
 - Fear that seeking support may lead to their family members being prosecuted;
 - Fear that they may bring ‘shame’ or ‘dishonour’ upon their family if they seek help;
 - Fear that seeking support may place them at greater risk;
 - Fear that seeking support may require them to leave their family and community, leaving them isolated and depriving them of all roots and support networks;

1 His Majesty’s Inspectorate of the Constabulary and Fire and Rescue, ‘[How the police respond to victims of sexual abuse when the victim is from an ethnic minority background and may be at risk of honour-based abuse: Report on Tees Valley Inclusion Project’s super-complaint](#)’, accessed 28 June 2023

2 Her Majesty’s Inspectorate of the Constabulary, *The depths of dishonour: Hidden voices and shameful crimes* (December 2015), p 29 ; For example: SafeLives ([HBA0037](#)), Honour Abuse Research Matrix ([HBA0047](#)), IKWRO ([HBA0042](#)); Professor Aisha K. Gill, University of Bristol, and Professor Sundari Anitha, University of Lincoln ([HBA0034](#))

3 Imkaan ([HBA0004](#)); IKWRO ([HBA0042](#)); Centre for Women’s Justice ([HBA0046](#)); Southall Black Sisters ([HBA0051](#))

4 Home Office ([HBA0041](#))

- Finding it difficult in practice to access support, for example due to being controlled, or because they have been taken abroad;
- Not knowing that the act in question is wrong or illegal—the victim may regard it as normal community practice.⁵

A non-exhaustive list of the forms of honour-based abuse can be found in Annex A.

Our inquiry

3. In this inquiry we gave careful consideration to using the term ‘honour’. Any sense of dishonour and shame belongs to the perpetrators of such acts and to those who support or condone them. There have been calls in recent years to cease using the term and replace it with terminology that reflects that there can never be justification for these crimes.⁶ However, the term ‘honour-based abuse’ reflects both how victims and survivors of these crimes understand their experience, and how perpetrators use it as a basis of control.⁷ In addition, many survivors, and the specialist organisations who support them, endorse the use of the phrase as necessary for understanding this form of abuse.⁸
4. In response to those views and to maintain consistency with the terminology currently used by the Government, Crown Prosecution Service (CPS), National Police Chiefs’ Council (NPCC) and numerous stakeholders, we have used the terms ‘so-called honour-based abuse’ and ‘honour-based abuse’ in this Report. Other organisations we quote throughout this Report also use the terms ‘honour-based violence’, ‘HBA’, ‘HBV’ and ‘HBA/V’.
5. We launched our inquiry in November 2022, as part of our wider *Preventing Violence Against Women and Girls* programme of work and following stakeholder consultation. We heard from academics, representatives from specialist services, the NPCC, CPS, the Domestic Abuse Commissioner and Government ministers. We also held a private session with people with lived experience of so-called honour-based abuse, and we are enormously grateful to those who participated. A note from that session is at Annex

5 Home Office ([HBA0041](#))

6 In 2017, Nusrat Ghani MP introduced a Private Member’s Bill to Parliament, calling for prohibition of the term ‘honour killing’ in official publications: “[MP Nusrat Ghani bids to ban ‘honour killing’ term](#)”, BBC News, 31 January 2017. For example: Freedom Charity ([HBA0008](#)); National Commission on Forced Marriage ([HBA0043](#)); Harmful Practices Strategic Partnership (HPSP) ([HBA0032](#))

7 [Q3](#) [Professor Aisha K Gill]

8 Karma Nirvana ([HBA0013](#)); IKWRO, ‘[Campaign Success: Nusrat Ghani MP withdraws her Bill which proposed to ban the term “honour” based violence and conflate it with domestic violence](#)’, accessed 17 March 2023

B of this Report. We would like to thank everyone who contributed to this inquiry, including our specialist advisers Shazia Choudhry, Professor of Law at the University of Oxford, and Elaine Croy from the Women's Resource & Development Agency.⁹

⁹ For details of their declarations of interests please see the Committee's Formal Minutes.

Prevalence

6. Unlike domestic abuse, there is no statutory definition of so-called honour-based abuse. However, the definition used by the Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) has been adopted by the National Police Chiefs' Council (NPCC) and the Government's Tackling Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG) strategy published in July 2021.¹⁰ The CPS defines it 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.¹¹

Data collection

7. In 2015, Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary (HMIC) investigated into the police response to honour-based violence, forced marriage and FGM. The inspectorate raised a number of concerns regarding data collection by the police. These included a lack of specific crime category for crimes of honour-based abuse, an inability of some forces to flag cases of honour-based abuse, and inaccurate recording of honour-based incidents or crimes.¹² HMIC recommended:

the Home Office, in conjunction with the National Police Chiefs' Council, should develop an approach to the collection of data recorded by police forces in relation to HBV, [forced marriage] and FGM. Consideration should be given to this data being recorded as part of the Annual Data Return.¹³

10 National Police Chiefs' Council, [Honour based abuse, forced marriage and female genital mutilation: a policing strategy for England, Wales and Northern Ireland](#) (2015); Home Office, ['Tackling violence against women and girls'](#), accessed 5 July 2023

11 Crown Prosecution Service, ['So-Called Honour-Based Abuse and Forced Marriage: Guidance on Identifying and Flagging cases'](#), accessed 5 July 2023

12 Her Majesty's Inspectorate of the Constabulary, [The depths of dishonour: Hidden voices and shameful crimes](#) (December 2015), pp 86–88

13 Ibid, p 17

8. Since 2019–20, the Home Office has collected and published data on honour-based abuse on a mandatory basis.¹⁴ Offences which are considered by the police to be motivated by so-called honour can be specifically flagged as such. The published data provides the overall number of honour-based abuse related offences, including those which have not resulted in the recording of a notifiable crime. The data is broken down into offences of forced marriage, FGM, and “other HBA-related tagged offences”.¹⁵
9. In the year ending 31 March 2022, police in England and Wales recorded 2,887 offences related to honour-based abuse—a six per cent increase on the previous year.¹⁶ In the period October 2022 to December 2022, the NHS had contact with 1,785 individual women and girls where FGM was identified.¹⁷ Between April 2015—when data collection on FGM was first mandated—and December 2022, NHS trusts and GP practices reported information about 32,740 individual women and girls who had experienced FGM.¹⁸
10. In 2022, the Forced Marriage Unit, run jointly by the Home Office and the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office, dealt with a total of 302 cases (78% involved female victims and 22% involved male victims). The majority of victims (68%) were 25 years old or younger, with 29% of victims aged 17 and under.¹⁹
11. The data set out above only cover offences that were reported and recorded. Honour-based abuse is often a hidden crime and victims can be reluctant to bring them to the attention of police or other authorities. As the Home Office recognises, “the data, therefore, are likely to only represent a small proportion of the actual HBA offences committed”.²⁰

14 Home Office ([HBA0041](#))

15 Ibid

16 Home Office, ‘[Statistics on so called ‘honour-based’ abuse offences, England and Wales, 2021 to 2022](#)’, accessed 5 July 2023. Increases in HBA-related offences recorded by the police over the last year could be due to several reasons, including: general improvements in crime recording, the police improving their identification of what constitutes so-called honour-based abuse and more victims coming forward to report these offences to the police, as well as a genuine increase in these offences. The next set of statistics are due to be published in October 2023.

17 NHS Digital, [Female Genital Mutilation \(FGM\) Enhanced Dataset](#) (20 December 2022), p 1

18 Ibid

19 Home Office/Foreign, Development and Commonwealth Office, ‘[Forced Marriage Unit statistics 2022](#)’, accessed 5 July 2023

20 Home Office, ‘[Statistics on so called ‘honour-based’ abuse offences, England and Wales, 2021 to 2022](#)’, accessed 5 July 2023

Challenges in recording honour-based abuse

12. During our inquiry we heard that there were inconsistencies in the recording of data about honour-based abuse. Uneven and inaccurately recorded data can make it difficult for the police and other agencies to identify and locate potential priority victims and to identify any shifts in patterns of victimisation which is crucial for preventing and tackling this abuse, both at a national and local level.²¹

Police

13. We heard from Professor Aisha K. Gill and Professor Sundari Anitha on inconsistent local recording of honour-based abuse by police forces. They told us:

It became clear during the research conducted with Hertfordshire Police (2017) that not all incidences of HBV/A had been recorded as such, with an unknown proportion noted as more general domestic abuse cases. At the same time, some incidences of HBV/A had not been additionally flagged as domestic abuse when they perhaps ought to have been. This discrepancy is significant because it meant that only a proportion of recorded HBV/A cases were routinely referred to local multi-agency risk assessment conferences (MARACs); a vital first move towards early intervention may, therefore, have been missed.²²

14. In its 2022 investigation of the police response to ‘victims of sexual abuse when the victim is from an ethnic minority background and may be at risk of honour-based abuse’, HMICFRS found that there was sometimes inaccurate over-flagging of honour-based abuse. For example, in one police force, some staff assumed a risk of honour-based abuse when a victim had a surname they believed to be South Asian.²³
15. HMICFRS also found that Home Office statistics were limited in that they did not give information regarding the backgrounds of victims and perpetrators. The inspectorate’s response to a super-complaint brought by specialist charity the Halo Project in 2020 found that the data on the experiences of victims of sexual abuse in particular:

21 Professor Aisha K. Gill, University of Bristol, and Professor Sundari Anitha, University of Lincoln ([HBA0034](#))

22 Professor Aisha K. Gill, University of Bristol, and Professor Sundari Anitha, University of Lincoln ([HBA0034](#))

23 His Majesty’s Inspectorate of the Constabulary and Fire and Rescue, ‘[How the police respond to victims of sexual abuse when the victim is from an ethnic minority background and may be at risk of honour-based abuse: Report on Tees Valley Inclusion Project’s super-complaint](#)’, accessed 5 July 2023

lacks an in-depth consideration of differences in experience based on ethnicity or vulnerability connected to honour-based abuse. There are significant gaps in the data collected by the police as well as quality concerns. This is a well-known problem. We believe it has now become an intolerable one.²⁴

- 16.** HMICFRS told us in its written evidence that data recording urgently needed to improve:

This situation, we believe, has gone on for far too long. It is unacceptable that poor data is hampering forces' abilities to police and the ability of other organisations to help address any inequalities that would become clear if that data was collected.²⁵

Information HMICFRS obtained from the Home Office as part of its investigation showed a variation in the quality of demographic data between forces; HMICFRS noted it was not a mandatory requirement for forces to provide ethnicity data to the Home Office Data Hub database.²⁶

- 17.** During its review of rape and sexual offence files, HMICFRS found that 31% of files did not record the victim's ethnicity. HMICFRS found a number of reasons for this, including that the forces' systems which record details of an initial victim call (when many officers do ask for details of ethnicity) are different to the systems for crime recording and that some crime recording systems allow for an 'unknown' field for ethnicity or for the field to be left blank altogether.²⁷

- 18.** In addition, HMICFRS was told that some victims were reported to be "reluctant to give the information", and some officers and staff felt cautious or uncomfortable in asking, fearing offending the victim or that victims might believe this information will negatively impact the service they receive.²⁸ The super-complaint investigation concluded that "police-recorded data [...] is too patchy, poor-quality and inconsistent for us to be able to compare the experiences of people of different ethnicities", to the extent that "every element of this super-complaint investigation was hampered by the lack of ethnicity data".²⁹ HMICFRS told us:

24 Ibid

25 His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary, Fire and Rescue Services (HMICFRS) ([HBA0050](#))

26 His Majesty's Inspectorate of the Constabulary and Fire and Rescue, '[How the police respond to victims of sexual abuse when the victim is from an ethnic minority background and may be at risk of honour-based abuse: Report on Tees Valley Inclusion Project's super-complaint](#)', accessed 5 July 2023

27 Ibid

28 Ibid

29 Ibid

Improved recording of the ethnicity of victims is vital and overdue. This will allow police to monitor and improve their service and assure the public they are treating everyone fairly. It will also help bring about smarter commissioning of specialist victim services to support victims.³⁰

Children’s social care

- 19.** The Department for Education collects information on the characteristics of children referred to local authority children’s social care services through the ‘Children in need’ census.³¹ The census guide explains that the purpose of collecting this data includes:

helping to map children’s journeys and understand the impact of services on their lives [...] to fulfil [the State’s] international obligations under the 1989 Convention on the Rights of the Child [and] help local authorities when planning and commissioning services and also central government when developing and monitoring its policies.³²

- 20.** The data collected includes the child’s primary need at their first social work assessment, and factors identified at the end of the assessment.³³ The categories in the Department for Education’s Children in need census for ‘primary need’ do not include any reference to honour-based abuse or related categories. The categories for ‘factors identified at the end of the assessment’ include FGM and abuse-linked to faith or belief, but no other categories that might coincide with honour-based abuse.³⁴

- 21.** Karma Nirvana told us that there was a “postcode lottery” as to whether cases of honour-based abuse would be identified correctly or at all, as many local authority children’s social care departments do not have a system for identifying honour-based abuse incidents.³⁵ Karma Nirvana’s own research showed that only 22 per cent of the local authorities had a method for identifying honour-based abuse cases.³⁶ Diana Nammi, Founder and Executive Director at Iranian and Kurdish Women’s Rights Organisation (IKWRO), explained:

30 HMICFRS ([HBA0050](#))

31 Department for Education, [Children in need census 2023 to 2024](#) (October 2022); the Children in need census is an “annual statutory census for all local authorities” which collects data on “children referred to local authority social care services because their health or development is at risk”.

