

18th September 2023

Rt Hon Suella Braverman
House of Commons
London, SW1A 0AA

Women and Equalities Committee Response on Honour Based Abuse

Dear Home Secretary,

I am writing as Executive Director of Karma Nirvana, a leading national Honour Based Abuse charity delivering the Home Office commissioned Honour Based Abuse helpline. I am writing to request a meeting with you to discuss the Government's recent response to the Women and Equality Committee's Honour Based Abuse Inquiry

We welcomed the Inquiry earlier this year, particularly as the last Inquiry with a specific focus on Honour Based Abuse was undertaken by the Home Affairs Select Committee in 2008. Disappointingly, many of the key findings and recommendations in the 2023 report mirrored the key findings and recommendations in the 2008 report, representative of insufficient and slow progress in tackling Honour Based Abuse.

We were pleased to see the government recognise in their response the witnesses with lived experience that provided evidence to the Committee. The Women and Equality Committee held a closed oral evidence session with eight of Karma Nirvana's Survivor Ambassadors. They shared their experiences of Honour Based Abuse and made many recommendations on how the government could better support victims and survivors. During the closed session, **the Survivor Ambassadors advocated the need for a statutory definition**, highlighting that a lack of statutory definition contributes to the significant underreporting and negative responses many victims receive from frontline practitioners, including police officers and social workers.

Honour Based Abuse is a complex area that is often misunderstood and goes unrecognised or unidentified by agencies, families and friends, and even victims. There are many myths and stereotypes surrounding Honour Based Abuse contributing to poor statutory responses and, consequently victim engagement. We see through our work running the National Honour Based Abuse Helpline, which supports around 2,500 victims and survivors every year, how a lack of understanding of what Honour Based Abuse is and how it can take place

significantly impacts safeguarding responses provided to victims. Many professionals do not recognise Honour Based Abuse safeguarding red flags, which puts victims and survivors at further risk of harm through inadequate responses.

To transform our response to Honour Based Abuse, we must first ensure it is understood. A cross-government statutory definition of Honour Based Abuse ensures that Honour Based Abuse is understood correctly, not mistaken to be religious or cultural, and creates an environment which actively challenges in statutory agencies and public attitudes.

In response to the Inquiry, it is indicated that the Government *"is not clear that making the definition statutory would improve understanding of or the response to these crimes, however, we will continue to keep this under review"*.

We welcome the opportunity for you to meet our remarkable Survivor Ambassadors who provided evidence to the Committee. Meeting with Survivors provides an opportunity to listen to their experiences of Honour Based Abuse and understand why a statutory definition of Honour Based Abuse is so important to them.

We look forward to your response and to continue working closely with the government to better protect all those impacted by Honour Based Abuse.

Yours sincerely



Natasha Rattu, Executive Director