

Responding to the Home Office HBA Survey in favour of a Statutory Definition for Honour Based Abuse Guide

Background:

Progress in tackling Honour Based Abuse has been hampered by a lack of a clear definition within statutory frameworks.

A statutory definition for Honour Based Abuse is a crucial starting point for identifying cases and supporting victims. Statutory definitions play a vital role in providing precision, uniformity, and legal acknowledgement to critical matters. Establishing a statutory definition for Honour Based Abuse carries several important implications:

- Identifying Honour Based Abuse cases and holding perpetrators accountable
- Supporting and protecting victims effectively
- Evidence-based policymaking and appropriate resource allocation based on consistent research and data collection

This survey offers an opportunity to shape the definition and build a stronger policy case in favour of a statutory definition. We want to focus on the need for an enlarging definition as well as a comprehensive definition of honour based abuse so that this nuanced and complex form of abuse can be properly confronted. Complexity should not be an argument for leaving confusing and conflicting definitions across statute, institutions and organisations with safeguarding duties.

The clear inadequacies and inconsistencies across policing, the family and criminal justice systems and child safeguarding definitions of honour based abuse demonstrate the need for a statutory definition. The need to, for example, enlarge the definition of honour based abuse and violence within family proceedings and to offer a comprehensive definition within child safeguarding, policing and criminal proceedings is plain.

We've put together this guide to help you answer these survey questions in favour of a statutory definition for Honour Based Abuse. You can find this guidance below. The deadline for completing the survey is the 6th May 2024, and you can find the survey at: <https://www.homeofficesurveys.homeoffice.gov.uk/s/honourbasedabusedefinition/>

Survey Questions:

1. **Question 1:** Choose your relevant professional category.
2. **Question 2 (Optional):** Since the focus is on the need for a statutory definition, you can choose to skip question 2 unless your workplace uses a definition with specific limitations you want to highlight.
3. **Question 3:** Emphasise the need for a consistent and clear definition in the statute book.
 - a. Highlight the limitations of relying solely on agency-specific definitions:
 - i. Inconsistency across agencies leads to confusion and hinders effective identification
 - ii. This leads to subpar support for victims and inconsistent reporting, which can even be exploited to escape accountability
 - iii. Advocate for a comprehensive statutory definition of Honour Based Abuse in order that this nuanced and complex form of abuse can be properly confronted in our communities, with supplementary statutory guidance to provide further details and best practices for applying the statutory definition in different professional contexts.
4. **Question 4:** Select "No" and explain why.
 - a. Use the information from the briefing on statutory definitions to explain the limitations of the CPS definition compared to the suggested statutory definition:
 - i. Motivation: The CPS definition focuses on protecting "honour" instead of the perceived violation of community norms. The sector-agreed statutory definition clarifies that the perpetrator's perception of dishonour is the key motivator
 - ii. Types of Abuse: The CPS definition provides limited examples (e.g., violence, threats). The statutory definition is broader, encompassing all forms of abuse (psychological, physical, sexual, financial, emotional, etc.)
 - iii. Clarity: The statutory definition uses clear and concise language, making it easier to understand and apply compared to the potentially ambiguous wording used in some existing agency definitions, including the CPS definition
5. **Question 5:** Refer to the suggested statutory definition in the briefing (provided below) as a guide. Emphasise the importance of a definition that captures:
 - a. A wide range of abuse/behaviours (e.g. including but not limited to psychological, physical, sexual, economic, spiritual, faith-related or emotional abuse).

- b. The perception of bringing shame to the family/community as a motivator for abuse.
- c. The fact that HBA can occur in any community, regardless of culture or religion.

An incident or pattern of violence, threats of violence, intimidation, coercion, control or abuse (including but not limited to psychological, physical, sexual, economic, spiritual, faith-related or emotional abuse) motivated by the perpetrator's perception that an individual has shamed, or may shame, the perpetrator, the family, or community or has otherwise broken, or may break, the perceived norms of the community's accepted behaviours, including by speaking out about the abuse and where the perception of shame may also prevent a victim from accessing support or help.

- 6. **Question 6:** Emphasise that a statutory definition should be simple and straightforward for professionals and the public alike to understand. The statutory definition provided in the briefing achieves this by using clear language and avoiding overly technical terms, as well as avoiding using terms that require defining within the definition (e.g. using 'honour' in a definition for honour based abuse)
- 7. **Question 7:** Select all relevant professional categories: Police, CPS, Healthcare professionals, Education, Local Authorities. You can also mention "Other" and specify categories like social workers or Domestic Abuse sector partners in the "Comment" section.
- 8. **Question 8:** Emphasise the need for multi-agency guidance that is built upon a statutory definition of HBA. This will ensure a unified approach across agencies for:
 - a. Collaborative working between agencies
 - b. Consistent safeguarding procedures
 - c. Effective data sharing protocols across agencies
- 9. **Question 9:** Use this space to strongly advocate for a statutory definition of HBA. Briefly mention the negative impact of the current lack of clarity and the benefits a statutory definition would bring (refer to the "What impact would a statutory definition have?" section from the briefing materials). Focus on points such as:
 - a. Identifying Honour Based Abuse cases and holding perpetrators accountable
 - b. Supporting and protecting victims effectively
 - c. Evidence-based policymaking and appropriate resource allocation based on consistent research and data collection

Key Points to Remember:



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- *Throughout your responses, highlight the urgency for a statutory definition due to the inconsistencies highlighted in the briefing*
- *Focus on the benefits of a clear and simple statutory definition that is easy to understand and apply, with additional guidance provided in supplementary statutory guidance*
- *Use the suggested statutory definition in the briefing as a model to build a definition for Honour Based Abuse*