32 Department for Education, [Children in need census 2023 to 2024](#) (October 2022)

33 Ibid

34 Ibid

35 Karma Nirvana ([HBA0013](#))

36 Karma Nirvana ([HBA0013](#))

In research [IKWRO] did in 2020, we noted that social services did not record 50% of forced marriages in the UK. That means that forced marriages and child marriages happened and they knew about them, but they did not record them.³⁷

- 22.** The Home Office accepted there is limited data on the personal characteristics of perpetrators, but said “one reasonable inference is that, since honour-based abuse happens within the person’s family or community, the ethnicities of the perpetrators are likely to closely mirror those of the victims”.³⁸ The Minister for Safeguarding told us:

on 19 December 2022 the Home Office launched an invitation to tender in relation to a feasibility study to explore whether a more rigorous estimation of the prevalence of forced marriage and FGM in England and Wales can be made [...] The competition closed on 30 January, and [the Home Office is] in the process of selecting a supplier to carry out the study.³⁹

The Home Office did not set out a timescale for the completion of the feasibility study, and we note the scope only applies to FGM and forced marriage.⁴⁰

23. CONCLUSION

There is inconsistency in how data on honour-based abuse offences is collected and recorded by the police. This is partly due to incorrect recording by police officers, either in failing to recognise an offence as honour-based, or in making an inaccurate assessment of the context. There is insufficient information provided in the published data, and the lack of ethnicity data makes it particularly difficult to know in which communities honour-based abuse occurs, in what forms, and how those communities are being served by police and other agencies. Data currently collected by children’s social care services does not allow for the prevalence of honour-based abuse amongst children and young people to be understood and monitored effectively at Government level.

37 [Q26](#) [Diana Nammi]; IKWRO ([HBA0042](#)); “*Girls at risk of child marriage as half of local authorities fail to keep records*”, The Guardian, 18 May 2020

38 Home Office ([HBA0041](#))

39 Women and Equalities Committee, [Correspondence from the Minister for Safeguarding, relating to the ‘So-called honour-based abuse’ inquiry](#), 14 March 2023

40 Ibid

24. RECOMMENDATION

The Home Office, National Police Chiefs' Council and College of Policing should publish refreshed guidance for forces on how to accurately and consistently record incidents of honour-based abuse. The Home Office should instruct police forces across England and Wales to collect specific information on victims and perpetrators of honour-based abuse, including data on their protected characteristics, and to report this to the Home Office as part of the existing Annual Data Requirement.

25. RECOMMENDATION

The Department of Health and Social Care and the Department of Education should add options for honour-based abuse to both the 'primary need at first social work assessment' and 'factors identified at the end of the assessment' categories in the 'Children in need' census.

Recognising honour-based abuse

- 26.** A recurring theme in our inquiry was a lack of understanding of honour-based abuse amongst professionals working in the police, social care, health and education sectors.⁴¹ The Domestic Abuse Commissioner, Nicole Jacobs, told us that one of her main priorities was raising awareness of the “need for a much greater understanding across the board, not just in the criminal justice system but in any number of public services, of honour-based abuse”.⁴² Karma Nirvana, a specialist charity which runs the national Honour Based Abuse Helpline, told us that there can be a disproportionate focus on forced marriage and FGM which “can mask cases of honour-based abuse for statutory professionals where there is no presenting [forced marriage] or FGM concern”.⁴³

The ‘One Chance Rule’

- 27.** During our inquiry we were told that being able to understand and recognise signs of honour-based abuse at an early stage is critical to protecting the victim. Savera UK, a charity focused on tackling honour-based abuse, explained:

One of the most common challenges for people at risk in coming forward and reporting honour-based abuse is the fear that their perpetrators will find out and cause further harm or threat to life. Some people at risk may also be concerned about the use of interpreters, as they may be from their community and could report the conversation back to perpetrators. In many communities a fear of reporting to authority is instilled by perpetrators, which makes it even more valuable for professionals to act upon the ‘One Chance Rule’, as one negative experience, or failure to be heard, could deter a person at risk from coming forward again.⁴⁴

41 For example: Apna Haq ([HBA0003](#)); BAWSO ([HBA0009](#)), Karma Nirvana ([HBA0013](#)); Institute for Research into Superdiversity, University of Birmingham ([HBA0028](#)); Q8 [Yasmin Khan]

42 Q55 [Domestic Abuse Commissioner]

43 Karma Nirvana ([HBA0013](#))

44 Savera UK ([HBA0020](#))

28. The ‘One Chance Rule’ refers to the concept that services may only have one opportunity to engage with or help a victim of honour-based abuse. Savera UK told us their campaign literature included a list of key actions which should be avoided when in contact with victims of honour-based abuse, to ensure victims do not withdraw their contact with the services they have engaged with. Actions include:

- Not sending them away;
- Not approaching members of the family or the community;
- Not accepting family or community members statements without an ‘honour’-based abuse targeted risk assessment and the relevant questions being asked;
- Not attempting mediation, reconciliation (such as family counselling) with the family and/or community members;
- Not approaching the victim’s family or community leaders/ members–this could heighten the risk to them; or
- Not sharing information without consent.⁴⁵

Police response

29. In 2015, an inspection of the police response to honour-based violence, forced marriage and FGM by Her Majesty’s Inspectorate of the Constabulary (HMIC) found that:

Only four of the 43 forces were assessed as prepared in respect of their capacity to investigate HBV incidents, work together with others to identify and manage those who pose a risk to victims and to close cases in a victim-centred and timely way.

[...] forces were more prepared in their leadership and in their responses at the early stages of the victim’s journey (awareness and understanding and protection) than they were in the later stages of enforcement and prevention.⁴⁶

30. In particular, HMIC found that there was a wide variation in understanding honour-based violence.⁴⁷ It said there was “clear evidence that police officers and staff who had received enhanced training demonstrated better

45 Savera UK, [Once Chance Rule Leaflet](#) (2020)

46 Her Majesty’s Inspectorate of Constabulary, [The depths of dishonour: Hidden voices and shameful crimes](#) (December 2015), pp 65–66

47 Ibid, p 12

awareness and understanding of HBV issues and the required responses”,⁴⁸ but that training was neither consistent nor widespread.⁴⁹ Following the inspectorate’s report, the police made a number of changes:

- The NPCC developed an updated policing strategy for honour-based abuse.⁵⁰
- A joint protocol between the police and Crown Prosecution Service for the investigation and prosecution of honour-based abuse was introduced.⁵¹
- The College of Policing produced a summary of best practice in relation to honour-based abuse in November 2020.⁵² In 2021 it produced guidance and training for first responders, including frontline officers.⁵³

- 31.** Deputy Chief Constable Ivan Balhatchet, the National Policing Lead (NPCC) for Honour-Based Abuse: Forced Marriage and Female Genital Mutilation since 2017, told us that he had produced a National Delivery Plan to improve the policing response, created a National Working Group for honour-based abuse matters which meets quarterly, and holds bi-annual honour-based abuse stakeholders’ meetings.⁵⁴
- 32.** In addition to these measures, the Home Office told us about the work the Government had done to increase understanding and awareness of honour-based abuse,⁵⁵ including the establishment of the Forced Marriage Unit (FMU) in 2005, run jointly by the Home Office and Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office,⁵⁶ and the publication of multi-agency statutory

48 Her Majesty’s Inspectorate of the Constabulary, [The depths of dishonour: Hidden voices and shameful crimes](#) (December 2015), p 85

49 Ibid, p 11

50 National Police Chiefs’ Council, [Honour based Abuse, Forced Marriage and Female Genital Mutilation: a Policing Strategy for England, Wales & Northern Ireland - Eradicating Honour based Abuse, Force Marriage and Female Genital Mutilation Together](#) (December 2015)

51 National Police Chiefs’ Council, [‘Crown Prosecution Service and NPCC launch new Honour-Based Violence/Abuse and Forced Marriage Protocol’](#), accessed 28 June

52 College of Policing, [Honour-based abuse: Summary of practice 2020](#) (November 2020)

53 College of Policing, [Honour-based abuse: Abuse for first responders](#) (October 2021)

54 National Police Chiefs’ Council ([HBA0048](#))

55 Home Office ([HBA0041](#))

56 The FMU supports victims and potential victims of forced marriage, releases annual statistics and provides training and workshops for police officers and social workers, as well as other professionals (such as healthcare and education) on request - see written evidence submitted by the Home Office ([HBA0041](#))

guidance for dealing with forced marriage in 2014, and on FGM in 2020.⁵⁷ The Government also provides funding for the National FGM Centre, via the Department for Education.⁵⁸

33. However, despite these developments, HMICFRS found in its response to the 2020 super-complaint—published in December 2022—that there were no records to show how much police training on honour-based abuse had been rolled out, and that its effectiveness had not been evaluated.⁵⁹ HMICFRS concluded that there was “far too much inconsistency in the service these victims receive from the police”.⁶⁰

34. During our inquiry we were told of instances where the police have, in cases of honour-based abuse, sought to put an officer from the same community in charge of the case. Freedom Charity explained:

While that is understandable, there is a risk that officers from that community may be sympathetic to controlling families and what we really need are well-trained, independently-minded police officers from all backgrounds who do not try to mediate and work on the basis that any engagement they have with a victim of dishonour abuse could be the last chance to help them and therefore act immediately.⁶¹

35. Throughout his contributions to this inquiry, DCC Balhatchet acknowledged the gaps in the police response to honour-based abuse. He told us that he was in discussions with the College of Policing on the need for a national training package for frontline officers. DCC Balhatchet also emphasised the importance of ensuring that an effective risk assessment tool for honour-based abuse was available to frontline officers:

The previous [risk assessment tool] used by policing, called ‘DASH’ (Domestic Abuse, Stalking, and Honour Based Abuse), contained HBA specific questions. The College of Policing has now launched

57 UK Government, *Working Together to Safeguard Children* (July 2018); Department for Education, *Keeping children safe in education 2022* (September 2022)

58 The Centre offers social work provision, professional development and training, expert reports, and hosts conferences and talks on FGM, breast ironing and abuse linked to faith or belief

