

7<sup>th</sup> May 2024

## **Proposed Statutory Definition on Honour Based Abuse**

Dear Minister Farris,

We are writing to you, as a group of expert organisations and individuals dedicated to safeguarding women and girls from violence, particularly in the context of Honour Based Abuse (HBA). Our collective experience in providing frontline support to some of the most vulnerable members of society underscores the importance of your leadership in tackling this hidden harm.

On behalf of the consortium of specialist organisations, we wish to express our gratitude for your dedicated efforts in addressing HBA. The recent online roundtable discussion focusing on HBA provided an invaluable platform for dialogue and collaboration. It was evident from our insightful discussions that HBA, under your leadership, is a key safeguarding priority. We commend the Home Office for its recent launch of a survey consultation seeking input on what should be included in a statutory definition.

As specialists in the field in addressing HBA, we have diligently collaborated to draft a proposed statutory definition under the guidance of barrister Naomi Wiseman from 1 Kings Bench Walk. This definition, endorsed by key stakeholders in the HBA specialist sector, marks a significant milestone in our collective efforts to combat this complex issue. We include the legal briefing drafted by Naomi Wiseman with this letter.

While we appreciate the recent strides made in initiating a survey consultation for the HBA statutory definition, we share concerns regarding potential delays in its implementation, particularly with an impending election on the horizon. Our consortium has long advocated for a statutory definition of HBA, predating the recommendation made in the Women and Equality Committee's HBA inquiry report last year. We were disappointed when this particular recommendation, in addition to other substantive recommendations, were rejected by the government last year. Since then, we have tirelessly collaborated as a collective to draft a proposed statutory definition, prepared to make progress whenever the opportunity arises to advance this cause.

As emphasised during the online roundtable, we strongly believe that establishing a statutory definition for HBA is paramount. A shared statutory understanding of

HBA is crucial for creating a unified approach across services. It not only supports better identification and responses to cases, but also ensures that victims receive the necessary support and protection they require. We consider a statutory definition to be the initial essential foundation building block to initiate significant progress towards addressing Honour Based Abuse.

We propose a timely opportunity to launch a statutory definition for HBA on the National Day of Memory [14<sup>th</sup> July 2024). This date holds particular significance as it commemorates the birthday of Shafiea Ahmed, a young girl tragically murdered by her family in an honour killing. On this day, we honour all those lost to Honour Based Abuse, while also offering renewed hope to survivors. Launching the statutory definition on this day ensures maximum visibility and awareness among professionals, providing a platform for the development of statutory guidance for multi-agency collaboration on HBA.

The National Day of Memory presents a unique opportunity to not only introduce a HBA statutory definition, but also launch a nationwide campaign aimed at raising awareness and fostering collaboration on tackling Honour Based Abuse. We acknowledge the opportunity that the Day of Memory presents to amplify our collective key messages on HBA, engaging the nation in activities to further our messaging.

In closing, we want to express our appreciation for your leadership and commitment to safeguarding vulnerable individuals from Honour Based Abuse. Your dedication to this cause is commendable, and we are confident that with your continued support, we can make significant strides in addressing this issue.

We are available at any time and welcome the opportunity to provide further briefing on our joint campaign and proposal for the government to adopt our sector agreed statutory definition as referenced in this letter and included within the legal briefing.

We look forward to your response.

Yours sincerely,

Natasha Rattu – CEO of Karma Nirvana

Yasmin Javed – Mother of Fawziyah Javed

Farah Nazeer – CEO of Women’s Aid

Matthew Mahmood-Ogston – Director of Naz and Matt Foundation

Diana Nammi – Director of IKWRO

Afrah Qassim – Director of Savera

Zainab Al-Shariff – Al-Hasaniya

Yasmin Khan- Director of Halo Project

Meena Kumari – Director of Hope Training and Consultancy

British Pregnancy Advisory Service

Joanna Camadoo-Rothwell – Head of Public Affairs and Policy at Safelives

Charlotte Proudman – Founder of Right to Equality