59 His Majesty’s Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services, College of Policing and Independent Office for Police Conduct, *How the police respond to victims of sexual abuse when the victim is from an ethnic minority background and may be at risk of honour-based abuse: Report on Tees Valley Inclusion Project’s super-complaint* (16 December 2022), pp 13–14

60 His Majesty’s Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services, College of Policing and Independent Office for Police Conduct, *How the police respond to victims of sexual abuse when the victim is from an ethnic minority background and may be at risk of honour-based abuse: Report on Tees Valley Inclusion Project’s super-complaint* (16 December 2022), p 14

61 Freedom Charity ([HBA0008](#))

‘DARA’ (Domestic Abuse Risk Assessment), which while providing an increased focus on coercive and controlling [behaviour], does not contain HBA specific questions. I believe that a specific question within DARA on HBA would help to reassure victims that police understand the issue, take it seriously, and that we are asking the right questions to identify offending.⁶²

Other public service providers

- 36.** The evidence we received to this inquiry, in terms of the role of public services in dealing with honour-based abuse, focused primarily on the police. However, we were told that other crucial services such as social services and healthcare also need to improve their recognition and understanding of honour-based abuse.⁶³ Children’s social care can provide timely and effective interventions when honour-based abuse is identified. However, Karma Nirvana told us:

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.⁶⁴

Dr Hannana Siddiqui, Head of Policy and Research at Southall Black Sisters, a by-and-for black and ethnic minority women’s organisation, gave us specific examples of unsafe practices by children’s social care professionals that heightened the risk of honour-based abuse:

In Bekhal Mahmud’s case—the sister of Banaz Mahmud—they actually mediated between her parents and Bekhal when she was in foster care, having escaped a forced marriage and abuse from her family. [Social services] handed over a tape from the father that was in Kurdish, which they had not checked, because the social worker wanted her to go back home and had been very friendly with her parents, [...] When Bekhal listened to that tape, he was threatening to kill her and the whole family if she did not come home, and she then did go home, because she was frightened that her whole family would be killed. This is how social services—even if it is unwittingly done—get involved in the mediation process.⁶⁵

62 Deputy Chief Constable Ivan Balhatchet ([HBA0053](#))

63 For example: Centre for Women’s Justice ([HBA0046](#)); Southall Black Sisters ([HBA0051](#)); Freedom Charity ([HBA0007](#)); Bawso ([HBA0009](#)); Dr Helen McCabe, Dr Roland Seymour, Dr Katarina Schwarz, Dr Lauren Eglen and Rebecca Brown ([HBA0016](#)); Savera UK ([HBA0020](#))

64 Karma Nirvana ([HBA0013](#))

65 Q23 [Dr Hannana Siddiqui] In the case of Banaz Mahmud, the victim reported rape, violence, harassment and threats and an attempt to kill by her extended family and community to the police multiple times before her murder in 2006.

Those survivors from our ‘lived experience’ session whose abuse began as children said that children’s services did not take their concerns seriously. One victim of an attempted forced marriage explained that she was told she should ‘go home’ by social workers.⁶⁶

37. CONCLUSION

We welcome the steps taken by the police service in response to the concerns raised in the super-complaint on honour-based abuse brought by Liberty and the Halo Project in 2020. However, there is still more work to be done if victims of honour-based abuse are to feel empowered to report the crimes against them and feel confident that they will be safeguarded against further harm. People subject to honour-based abuse take huge risks in reporting the crimes against them, and it is critical that the public services in place to protect them are able to recognise that abuse at the first opportunity.

38. RECOMMENDATION

In response to this Report, the Government should set out the progress made in implementing the national training package for frontline police officers on recognising so-called honour-based abuse. The Government must also set out the steps it will take to ensure those working in other safeguarding roles, including in social services and education, are trained to recognise honour-based abuse and not deterred from tackling it by cultural sensitivity.

39. RECOMMENDATION

The Government must include specific questions on honour-based abuse in the Domestic Abuse Risk Assessment tool to help both victims and police officers identify risks confidently and accurately.

Education and RSHE

- 40.** Schools can also play an important role in protecting children from honour-based abuse and educating them about harmful practices. From September 2020, all state schools have been required to consider statutory guidance on relationships, sex, and health education (RSHE). The statutory guidance outlines recommended topics to be taught as part of the RSHE curriculum in schools, including around honour-based abuse. However, schools have flexibility in how they choose to deliver RSHE and there is no standardised

66 See Annex B

curriculum. The Home Office told us that resources for teachers have been published online and the RSHE teacher training module ‘Being Safe’ includes sections on these topics.⁶⁷ It also told us:

The Department for Education will be launching an online resource hub for Designated Safeguarding Leads in schools and colleges in [2023] to support their role in identifying children who may be at risk of harm. This will enable them to access advice and guidance, including on HBA.⁶⁸

The Department for Education is currently reviewing the teaching of RSHE in schools, the outcome of the review is expected later this year.

- 41.** Both Yasmin Khan, Founder of the Halo Project, and Surwat Sohail, from domestic abuse charity Roshni, told us about their experiences working in schools. Ms Khan said she felt many schools send the message to young women at risk of honour-based abuse not to “be silly” and to “stand up to their parents”.⁶⁹ Ms Sohail told us:

I did sessions with 750 children, and 95% of them could not even identify what is a forced marriage, what is honour-based abuse, and why it is abuse. That is quite concerning.⁷⁰

Some of the participants in our ‘lived experience’ session told us that although their abuse had started at school-age, their school had not recognised the abuse or taken action. Some felt this was a result of misplaced cultural sensitivities by the school; others felt the resources available to teachers were inadequate.⁷¹

42. RECOMMENDATION

The Government is currently reviewing the content of relationships, sex and health education (RSHE) taught in schools. It is clear from the evidence we received that the teaching of honour-based abuse is currently inadequate. The ongoing review of RSHE should consider how the teaching of honour-based abuse should be improved across educational settings.

67 Home Office ([HBA0041](#))

68 Home Office ([HBA0041](#))

69 Q8 [Yasmin Khan]

70 Q23 [Surwat Sohail]

71 See Annex B

A shared definition and shared understanding

- 43.** From the evidence we have received, it is clear there is significant variation across statutory agencies in their understanding and response to cases of so-called honour-based abuse. The Domestic Abuse Commissioner stressed the need for a cross-government approach to honour-based abuse which:

starts with defining it correctly so that we are not [...] overly oriented to murder and the high risk—understanding the continuum and the complexities. [...] We need to have a greater understanding of what we mean by so-called honour-based abuse, and put in resource and activity to help specialists in the third sector really enter into partnerships where we have that kind of comprehensive coverage and training.⁷²

- 44.** Jaswant Narwal, National Lead for Honour Based Abuse at the CPS, told us the CPS had consulted widely when framing its own definition of honour-based abuse, and that the definition was “well-respected”.⁷³ However, she accepted that there was an absence of “any official sentencing guidelines or any strong case law that [the CPS] can refer to in order to help the judges understand honour-based abuse”.⁷⁴ She continued:

Again, it is back to the definition. It is back to understanding what so-called honour-based abuse is. If you do not understand what it is, if a jury does not understand what it is, and if people who are prosecuting, defending and judging do not fully understand what it is, this will be an issue for victims and witnesses.⁷⁵

Although some of those who submitted evidence to our inquiry told us that the CPS definition was useful, they were also concerned that it did not sufficiently capture the breadth of honour-based abuse,⁷⁶ provide sufficient

72 Q56 [Domestic Abuse Commissioner]

73 Q46 [Jaswant Narwal]

74 Q45 [Jaswant Narwal]

75 Q45 [Jaswant Narwal]

76 For example: Dr Helen McCabe (Associate Professor of Political Theory at University of Nottingham); Dr Rowland Seymour (Assistant Professor of Mathematics at University of Birmingham); Dr Katarina Schwarz (Associate Professor in Antislavery Law and Policy at Rights Lab, University of Nottingham); Dr Lauren Eglén (Rights Lab Research Fellow in Modern Slavery, Gender and Feminist Approaches at Rights Lab, University of Nottingham); Rebecca Brown (PhD student at University of Nottingham) ([HBA0016](#)); Karma Nirvana ([HBA0013](#)); Law Commission ([HBA0039](#)); Southall Black Sisters ([HBA0051](#))

context about the motivations of perpetrators and the challenges faced by victims, or recognise that honour-based abuse is often a course of conduct or pattern rather than a single incident.⁷⁷

- 45.** In the written evidence submitted to this inquiry, there was considerable support for introducing a statutory definition of honour-based abuse. Karma Nirvana outlined the case for what such a definition might look like:

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 those on the frontline responding to it. It will also improve the quality of data collated and recorded on this issue.⁷⁸

- 46.** Yasmin Khan compared the fact there was a statutory definition of domestic abuse to the absence of one for honour-based abuse and told us this “sets the scene in terms of the significance and importance that honour-based abuse has”.⁷⁹ Professor Gill, Professor of Criminology, Centre for Gender and Violence Research at University of Bristol, highlighted the problems for data collection across agencies if different definitions were used:

If there is not the same definition of honour-based violence, it is actually difficult to collect the data. The lack of data across agencies has an impact in terms of monitoring the value of an intervention.⁸⁰

- 47.** The Minister for Victims and Sentencing told us that he was “wary” of introducing a statutory definition of honour-based abuse because of several challenges, including the view that it was “probably too early to see what the impact of [a statutory definition of domestic abuse] has been, both in terms of bringing clarity to the system and driving more charges and prosecutions”,⁸¹ as well as the “complexities in drafting a statutory definition”, “challenges with data recording [...] and also the richness of data”.⁸² The Minister for Safeguarding told us that most honour-based abuse falls within the statutory definition of domestic abuse but that because honour-based abuse often occurs between members of the community rather than in a family context, it is “incredibly difficult to define it”.⁸³

77 Karma Nirvana ([HBA0013](#)); Southall Black Sisters ([HBA0051](#))

78 Karma Nirvana ([HBA0013](#))

79 Q4 [Yasmin Khan]

80 Q5 [Professor Gill]

81 Q80 [Minister for Victims and Sentencing]; the statutory definition of domestic abuse was included in the Domestic Abuse Act 2021 and came into effect in October 2021.

82 Q80 [Minister for Victims and Sentencing]

83 Q81 [Minister for Safeguarding]

48. CONCLUSION

In order to tackle so-called honour-based abuse effectively, it is crucial there is shared understanding of it across all agencies. The introduction of a statutory definition of honour-based abuse would contribute to social and professional understanding, help to improve data collection and ultimately assist in bringing more perpetrators to justice.

49. RECOMMENDATION

The Government should introduce a statutory definition of honour-based abuse. It should consult a wide range of experts, specialist by-and-for services and survivors of honour-based abuse on framing the definition using the existing Crown Prosecution Service definition as a starting point. The definition, once finalised, should be accompanied by statutory multi-agency guidance.

Supporting victims and reforming the law

- 50.** In this Chapter we consider the challenges in supporting victims of so-called honour-based abuse. We look at the barriers for victims with insecure immigration status (particularly those with no recourse to public funds), and the wider challenges for the specialist sector which supports victims. We also consider the merits of sentencing reform for offences motivated by so-called honour.

Migrant victims

- 51.** During our inquiry we heard that victims of honour-based abuse with insecure immigration status can be reluctant to report crimes against them or to seek support due to concerns that authorities may report them to Immigration Enforcement and those fears are exploited by their abusers. Such concerns are compounded for migrant victims with no recourse to public funds who can face destitution if they leave an abusive relationship.⁸⁴ BAWSO, a Wales-based specialist service supporting Black and minority victims of abuse, explained that migrant victims can be subjected to:

emotional abuse using immigration status to confine them in abusive relationships. Perpetrators use threats to take their children from them and report them as illegal immigrants to police to be deported.⁸⁵

- 52.** There have been repeated calls for an end to the sharing of victims' data by the police with Immigration Enforcement. The introduction of a 'firewall' between those services has been supported by a coalition of 58 organisations led by the Latin American Women's Rights Service (LAWRS), the Domestic Abuse Commissioner, the Victims Commissioner for England and Wales, the London Victims Commissioner, the Justice Select Committee, and a number of organisations submitting evidence to this inquiry.⁸⁶

84 Southall Black Sisters ([HBA0051](#))

85 BAWSO ([HBA0009](#))

86 See Step Up Migrant Women [campaign](#); Domestic Abuse Commissioner, '[Vulnerable survivors failed as government rejects recommendations that would protect migrant victims of domestic abuse](#)', accessed 5 July 2023; Justice Committee, Second Report of Session 2022–23, [Pre-legislative Scrutiny of the draft Victims Bill](#), HC 304; Victims'

- 53.** In 2018, Liberty and Southall Black Sisters submitted a super-complaint against the Home Office and the NPCC.⁸⁷ The super-complaint stated that “victims and witnesses [...] to all crimes, who have insecure or irregular immigration status, may be unacceptably deterred from reporting to the police due to fears that their details will be passed to the Home Office.”⁸⁸ The super-complaint focused mainly on female victims of domestic and sexual abuse and violence. The super-complaint proposed a number of solutions, including establishing a “complete firewall” between the police and the Home Office to prevent data-sharing on victims and witnesses of crime.⁸⁹
- 54.** In its response to the super-complaint, the panel of HM Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services (HMICFRS), the College of Policing (CoP) and the Independent Office for Police Conduct (IOPC) found that the current system was causing “significant harm to the public interest”.⁹⁰ It called on the Home Office to review the existing framework and for that review to include “further consideration of a mechanism for establishing a firewall between police and immigration enforcement services for all migrant victims of crime with insecure immigration status.”⁹¹ As an interim measure the panel called for an immediate halt to the police sharing information on domestic abuse victims with Immigration Enforcement and, instead, for police officers to link the victim to a third party that can provide advice and assistance.⁹²
- 55.** The panel considered that a complete firewall, which it took to mean preventing all communication between the police service and the Home Office on migrant victims of crime, “could undermine the public interest and the interests of bringing to justice individuals breaking the law” and that any policy decision to adopt a ‘firewall’ would have to be “informed by evaluation to minimise the risk of unintended consequences”.⁹³

Commissioner, *2021/22 Annual Report* (June 2022), London Victims’ Commissioner, ‘[Victims Bill Consultation Response](#)’, accessed 5 July; Institute for Research into Superdiversity, University of Birmingham ([HBA0028](#)); SafeLives ([HBA0037](#)); End Violence Against Women Coalition ([HBA0045](#)); Southall Black Sisters ([HBA0051](#))

87 Liberty and Southall Black Sisters, ‘[Liberty and Southall Black Sisters’ super-complaint on data-sharing between the police and Home Office regarding victims and witnesses to crime](#)’, accessed 28 June 2023

88 Liberty and Southall Black Sisters, *[Super-complaint prepared by Liberty and Southall Black Sisters](#)* (2018), p 4

89 Ibid

90 His Majesty’s Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services, College of Policing and Independent Office for Police Conduct, *[Safe to share?: Report on Liberty and Southall Black Sisters’ super-complaint on policing and immigration status](#)* (17 December 2020), p 12

91 Ibid, p 16

92 Ibid, p 15

93 Ibid, p 13

- 56.** In December 2021, the Home Office published a review of data sharing arrangements in response to the panel’s report. The review concluded that the Home Office would not establish a firewall between police and immigration enforcement because it deemed that it would not be “operable or proportionate”.⁹⁴ The Home Office maintained that information sharing had a safeguarding purpose:

Information sharing enables, for example, the police to potentially acquire a fuller understanding of a migrants’ particular needs and circumstances. The Home Office may have relevant information and be able to help to protect and support victims and help with an investigation (including establishing the immigration status of the perpetrator), which may assist in determining the most appropriate and effective intervention(s).⁹⁵

Instead, the Home Office said it would seek to implement an Immigration Enforcement Migrant Victims Protocol “which puts safeguarding needs first”.⁹⁶ The protocol would:

set out that no immigration enforcement action will be taken against that victim while investigation and prosecution proceedings are ongoing, and the victim is receiving support and advice to make an application to regularise their stay. We will [...] provide information and signposting at the point of the referral from police and keep contact with the individual on the progress of support and advice being received.⁹⁷

- 57.** Some specialist organisations including Southall Black Sisters, Liberty, Imkaan and LAWRS rejected the proposal of the protocol, arguing that it “failed to address the harm generated by data-sharing and failed to guarantee safety in reporting to the police without the fear of detention or deportation”.⁹⁸ As a result, many organisations have refused to engage with the Home Office on its development, including ten of the 16 organisations which had contributed to the original review.⁹⁹

94 Home Office, [Home Office and Police data sharing arrangements on migrant victims and witnesses of crime with insecure immigration status](#) (December 2021), para 68

95 Ibid, para 33

96 Home Office, [Review of data sharing: migrant victims and witnesses of crime](#), accessed 5 July 2023

97 Ibid

98 LAWRS, [Joint Response to the “Home Office and Police data sharing arrangements on migrant victims and witnesses of crime with insecure immigration status” Review](#), accessed 5 July 2023

99 Ibid; see also Southall Black Sisters ([HBA0051](#))

58. CONCLUSION

Abusers use the insecure immigration status of their victims to deter and prevent them from seeking support, exploiting fears that reporting abuse to the police will lead to action against the victim by Immigration Enforcement. We are not satisfied that the Immigration Enforcement Migrant Victims Protocol proposed by the Home Office, which prevents immigration enforcement action against that victim only while investigation and prosecution proceedings are ongoing, and the victim is receiving support to make an application to regularise their stay, is sufficient to mitigate those concerns.

59. RECOMMENDATION

The Government should establish an appropriate firewall-type mechanism between the police and the Home Office to prevent data sharing for the purposes of enforcing immigration rules against victims of abuse. The firewall should be designed to ensure the police only share information with Immigration Enforcement on victims in exceptional circumstances, which must be narrowly defined and be for the purposes of assisting in the safeguarding of the individual or taking action against their abuser. If and when police become aware a victim has irregular immigration status, they should provide that person with information about local support services (including legal advice) and encourage them to seek advice on regularising their status. The National Police Chiefs' Council guidance should be updated to reflect this.

Funding for specialist services

- 60.** During this inquiry, we heard that specialist ‘by-and-for’ services are key providers of support for victims of honour-based abuse. By-and-for services, which are organisations designed and run by and for people who are minoritised. They are “rooted in the communities they serve, and many include wrap-around holistic recovery and support that address a victim or survivor’s full range of intersecting needs, beyond purely domestic abuse support”.¹⁰⁰ Professor Aisha K. Gill and Professor Sundari Anitha told us:

These organisations are staffed by and cater to victims from particular communities and have extensive experience of addressing HBV/A, [forced marriage] and FGM alongside long-established practices to safeguard victims and provide them with advocacy and support.¹⁰¹

100 Domestic Abuse Commissioner, *A Patchwork of Provision: How to meet the needs of victims and survivors across England and Wales* (November 2022), p 41

101 Professor Aisha K. Gill, University of Bristol, and Professor Sundari Anitha, University of Lincoln ([HBA0034](#))

Despite this, we heard that over the last decade these services have reduced across the UK, and that central and local government tendering processes tend to favour large generic providers.¹⁰²

- 61.** Funding for by-and-for services was highlighted repeatedly as an ongoing and significant issue during our inquiry.¹⁰³ We heard there is approximately a £97 million shortfall in funding for specialist services, and that two-thirds of the specialist sector had “vanished” due to funding pressures, leaving those which are left under extreme pressure due to the number of cases.¹⁰⁴ The Domestic Abuse Commissioner told us that, despite being “extremely effective”, by-and-for services are six times less likely to receive Government funding.¹⁰⁵ In addition, we were told that Government funding, whilst vital to the sector, tends to be short term and create intense resource pressures for organisations.¹⁰⁶ This point was also raised in the Domestic Abuse Commissioner’s report on provision, which stated that “while the largest percentage was for between one to three years, over a quarter of organisations relied on a main source of funding that was for less than one year”.¹⁰⁷
- 62.** The Home Office told us that the Government recognised the uncertainties about funding, and that the Domestic Abuse Plan committed to “over £230 million being invested over multiple years and via multi-year grants where it is appropriate to do so”.¹⁰⁸ They explained that:

Smaller, community-based HBA organisations may have less capacity to apply for public funding than larger organisations which cover a broader array of harm types. The Government recognises this, which is why both the Home Office and Ministry of Justice have sought opportunities to target funding at smaller organisations. This has been done both through the design of commercial competitions run, for example providing more time than is standard and promoting consortium bidding arrangements, and by launching a competition whose criteria are based partly around specialised organisations tailored to supporting minority groups or people who have been victims of crimes such as HBA.¹⁰⁹

102 See Professor Aisha K. Gill, University of Bristol, and Professor Sundari Anitha, University of Lincoln ([HBA0034](#)) and Southall Black Sisters ([HBA0051](#))

103 See, for example, Southall Black Sisters ([HBA0051](#))

104 Q27 [Dr Hannana Siddiqui;] Imkaan, [Letter to the Chancellor of the Exchequer](#) (30 September 2021); Q27 [Surwat Sohail]

105 Q55 [Nicole Jacobs], Domestic Abuse Commissioner, [A Patchwork of Provision: How to meet the needs of victims and survivors across England and Wales](#) (November 2022), p 41

106 Q27 [Diana Nammi; Dr Hannana Siddiqui]

107 Domestic Abuse Commissioner, [A Patchwork of Provision: How to meet the needs of victims and survivors across England and Wales](#) (November 2022), p 41

108 Home Office ([HBA0041](#))

109 Home Office ([HBA0041](#))

63. In her report, *Patchwork of Provision: How to meet the needs of victims and survivors across England and Wales*, the Domestic Abuse Commissioner identified funding for specialist services as one of her three main priorities for tackling honour-based abuse.¹¹⁰ The Commissioner told us she wanted to see a strategic approach to funding for by-and-for services instead of a one-off fund,¹¹¹ and has recommended the Government should establish a £263 million national funding pot for by-and-for services over three years.¹¹²

64. CONCLUSION

By-and-for services, which are organisations designed and run by and for people who are minoritised, are vital to ensuring victims of honour-based abuse receive the support they need. However, the sector is underfunded, and complex commissioning processes often prevent smaller specialist organisations from competing against generic and larger providers for the funding available. Such funding is also too often available only on a short term basis.

65. RECOMMENDATION

The Government should increase the funding available to by-and-for services that support victims of honour-based abuse. The Government should commit to providing this funding across multiple years. It should also assess the merits of that funding being made available in a simple grant form so it is accessible to smaller organisations which lack the resources to compete with larger providers in complex commissioning processes.

Support for victims with no recourse to public funds

66. Migrants with no recourse to public funds (NRPF) are people who have been given limited leave to enter the UK—usually to visit, study, work or join family—with a condition imposed on their leave to enter specifying they have no access to funding such as benefits, or services such as the NHS. We heard that the pressure on services trying to support migrant victims with NRPF are even more acute than with other victims. These victims are prevented by their status from accessing a number of forms of state support and welfare benefits, including housing benefit. Victims with

110 Domestic Abuse Commissioner, [*A Patchwork of Provision: How to meet the needs of victims and survivors across England and Wales*](#) (November 2022)

111 Q55 [Domestic Abuse Commissioner]

112 Domestic Abuse Commissioner, [*A Patchwork of Provision: How to meet the needs of victims and survivors across England and Wales*](#) (November 2022)

NRPF have difficulty in accessing refuge accommodation and achieving financial independence from their abusers, often leaving them trapped in abusive relationships or situations, or vulnerable to exploitation.¹¹³ The Centre for Women’s Justice told us that victims with NRPF had a heightened vulnerability to abuse, including honour-based abuse. They explained:

Women in these positions echo similar stories of extreme violence and control, domestic servitude, isolation, cruelty, abandonment and neglect. All too frequently their documents and passports are taken away and they are told that any transgression on their part will result in their detention and deportation to countries of origin where they are likely to face further risks of violence and destitution and are more likely to be ostracised by their families for transgressing from social norms on marriage and divorce. Most women are therefore imprisoned in abuse and find themselves in positions that are similar to that of bonded labour in that their vulnerability and powerlessness is often exploited to the full.¹¹⁴

- 67.** Diana Nammi, Founder and Executive Director at Iranian and Kurdish Women’s Rights Organisation (IKWRO), told us about some of the challenges in supporting victims with no recourse to public funds:

Every month, we pay nearly £1,500 just to support women from minority communities in hotels or refuges. The problem is that many refuges don’t take them easily because they have no recourse to public funds. Because the funding from the Government is for a very short time, most refuges are worried about losing money, so they don’t accept them. We pay from our reserves or from the donations we get from people to support women. They spend about two weeks in a hotel before we find them a safe place.¹¹⁵

- 68.** Nicole Jacobs, the Domestic Abuse Commissioner told us that she:

strongly advised that we need more provision of support in place to open recourse to public funds to a wider range of migrants. The London School of Economics has shown us there is a cost-benefit analysis of about 4:1 when we do that.¹¹⁶

113 See BAWSO ([HBA0009](#)); West Yorkshire Combined Authority, Policing and Crime ([HBA0011](#)); Derbyshire OPCC, Derbyshire Constabulary, Commissioned Services of Victim Support ([HBA0019](#)); Institute for Research into Superdiversity, University of Birmingham ([HBA0028](#)); Warwickshire Police, NHS Coventry and Warwickshire, South Warwickshire NHS, Safeguarding Adults Warwickshire ([HBA0040](#)); IKWRO ([HBA0042](#)); Centre for Women’s Justice ([HBA0046](#)); Southall Black Sisters ([HBA0051](#))

114 Centre for Women’s Justice ([HBA0046](#))

115 Q27 [Diana Nammi]

116 Q57 [Domestic Abuse Commissioner]

The Commissioner also told us she wanted to see pathways to support opened up so migrant victims can access accommodation as well as other services, and a dedicated national funding pot to assist some victims.¹¹⁷

- 69.** The Home Office offers some support to victims who may become destitute if they seek to escape their abuser through the Destitute Domestic Violence Concession (DDVC). The DDVC provides leave that enables individuals to access public funds for three months which can be used to fund safe accommodation. These victims can also apply for settlement (Indefinite Leave to Remain) under the Domestic Violence Indefinite Leave to Remain rules. These schemes have been widely praised but women on non-spousal/partner visas with NRPf and undocumented women are not eligible for the DVILR and the DDVC. In 2021, the Government introduced the ‘Support for Migrant Victims’ pilot scheme for women with NRPf facing domestic abuse. We discuss that scheme below.

Support for Migrant Victims scheme

- 70.** In April 2021, the Government launched the ‘Support for Migrant Victims’ pilot scheme, which provided £1.5 million to third sector organisations to fund advice, subsistence payments, and housing for a period of up to 12 weeks. A further £1.4 million was allocated in 2022–23 to extend the scheme by a year.¹¹⁸ The Minister for Safeguarding told us the scheme:

works with other wraparound support services for migrant victims of domestic abuse, which does include accommodation, subsistence, counselling, and, at times, legal advice. I do not think it would be fair to frame it that the Government have not assisted or that there are fears as to the longevity of that. So far, the Government have supported 425 migrant victims through that £1.4 million fund.¹¹⁹

The scheme has now been extended to March 2025.¹²⁰

- 71.** Southall Black Sisters, which delivers the pilot scheme, shared their concerns that “many on non-spousal/partner visas and undocumented victims have not come forward as it does not also give them the right to settlement”. They explained that they had commissioned their own evaluation of the scheme.

The findings of the latter evaluation show that providing financial assistance is a vital safety net, but victims do need more money for longer as the current rates are below those for Universal Credit,

117 Q57 [Domestic Abuse Commissioner]; Q62 [Domestic Abuse Commissioner]

118 PQ [189271](#) [on Home Office: Grants, 19 June 2023]

119 Q74 [Minister for Safeguarding]

120 PQ [189271](#) [on Home Office: Grants, 19 June 2023]

despite a recent rise to deal with the cost-of-living crisis. Many are still unable to access a refuge in areas where there are high rents, and instead women and children are housed in unsuitable accommodation such as bed and breakfast or hotels. Also, some refuges are reluctant to accept referrals if funding is only available for a short period, particularly in complex spousal/partner, non-spousal/partner visa and undocumented cases which may take some time to resolve.¹²¹

The Istanbul Convention

- 72.** The Government has said the results of the Support for Migrant Victims scheme will inform its approach to implementing the Istanbul Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence Against Women and Domestic Violence. The Istanbul Convention establishes legal standards to ensure women's right to be free from violence. States that have ratified the Convention must adopt measures to fulfil their commitment to preventing and combating violence against women and girls. It applies to all women and the adequacy of the UK Government's approach to meeting its commitments under the Convention is monitored and reported upon. The Istanbul Convention was ratified by the Government in 2022, and came into force on 1 November 2022, however, the Government entered a reservation to Article 59 which compels states to protect women whose residency status depends on that of an abusive spouse or partner. In response to a Written Question in September 2022, the Government explained that:

[it] will make a longer-term decision about the UK's position on Article 59, and whether the reservation on that article should be maintained or withdrawn, in the light of the findings of the Support for Migrant Victims Scheme pilot and wider policy considerations. Therefore, we decided to apply a reservation on Article 59, which nine other countries have also done, to enable the UK to ratify as soon as possible.¹²²

- 73.** This approach was reiterated in a letter from the Home Secretary to the Chairs of this Committee, the Home Affairs Committee and the Joint Committee on Human Rights on 11 January 2023, in which she stated that the Home Office:

remain[s] committed to making a decision, as soon as practicable, on whether it is appropriate to maintain our reservation on Article 59 of the Convention, relating to migrant victims of domestic abuse. I can confirm that the evaluation report of the Support for Migrant

121 Southall Black Sisters ([HBA0051](#))

122 PQ [449 6](#) [on Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence], 2 September 2022

Victims Scheme pilot has been received. Ministers will need time to carefully consider it and we will share the report findings as soon as is practicable.¹²³

- 74.** The reservation to Article 59 has been criticised by stakeholders in written evidence to this inquiry including by the charity SafeLives, which recommended the Government should remove the reservation and ensure that migrant survivors of domestic abuse receive the rights afforded to them under the Istanbul Convention.¹²⁴

75. RECOMMENDATION

The Support for Migrant Victims Scheme pilot has been valuable and we welcome its extension to 2025. However, there are shortfalls in funding to support victims with no recourse to public funds. We are concerned this is aggravated by the Government’s reservation on Article 59 of the Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence (the ‘Istanbul Convention’). In order to help limit perpetrators’ ability to use a victim’s immigration status as a tool for control, the Government should reconsider its reservation to Article 59 of the Istanbul Convention. It should also consider extending eligibility to the Destitute Domestic Violence Concession scheme and Domestic Violence Indefinite Leave to Remain to all migrant victims.

The Human Rights Act

- 76.** During our inquiry we were told of the importance of the protections that the Human Rights Act provides to victims of abuse, including honour-based abuse.¹²⁵ The Human Rights Act gives effect in domestic law to the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR). Through the ECHR the UK has committed to be legally bound by negative obligations, requiring it to refrain from violating individuals’ human rights, but also positive obligations, requiring it to take steps to protect individuals against human rights violations.
- 77.** These positive duties include obligations arising under Article 2 of the ECHR (the right to life) and Article 3 of the ECHR (the right not to be subjected to torture or inhuman or degrading treatment) both to put in place effective

123 Women and Equalities Committee, Home Affairs Committee and Joint Committee on Human Rights, [Correspondence from the Home Secretary relating to the Istanbul Convention](#), 11 January 2022

124 For example: SafeLives ([HBA0037](#)); Southall Black Sisters ([HBA0051](#)); Dr Emmaleena Käkelä, University of Strathclyde ([HBA0010](#))

125 End Violence Against Women Coalition ([HBA0045](#))

criminal-law provisions to deter offences that result in death or inhuman or degrading treatment and also to take reasonable steps to protect an individual who is at real and immediate risk of such harm.¹²⁶ Attempts to meet this latter obligation include threat to life notices (known as Osman warnings) intended to protect women and girls from the immediate risk of harm, including by helping to support the urgent securing of safe accommodation or the protection of victims from those intending to cause them harm.

78. Through the Human Rights Act, individuals can also bring claims in domestic courts requiring public authorities to comply with their positive obligations under the ECHR and allowing claimants to secure a remedy when state agencies have failed in their duties, as evidenced in the civil cases brought against the Metropolitan Police by the sister of Banaz Mahmud.
79. During this Parliament, positive obligations under the ECHR have been subject to debate as a result of the Government bringing forward legislative proposals to replace the Human Rights Act with a Bill of Rights which would have severely limited the effect of positive obligations. The Government has now dropped those proposals from its current legislative agenda.

Male victims

80. Although women and girls are disproportionately affected by honour-based abuse, men and boys can also be victim to it. For example, they can be accused of bringing dishonour onto a woman or girl through their unapproved friendship or sexual relationship or be victim of abuse due to mental health problems, a disability or by being in the LGBT+ community.¹²⁷ The Government's *Position Statement on Male Victims of crimes considered in the cross-Government Tackling Violence Against Women and Girls Strategy and the Tackling Domestic Abuse Plan* states that male victims:

may be subjected to it [honour-based abuse] for a variety of reasons. These include: to punish behaviour which is seen as transgressing community norms or compromising family 'honour', to attempt to 'cure' or mask trans identity or homosexuality, or additionally, in the case of being forced into marriage, to obtain a visa or to find a carer for an individual with a disability.¹²⁸

126 The ECHR has also recognised gender-based violence as a form of discrimination against women – *Opuz v. Turkey* 9 June 2009.

127 Southall Black Sisters ([HBA0051](#))

128 Home Office, [Supporting Male Victims: Position Statement on Male Victims of crimes considered in the cross-Government Tackling Violent Against Women and Girls Strategy and the Tackling Domestic Abuse Plan](#) (March 2022), p 5

Statistics published by the Forced Marriage Unit (FMU) show a significant minority of victims of forced marriage are male. In 2021, the FMU dealt with:

251 cases (74%) [involving] female victims and 86 (26%) [involving] male victims. This highlights that forced marriage is a crime which disproportionately affects women, but that men can also be victims. Men are particularly represented in cases where the victim has mental capacity concerns (57% of males).¹²⁹

- 81.** The Government told us its work in tackling violence against women and girls, which includes honour-based abuse, encompasses all victims regardless of gender. Home office guidance states:

The term ‘violence against women and girls’ refers to acts of violence or abuse that we know disproportionately affect women and girls. [...] The use of this term cannot and should not negate the experiences of, or provisions for, male victims of these crimes.¹³⁰

The Minister for Safeguarding explained the term “does not exclude men, despite the actual phraseology of it [...] it is very much a part of a strategy to support males as well as all members of our community”.¹³¹ However, ManKind Initiative told us that including men in this phraseology misgenders male victims, and:

hampers the creation of nuanced and gender responsive statutory services and understanding at a national, regional and local level [...] Male victims often feel they will not be taken seriously [...] Misgendering them, as the current Government policy does, exacerbates this.¹³²

Dr Mohammad Mazher Idriss, Senior Lecturer in Law at Manchester Metropolitan University, called for “a parallel Violence Against Men and Boys Strategy/VAMB” to be created “to ensure that policymakers have a more modern, inclusive, equality-based view of victims of HBA and FM.”¹³³

- 82.** When asked about whether the Home Office was undertaking any work to better understand the root causes of honour-based abuse against male victims, the Minister for Safeguarding told us:

129 Home Office/Foreign, Development and Commonwealth Office, ‘[Forced Marriage Unit statistics 2022](#)’, accessed 28 June 2023

130 Home Office, [Supporting Male Victims: Position Statement on Male Victims of crimes considered in the cross-Government Tackling Violent Against Women and Girls Strategy and the Tackling Domestic Abuse Plan](#) (March 2022), p 1

131 Q69 [Minister for Safeguarding]

132 ManKind Initiative ([HBA0012](#))

133 Dr Mohammad Mazher Idriss ([HBA0021](#))

The Home Office is consistently working on this policy field all the time. [...] There is a body of evidence that is now being accrued, which is why the Home Office are spending so much money on getting details as to prevalence and statistics right. This information will tell us where we need to do our work and where best to spend the money.¹³⁴

83. RECOMMENDATION

We recognise the overwhelming majority of victims of honour-based abuse are female, but this must not detract from the experiences of male victims. We are concerned the inclusion of men and boys in strategies primarily aimed at women and girls fails to empower male victims and can contribute to underreporting. The Government should consider introducing a distinct honour-based abuse strategy aimed at male victims, parallel to that aimed at women and girls. Such a strategy might empower male victims to report the crimes committed against them and to seek support.

Law reform

- 84.** Campaigners on honour-based abuse, including specialist by-and-for services such as Southall Black Sisters, have raised the issue of so-called honour being used as a defence, or as part of a defence, in criminal prosecutions.¹³⁵ In addition, many stakeholders told our inquiry they were concerned about sentencing, and reference to honour being used as a mitigating factor to reduce sentences.¹³⁶ Southall Black Sisters noted that honour was used as a possible mitigating factor by the defence in Banaz Mahmud's murder:

The police estimate there were fifty men who were involved in the conspiracy. They explicitly justified their actions as legitimate in the community, and although the killers denied the murder in the criminal courts, they implicitly set about influencing the juries' verdict and the judge's sentencing decision by creating a context when it would be culturally insensitive of them to not to perceive their honour motive as mitigation.¹³⁷

In evidence to this inquiry, the Minister for Victims and Sentencing stressed that:

134 Q71 [Minister for Safeguarding]

135 Southall Black Sisters ([HBA0051](#))

136 Ibid

137 Southall Black Sisters written evidence to the Justice Committee inquiry, Pre-legislative scrutiny of the draft Victims Bill, ([VIC0055](#))

the reality is there is no defence in law that enables a defendant to claim they committed a criminal offence based upon the result of their religion or so-called honour specifically brought upon them by their family or wider community. [...] I could see how perhaps some defence counsel might seek to introduce this—potentially of loss of control defence because their cultural sensibilities were so outraged. I struggle to see how that would work as either a defence or as a mitigating factor. We heard the chief crown prosecutor say that she has seen this attempted, but in each case the judge gave it very short shrift, recognising that there was not, in law, a valid defence around valid mitigations.¹³⁸

- 85.** Some witnesses suggested introducing sentencing guidelines to make motivations of so-called honour an aggravating factor. Dr Hannana Siddiqui from Southall Black Sisters suggested it would prevent perpetrators from escaping justice and change attitudes to and within communities:

Banaz’s law is one of the things we are campaigning for. It is based on the case of Banaz Mahmood. Her sister is campaigning for Banaz’s law to prevent the use of religious and cultural defences to justify violence against women and girls. We want to see it as an aggravating factor in sentencing. We think that it will prevent agencies from ignoring the problem in order to be culturally sensitive. We also think it will change norms and values within the community.¹³⁹

This was supported by SafeLives, which recommended “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”.¹⁴⁰

Sentencing guidelines

- 86.** The Sentencing Council is an independent, non-departmental public body which issues guidelines on sentencing. The courts must follow this guidance unless it is in the interests of justice not to do so.¹⁴¹ The Sentencing Council has a statutory duty to consider any proposal made by the Lord Chancellor to prepare or revise sentencing guidelines in relation to offences, offenders, or in relation to a particular matter regarding sentencing.¹⁴²

138 Q82 [Minister for Victims and Sentencing]

139 Q30 [Dr Hannana Siddiqui]

140 SafeLives ([HBA0037](#))

141 Sentencing Council, '[About the Sentencing Council](#)', accessed on 3 July 2023

142 [Coroners and Justice Act 2009](#), Section 124

87. There are no specific sentencing guidelines for honour-based abuse, although the 2018 guidelines on domestic abuse also refer to so-called honour-based abuse, FGM and forced marriage.¹⁴³ Aggravating factors within these guidelines that may be relevant to honour-based abuse include abuse of trust or power, steps taken to prevent the victim reporting an incident, or steps taken to prevent the victim obtaining assistance.¹⁴⁴

88. In the context of the current law, Jaswant Narwal, National Lead for Honour Based Abuse at the CPS, told us of two recent cases where men had killed their female partners, and the defence teams had tried to introduce the issue of honour to mitigate the sentence of both men. Ms Narwal assured us, however, that in both cases the judge “was having none of it”.¹⁴⁵ The Minister for Victims and Sentencing told us:

The Sentencing Council sets its own work plan and priorities, and we cannot compel them to produce guidelines in a particular area, but I will again consider carefully any recommendations by the Committee in this respect as to whether there is scope for us to invite them to consider whether they might wish to look at this.¹⁴⁶

89. RECOMMENDATION

It is reassuring to hear judges have robustly rejected any attempts to use ‘honour’ to reduce a sentence. Explicitly recognising so-called honour in sentencing guidelines would go further; it would strengthen the understanding that honour-based abuse is taken seriously by the criminal justice system and only ever as an aggravating factor. We recommend the Sentencing Council considers including motivations of honour as an aggravating factor in the domestic abuse guideline.

143 Sentencing Council, ‘[Overarching principles: domestic abuse](#)’, accessed 10 March 2023

144 The [Sentencing Council](#) sets out that aggravating factors are factors that indicate a higher culpability or degree of harm more serious than usual, such as an offence being committed whilst on bail or multiple victims. Aggravating factors can mean harsher sentencing. See: Sentencing Council, ‘[Aggravating and mitigating factors](#)’, accessed 12 July 2023

145 Q45 [Jaswant Narwal]

146 Q82 [Minister for Victims and Sentencing]

Conclusions and recommendations

Prevalence

1. There is inconsistency in how data on honour-based abuse offences is collected and recorded by the police. This is partly due to incorrect recording by police officers, either in failing to recognise an offence as honour-based, or in making an inaccurate assessment of the context. There is insufficient information provided in the published data, and the lack of ethnicity data makes it particularly difficult to know in which communities honour-based abuse occurs, in what forms, and how those communities are being served by police and other agencies. Data currently collected by children's social care services does not allow for the prevalence of honour-based abuse amongst children and young people to be understood and monitored effectively at Government level. (Paragraph 23)
2. The Home Office, National Police Chiefs' Council and College of Policing should publish refreshed guidance for forces on how to accurately and consistently record incidents of honour-based abuse. The Home Office should instruct police forces across England and Wales to collect specific information on victims and perpetrators of honour-based abuse, including data on their protected characteristics, and to report this to the Home Office as part of the existing Annual Data Requirement. (Paragraph 24)
3. The Department of Health and Social Care and the Department of Education should add options for honour-based abuse to both the 'primary need at first social work assessment' and 'factors identified at the end of the assessment' categories in the 'Children in need' census. (Paragraph 25)

Recognising honour-based abuse

4. We welcome the steps taken by the police service in response to the concerns raised in the super-complaint on honour-based abuse brought by Liberty and the Halo Project in 2020. However, there is still more work to be done if victims of honour-based abuse are to feel empowered to report the crimes against them and feel confident that they will be safeguarded against further harm. People subject to honour-based abuse take huge

risks in reporting the crimes against them, and it is critical that the public services in place to protect them are able to recognise that abuse at the first opportunity. (Paragraph 37)

- 5.** In response to this Report, the Government should set out the progress made in implementing the national training package for frontline police officers on recognising so-called honour-based abuse. The Government must also set out the steps it will take to ensure those working in other safeguarding roles, including in social services and education, are trained to recognise honour-based abuse and not deterred from tackling it by cultural sensitivity. (Paragraph 38)
- 6.** The Government must include specific questions on honour-based abuse in the Domestic Abuse Risk Assessment tool to help both victims and police officers identify risks confidently and accurately. (Paragraph 39)
- 7.** The Government is currently reviewing the content of relationships, sex and health education (RSHE) taught in schools. It is clear from the evidence we received that the teaching of honour-based abuse is currently inadequate. The ongoing review of RSHE should consider how the teaching of honour-based abuse should be improved across educational settings. (Paragraph 42)
- 8.** In order to tackle so-called honour-based abuse effectively, it is crucial there is shared understanding of it across all agencies. The introduction of a statutory definition of honour-based abuse would contribute to social and professional understanding, help to improve data collection and ultimately assist in bringing more perpetrators to justice. (Paragraph 48)
- 9.** The Government should introduce a statutory definition of honour-based abuse. It should consult a wide range of experts, specialist by-and-for services and survivors of honour-based abuse on framing the definition using the existing Crown Prosecution Service definition as a starting point. The definition, once finalised, should be accompanied by statutory multi-agency guidance. (Paragraph 49)

Supporting victims and reforming the law

- 10.** Abusers use the insecure immigration status of their victims to deter and prevent them from seeking support, exploiting fears that reporting abuse to the police will lead to action against the victim by Immigration Enforcement. We are not satisfied that the Immigration Enforcement Migrant Victims Protocol proposed by the Home Office, which prevents immigration enforcement action against that victim only while investigation

and prosecution proceedings are ongoing, and the victim is receiving support to make an application to regularise their stay, is sufficient to mitigate those concerns. (Paragraph 58)

- 11.** The Government should establish an appropriate firewall-type mechanism between the police and the Home Office to prevent data sharing for the purposes of enforcing immigration rules against victims of abuse. The firewall should be designed to ensure the police only share information with Immigration Enforcement on victims in exceptional circumstances, which must be narrowly defined and be for the purposes of assisting in the safeguarding of the individual or taking action against their abuser. If and when police become aware a victim has irregular immigration status, they should provide that person with information about local support services (including legal advice) and encourage them to seek advice on regularising their status. The National Police Chiefs' Council guidance should be updated to reflect this. (Paragraph 59)
- 12.** By-and-for services, which are organisations designed and run by and for people who are minoritised, are vital to ensuring victims of honour-based abuse receive the support they need. However, the sector is underfunded, and complex commissioning processes often prevent smaller specialist organisations from competing against generic and larger providers for the funding available. Such funding is also too often available only on a short term basis. (Paragraph 64)
- 13.** The Government should increase the funding available to by-and-for services that support victims of honour-based abuse. The Government should commit to providing this funding across multiple years. It should also assess the merits of that funding being made available in a simple grant form so it is accessible to smaller organisations which lack the resources to compete with larger providers in complex commissioning processes. (Paragraph 65)
- 14.** The Support for Migrant Victims Scheme pilot has been valuable and we welcome its extension to 2025. However, there are shortfalls in funding to support victims with no recourse to public funds. We are concerned this is aggravated by the Government's reservation on Article 59 of the Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence (the 'Istanbul Convention'). In order to help limit perpetrators' ability to use a victim's immigration status as a tool for control, the Government should reconsider its reservation to Article 59 of the Istanbul Convention. It should also consider extending eligibility to the Destitute Domestic Violence Concession scheme and Domestic Violence Indefinite Leave to Remain to all migrant victims. (Paragraph 75)

- 15.** We recognise the overwhelming majority of victims of honour-based abuse are female, but this must not detract from the experiences of male victims. We are concerned the inclusion of men and boys in strategies primarily aimed at women and girls fails to empower male victims and can contribute to underreporting. The Government should consider introducing a distinct honour-based abuse strategy aimed at male victims, parallel to that aimed at women and girls. Such a strategy might empower male victims to report the crimes committed against them and to seek support. (Paragraph 83)

- 16.** It is reassuring to hear judges have robustly rejected any attempts to use 'honour' to reduce a sentence. Explicitly recognising so-called honour in sentencing guidelines would go further; it would strengthen the understanding that honour-based abuse is taken seriously by the criminal justice system and only ever as an aggravating factor. We recommend the Sentencing Council considers including motivations of honour as an aggravating factor in the domestic abuse guideline. (Paragraph 89)

Annex A: Types of so-called honour-based abuse

1. Submissions to the inquiry highlighted the wide range of forms that so-called honour-based abuse can take. Some of these forms are poorly understood, and not all are legally recognised. Below is a list of types of abuse which we received evidence about; this list is not intended to be comprehensive but rather to aid wider understanding and awareness.
2. Types of abuse include:
 - a. Abandonment
 - b. Abduction or kidnapping
 - c. Abuse linked to faith or belief
 - d. Acid attacks
 - e. Blackmail
 - f. Breast flattening or ironing
 - g. Burning or scarring (whether for punishment or as part of a ritual)
 - h. Child marriage/early marriage
 - i. Coercive control including surveillance
 - j. Death threats
 - k. Domestic servitude and modern day slavery
 - l. Dowry abuse
 - m. Emotional and psychological abuse
 - n. Female Genital Mutilation (FGM)
 - o. Financial/economic abuse
 - p. Forced abortions, including for sex-selective purposes
 - q. Forced feeding or other food-related abuse including deprivation of food

- r.** Forced marriage
- s.** Forced suicide
- t.** ‘Honour’ killings
- u.** Imprisonment/deprivation of liberty
- v.** Passport abuse
- w.** Polygamy or temporary marriage
- x.** Physical assault or abuse
- y.** Polygamy or temporary marriage
- z.** Rape including so-called “revenge” rape or “corrective” rape
- aa.** Shunning, disowning, and/or deliberately isolating the victim
- ab.** So-called conversion practices
- ac.** Trafficking
- ad.** Using the victim’s children to carry out abuse
- ae.** Virginity testing and hymenoplasty
- af.** Widow abuse

Annex B: Note of private informal meeting with survivors of so-called honour-based abuse

Tuesday 14 March 2023

Meeting between the Women and Equalities Committee and survivors to discuss so-called honour-based abuse (HBA).

The following themes emerged during the discussion:

Seeing honour-based abuse as abuse

'I should kill you now and I would be a hero.'

Attendees felt that HBA should be seen as abuse; child abuse or domestic abuse. Using child abuse frameworks would help services understand and tackle HBA.

- If HBA is not seen as child abuse or domestic abuse, it is likely to create division and lead to the othering and demonisation of people from minority ethnic backgrounds.
- HBA should be seen as an issue of control, on the spectrum with other forms of domestic abuse such as financial abuse.
- During the discussion, all the attendees described patterns of coercive control which they had experienced from their families and communities.
- Many attendees described how these patterns of coercive control had not been recognised by teachers, GPs, the police, and other professionals. This had led to them becoming more isolated and this isolation made them unable to protect themselves from harm.
- Often victims do not recognise that they are experiencing abuse. Recognising the abuse can be a long journey of recognition.

One attendee said that HBA comes across as being a 'brown' problem. She highlighted that Government videos discussing the subject, all feature brown people.

Another of the attendees described how she came to the UK with her family as a small child. She now recognises that her family held extremist views with highly conservative gender values. As she was growing up, her parents routinely praised Islamist terrorists and made comments about the appropriateness of women's clothing.

At 17 she met somebody the family disapproved of, and the family began making threats towards her. She continued seeing her boyfriend secretly but while she was studying in London her mother found out about the relationship and she was forced to return home.

Some years later, she had children. She didn't want to circumcise her sons and 'came out', sharing with her family her decision not to raise her children as Muslim. As a result, she received death threats. She took these to the police who 'were nice and took it seriously but didn't know how to advise'.

Another attendee gave examples of the sort of behaviour that was unacceptable within the family: talking to or being alone with the opposite sex if you are not related to them, dating someone, receiving phone calls, associating with those outside the regional or religious group of the family. Elaborating on how boundaries were enforced by her parents, she recalled the 'violent repercussions' when someone she had met on a night out called the family home, and when as a prank neighbourhood children posted romantic letters through their letterbox.

The Police response to honour-based abuse

'The police listened but did not fully understand.'

The police are unsure what will happen if they intervene in cases of HBA. They do not want to be seen as racist or acting insensitively towards a community. One of the attendees noted that confidence needed to be built within the police and other authorities through training.

- Attendees identified that the police need more training in HBA, and the training needs to be mandatory to change attitudes and police culture.
- Often there is a misunderstanding by the police that HBA is a cultural practice.
- The police need to recognise that HBA can happen to people from a wide range of different backgrounds.

- Police have stereotypical understandings of violence and treat domestic abuse as less serious or as something to be expected.
- The police are often unsure of the law in cases of HBA. One attendee described how the police took the threats made by her family seriously but were not sure how to advise.
- The police often fail to recognise that people can be both victims and perpetrators of abuse.
- The police are often overworked and HBA is not seen as a priority.
- The police should be proactive and intervene even when the victim doesn't explicitly ask for this.
- There should be disciplinary action for police who do not take robust action on domestic abuse or HBA.
- There should be better data recording and data analysis of HBA and past cases involving HBA should be reviewed.

One attendee described the murder of a woman from her community.

The woman experienced coercive control by her husband, but this abuse was not recognised as coercive control by the police. She was told by her husband that divorce was not allowed and was punishable by death. On one occasion she was taken into hospital with bruises and told them about the abuse. A nurse reported it, but police did nothing. The investigating officer downgraded the severity of her situation from medium to low risk.

On the day she was murdered, she called the police several times as she was in fear of her life. During the final call the police advised her to return home. Her husband was waiting for her, and she was killed. The police knew of her situation many months before the murder took place. Some of the police officers involved in the case have been prosecuted.

She felt that police are not as well trained on domestic abuse as other crimes, and in this woman's case, much was left to 'individual initiative', where bias and prejudice came into play.

Barriers to reporting HBA

'You never know if the threats will turn into violence'

Several attendees described why it is difficult to report to the police and other front-line services.

- Attendees said that they feared violence if they reported abuse.

- They felt that victims of HBA are seen as problematic and people always side with the abuser.
- The criticism of immigrant groups makes it harder for victims to seek support, if policy/media/authorities make them be seen as 'other'.
- When approaching social services, a relative of an attendee was scared that her children would be taken away from her.
- Attendees described how people experiencing HBA may not see themselves as victims of abuse.
- In many cases victims/survivors do not want to prosecute family members, and this needs to be understood by frontline services.
- They felt that HBA is often seen as a family problem between a child and their parents.
- Families fear stigma and shame from the community if they involved the police and other services.
- Services lack the appropriate knowledge to deal with HBA. One attendee described the training that nurses get on HBA. When she teaches nursing students, she tells her students that it's not racist to ask questions and that HBA should be seen as domestic abuse. She said that the training she saw had nothing in it about domestic abuse.
- Services need to recognise that people can be both victims and perpetrators of abuse. It can be difficult to know where to turn in a community where you have others around you who occupy both roles.

One attendee had a stalker when she was 18. The stalker threatened violence towards her and her parents. When her parents found out about her stalker, they did not call the police. They insisted the stalker must be her boyfriend and were concerned about 'what people would say.'

She described a lack of support from police, doctors and nurses. The judge in her criminal case engaged in victim blaming, suggesting that 'there comes a time when you have to say no'.

Another attendee described running away from home as a teenager and the response she had from social workers.

'Asian social workers kept saying I should go back. They thought I was performing, a child, didn't take me seriously ... Social workers didn't listen, leaked addresses, said I should be in contact with my family.'

Education and schools

Speaking about her experiences as a teacher, one attendee commented that teaching resources she had seen on honour-based abuse were inadequate, to the extent that she refused to use them. She felt that HBA was an issue that should override cultural sensitivities and that safeguarding should be paramount.

- HBA training in PHSE lessons should be mandatory.
- HBA should be given greater importance in school safeguarding training.
- There should be an emphasis that safeguarding should take precedence over cultural differences.
- HBA lesson plans need to be designed by an expert in the field.
- Teacher autonomy is important but planning HBA lessons should not be left to individual teachers.
- The teaching of HBA has the potential to do harm if it is not done properly.
- Schools are reluctant to invite organisations campaigning to end HBA in to talk to them.

During the discussion, several attendees described how their own signs of abuse were not picked up on when they were at school. One attendee described how because of her outward success at school, nobody noticed the signs of coercive control. She believed that this was because the school did not want to be seen as targeting an immigrant family.

Another attendee described growing up as an active, boisterous child until she started her period at age nine, at which point she was withdrawn from mainstream school and placed in a faith school. She described being chaperoned to and from school. Her attendance at school was patchy, and her parents rejected attempts from the local authority to address this.

Stigma and shame

‘Wouldn’t you want to make your family proud?’

The attendees all talked about the significant shame dimension of HBA.

As a young child, one attendee reported abuse she was suffering from a family friend to her mother. Her mother did nothing about this, and the concern was for the honour of the family. Her mother said that she wouldn't find anyone to marry if the abuse became known.

Some of the attendees highlighted the generational impact of HBA and one attendee described how her mother had started to emotionally blackmail her granddaughter.

Another attendee described the years of HBA his partner had experienced, and the fear he had that his family would find out he was gay. Eventually when they found out, his mother suggested that he should see a psychiatrist so he could 'be cured.' He took his life two days after this confrontation.

The attendee was asked to remove his items from the home they had together so that other family members would not know about the relationship.

The family stopped the attendee from going to the funeral by giving him the wrong details of the funeral arrangements.

He highlighted the psychological aspect of HBA. He said that it is usually the mother who inflicts the psychological abuse and the father who issues the physical abuse.

Annex C: Respondents to joint Area of Interest

On 10 March 2022, the Women and Equalities Committee and Home Affairs Committee launched a joint Area of Research Interest to help support ongoing work on tackling violence against women and girls. ARIs are lists of policy issues and questions, through which academics can share their expertise and work, and is one of the ways that UK Parliament’s Select Committees gather research evidence to inform their work. Throughout our programme of work, we have used information provided through the ARI to inform our choice of witnesses, to engage informally with academics and advance our research in different areas. The Committee would like to thank all those who have taken the time to respond to the Committees’ ARI.

Respondents to the ARI as of 10 July 2023 are listed below.

Respondent	Institution
Dr Ellen Daly	Anglia Ruskin University
Dr Ceryl Teleri Davies	Bangor University
Miss Kiran Sahota	Believe in Me CIC
Dr Jane Healy	Bournemouth University
Dr Vanessa Heaslip	Bournemouth University
Dr Sofia Graca	Canterbury Christ Church University
Ms Mary Makinde	Canterbury Christ Church University
Dr Elizabeth Cook	City, University of London
Dr Anastasia Fadeeva	City, University of London
Dr Cassandra Wiener	City, University of London
Dr Adrienne Yong	City, University of London
Dr Ruth Weir	City, University of London
Dr Jessica Lynn Corsi	City, University of London
Ms Sally McManus	City, University of London / National Centre for Social Research
Dr Alexa Yakubovich	Dalhousie University
Dr Kathryn Hinsliff-Smith	De Montfort University
Prof Nicole Westmarland	Durham University
Dr Camilla Pickles	Durham University
Dr Jenny Lloyd	Durham University

Respondent	Institution
Prof Clare McGlynn	Durham University
Dr Hannah Bows	Durham University
Mrs Bridget Shaffrey	Durham University
Dr Stephen Burrell	Durham University
Dr Melanie Lang	Edge Hill University
Ms Lisa Ward	Freelance Consultant
Ms Joanna Sharpen	Freelance Consultant
Dr Helen Mott	Freelance Consultant
Dr Nancy Lombard	Glasgow Caledonian University
Ms Charlene Calderaro	Goldsmiths, University of London / University of Lausanne
Dr Jennifer Fleetwood	Goldsmiths, University of London
Prof June Keeling	Keele University
Mrs Rebecca Brione	King's College London
Dr Claire Fitzpatrick	Lancaster University
Mrs Mandi Whittle	Lancaster University
Dr Patricia Prieto-Blanco	Lancaster University
Dr Úna Barr	Liverpool John Moores University
Prof Sandra Walklate	Liverpool University / Monash University
Dr Daria Denti	London School of Economics and Political Science / Gran Sasso Science Institute
Prof Simona Iammarino	London School of Economics and Political Science
Dr Tirion Elizabeth Havard	London South Bank University
Miss Alice King	London South Bank University / University of Warwick
Dr Dominic Willmott	Loughborough University
Prof Khatidja Chantler	Manchester Metropolitan University
Dr Rossella Pulvirenti	Manchester Metropolitan University
Dr Rahmanara Chowdhury	Markfield Institute of Higher Education
Dr Victoria Pagan	Newcastle University
Ms Hannah Perry	Norfolk Constabulary
Miss Zoe Mitchell	Northumbria University
Dr Rima Hussein	Northumbria University
Dr Danna-Mechelle Lewis	Northumbria University
Dr Ruth Lewis	Northumbria University
Miss Kayliegh Richardson	Northumbria University
Dr Claire Bessant	Northumbria University

Respondent	Institution
Dr Vibha Hetu	Northumbria University
Dr Amanda Clough	Northumbria University
Dr Caroline Harper	ODI
Dr Olga Jurasz	Open University
Dr Sophie Doherty	Open University
Dr Kim Barker	Open University
Mrs Natalie Collins	Own My Life Course/DAY Programme
Prof Anne Laure Humbert	Oxford Brookes University
Dr Michele Paule	Oxford Brookes University
Dr Alan Underwood	Queen Marys University of London
Dr Amit Anand	REVA University, Bengaluru
Dr Aislinn O'Connell	Royal Holloway University of London
Prof Dan Anderberg	Royal Holloway University of London
Dr Sadiq Bhanbhro	Sheffield Hallam University
Dr Emma Bimpson	Sheffield Hallam University
Dr Maria Mellins	St Mary's University
Dr Samantha Spence	Staffordshire University
Dr Laura Walton-Williams	Staffordshire University
Dr Kate Byrne	Ulster University
Ms Aleisha Ebrahimi	University College London
Prof Jessica Ringrose	University College London
Dr Leonie Maria Tanczer	University College London
Prof Jenny Phillimore	University of Birmingham
Prof Jessica Woodhams	University of Birmingham
Dr Sophie King-Hill	University of Birmingham
Dr Natasha Mulvihill	University of Bristol
Dr Zahra Siddique	University of Bristol
Dr Jade Levell	University of Bristol
Dr Hannah Charnock	University of Bristol
Prof Marianne Hester	University of Bristol
Ms Joanne Higson	University of Bristol
Dr Alison Gregory	University of Bristol
Dr Jade Levell	University of Bristol
Dr Nadia Aghtaie	University of Bristol
Dr Charlotte Barlow	University of Central Lancashire
Dr Lis Bates	University of Central Lancashire
Dr Rachael Wheatley	University of Derby
Miss Katerina Mentzou	University of Dundee

Respondent	Institution
Dr Jennifer M Lavoie	University of Edinburgh
Dr Charlotte Bosseaux	University of Edinburgh
Dr Aja Murray	University of Edinburgh
Prof M Catherine Maternowska	University of Edinburgh
Prof Lorna Woods	University of Essex
Dr Katerina Hadjimatheou	University of Essex
Ms Susanna Alyce	University of Essex
Dr Veronica Lamarche	University of Essex
Miss Jaspreet Kaur	University of Glasgow
Dr Rosie Campbell OBE	University of Huddersfield
Dr Nadia Marie Wager	University of Huddersfield / University of Teesside
Mr Samuel T Hales	University of Kent
Dr Anna Barker	University of Leeds
Dr Sam Lewis	University of Leeds
Dr Carly Lightowlers	University of Liverpool
Prof Barry Godfrey	University of Liverpool
Dr Gayle Brewer	University of Liverpool
Dr Helen McCabe	University of Nottingham
Dr Rowland Seymour	University of Nottingham
Dr Yuwei Xu	University of Nottingham
Ms Kelly-Ann Fonderson	University of Oxford
Prof Shazia Choudhry	University of Oxford
Dr María del Pilar Blanco	University of Oxford
Dr Sharon Beckett	University of Plymouth
Dr Kieran Walsh	University of Portsmouth
Dr Lisa Sugiura	University of Portsmouth
Dr Karen Middleton	University of Portsmouth
Dr Judith Fletcher-Brown	University of Portsmouth
Dr Ann Weatherall	University of Roehampton
Dr Amanda Holt	University of Roehampton
Dr Amanda Spalding	University of Sheffield
Dr Michelle Newberry	University of Southampton
Ms Laura Bea	University of Southampton
Ms Emilia Wilson	University of St Andrews
Miss Megan Hermolle	University of Suffolk
Dr Miranda Horvath	University of Suffolk

Respondent	Institution
Dr Emily Setty	University of Surrey
Dr Jane Meyrick	University of the West of England
Prof Sonia Bhalotra	University of Warwick
Prof Ravi Thiara	University of Warwick
Dr Roya Rahimi	University of Wolverhampton

Formal minutes

Wednesday 12 July 2023

Members present:

Caroline Nokes, in the Chair

Elliot Colburn

Carolyn Harris

Mark Jenkinson

Kim Johnson

Lia Nici

Anum Qaisar

So-called honour-based abuse

Draft Report (So-called honour-based abuse) proposed by the Chair, brought up and read.

Ordered, That the Report be read a second time, paragraph by paragraph.

Paragraphs 1 to 89 read and agreed to.

Summary agreed to.

Annexes agreed to.

Resolved, That the Report be the Sixth Report of the Committee to the House.

Ordered, That the Chair make the Report to the House.

Ordered, That embargoed copies of the Report be made available, in accordance with the provisions of Standing Order No. 134.

Adjournment

Adjourned till Tuesday 18 July 2023 at 10.00am

Witnesses

The following witnesses gave evidence. Transcripts can be viewed on the inquiry publications page of the Committee's website.

Wednesday 7 December 2022

Ms Yasmin Khan, Founder of Halo Project and National Adviser to the Welsh Government; **Dr Roxanne Khan**, Founder and Director of Honour Abuse Research Matrix (HARM), University of Central Lancashire; **Prof. Aisha K Gill PH.D CBE**, Prof. of Criminology, Centre for Gender and Violence Research, University of Bristol [Q1-15](#)

Ms Surwat Sohail, Chief Executive, Roshni Birmingham; **Dr Hannana Siddiqui**, Head of Policy and Research, Southall Black Sisters; **Ms Diana Nammi**, Founder and Executive Director, Iranian and Kurdish Women's Rights Organisation [Q16-30](#)

Wednesday 11 January 2023

DCC Ivan Balhatchet, Lead for Honour Based Abuse, National Police Chiefs' Council; **Jaswant Narwal**, National Lead for Honour Based Abuse, Crown Prosecution Service; **Nicole Jacobs**, Domestic Abuse Commissioner; **The Rt Hon Edward Argar MP**, Minister for State for Victims and Sentencing, Ministry of Justice; **Sarah Dines MP**, Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State (Minister for Safeguarding), Home Office [Q31-85](#)

Published written evidence

The following written evidence was received and can be viewed on the inquiry publications page of the Committee's website. INQ numbers are generated by the evidence processing system and so may not be complete.

- 1 Al Hasaniya Moroccan Women's Centre ([HBA0018](#))
- 2 Alam, Ayesha ([HBA0024](#))
- 3 Apna Haq ([HBA0003](#))
- 4 BAWSO ([HBA0009](#))
- 5 Barnardo's ([HBA0044](#))
- 6 Bhanbhro, Dr Sadiq (Senior Research Fellow, Sheffield Hallam University) ([HBA0030](#))
- 7 Centre for Women's Justice ([HBA0046](#))
- 8 Derbyshire OPCC, Derbyshire Constabulary and victim service providers ([HBA0019](#))
- 9 End Violence Against Women Coalition ([HBA0045](#))
- 10 Female Circumcision Research Group at the University of Bristol ([HBA0035](#))
- 11 Freedom Charity ([HBA0008](#))
- 12 Professor Aisha K. Gill Ph.D. CBE (Professor of Criminology, University of Bristol School for Policy Studies); and Professor Sundari Anitha (Professor of Gender, Work and Violence, University of Lincoln) ([HBA0034](#))
- 13 Gloucestershire Sisters ([HBA0023](#))
- 14 Goldsobel, Yehudis ([HBA0029](#))
- 15 Harmful Practices Strategic Partnership ([HBA0032](#))
- 16 His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary, Fire and Rescue Services ([HBA0050](#))
- 17 Home Office ([HBA0041](#))

- 18 Honour Abuse Research Matrix ([HBA0047](#))
- 19 IKWRO ([HBA0042](#))
- 20 Idriss, Dr. Mohammad Mazher (Senior Lecturer in Law, Manchester Metropolitan University) ([HBA0021](#))
- 21 Imkaan ([HBA0004](#))
- 22 Institute for Research into Superdiversity, University of Birmingham ([HBA0028](#))
- 23 Jacobs, Nicole (Domestic Abuse Commissioner for England and Wales, Home Office) ([HBA0049](#))
- 24 Käkälä, Dr Emmaleena (Research Associate, University of Strathclyde) ([HBA0010](#))
- 25 Karma Nirvana ([HBA0013](#))
- 26 Local Government Association ([HBA0052](#))
- 27 Dr Helen McCabe (Associate Professor of Political Theory, University of Nottingham); Dr Rowland Seymour (Assistant Professor of Mathematics, University of Birmingham); Dr Katarina Schwarz (Associate Professor in Antislavery Law and Policy, Rights Lab, University of Nottingham); Dr Lauren Eglen (Rights Lab Research Fellow in Modern Slavery, Gender and Feminist Approaches, Rights Lab, University of Nottingham); and Rebecca Brown (PhD student, University of Nottingham) ([HBA0016](#))
- 28 ManKind Initiative ([HBA0012](#))
- 29 Middle Eastern Women and Society Organisation (MEWSo) ([HBA0027](#))
- 30 Nahamu ([HBA0031](#))
- 31 National Commission on Forced Marriage ([HBA0043](#))
- 32 National Police Chiefs' Council ([HBA0053](#))
- 33 National Police Chiefs' Council ([HBA0048](#))
- 34 National Secular Society ([HBA0005](#))
- 35 Police, Fire & Crime Commissioner for Essex ([HBA0006](#))
- 36 SafeLives ([HBA0037](#))
- 37 Savera UK ([HBA0020](#))
- 38 Sikh Women's Aid ([HBA0022](#))

- 39 Southall Black Sisters ([HBA0051](#))
- 40 The Drive Partnership ([HBA0038](#))
- 41 The Law Commission ([HBA0039](#))
- 42 University of Birmingham ([HBA0056](#))
- 43 University of Birmingham ([HBA0017](#))
- 44 Warwickshire Police; NHS Coventry and Warwickshire; South Warwickshire NHS; and Safeguarding Adults Warwickshire ([HBA0040](#))
- 45 West Yorkshire Combined Authority, Policing and Crime ([HBA0011](#))