



Karma Nirvana's

# Honour Based Abuse (HBA) Identification Tool: Professional Guidance



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## About Karma Nirvana

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Karma Nirvana is the longest-established charity specialising in providing support for people impacted by Honour Based Abuse and Forced Marriage. We were established in 1993 as the first specialist charity for victims and survivors and are committed to ending Honour Based Abuse in the UK. We deliver the national Honour Based Abuse Helpline which supports victims of Honour Based Abuse through practical support and advice.

## Understanding Honour Based Abuse (HBA)

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HBA is a form of abuse rooted in the desire to uphold or restore the perceived honour of a family or community. It involves coercive control and violence often committed in response to an individual's perceived actions that violate familial or community norms. Statutory professionals play a vital role in identifying, supporting, and safeguarding individuals at risk of or experiencing HBA. This section aims to assist professionals in comprehending the complexities of HBA and to equip them with tools to explore these sensitive issues with individuals who may be experiencing HBA.

- **Cultural Sensitivity and Awareness:** Professionals must approach HBA with an understanding of the cultural and familial context but remain vigilant in ensuring that abusive behaviours are not excused or justified as cultural or traditional practices.
- **Safety and Confidentiality:** Given the potential dangers to the victim, confidentiality must be strictly upheld, and safety measures must be prioritised. Professionals must ensure that disclosures are handled with care to protect individuals from retaliation or further harm.
- **Multi-Agency Collaboration:** HBA cases require a coordinated approach from multiple statutory bodies including police, social services, and specialised support organisations to ensure victims are provided with comprehensive support.
- **Non-Judgmental Approach:** Victims of HBA may struggle to disclose due to fear of shame or family repercussions. A non-judgmental and empathetic approach, coupled with clear communication about the support available, can help encourage disclosure.

## Overview of the Tool

Karma Nirvana has developed this Honour Based Abuse (HBA) Identification Tool to support frontline professionals in identifying potential cases of HBA. It helps professionals to recognise the commonly recognised indicators of HBA and decide what support might be suitable for the individual. This tool is designed to guide practitioners and offer support in managing cases of suspected HBA.

Before using the tool, please review this guidance in full to familiarise yourself with HBA indicators and ensure you are fully prepared to engage with the individual appropriately and safely.

### What this tool can do:

- Help professionals identify potential indicators of Honour-Based Abuse
- Guide practitioners on how to ask questions sensitively and effectively
- Support decision-making around whether to seek further specialist input

### What this tool can't do:

- Assess risk – This tool identifies indicators only. It is not a risk assessment
- Confirm HBA – It does not offer a definitive conclusion
- Replace professional judgment – Practitioners must apply their own safeguarding knowledge
- Act as a referral – This tool does not notify Karma Nirvana or submit a case for support

By using this tool, you acknowledge the following:

- **Restricted Use:** *This tool is for individual use only. Copying, sharing, or reproducing any part of it without permission is not allowed.*
- **Non-Commercial Use:** *The content is for personal, non-commercial use. Redistribution or resale is prohibited.*
- **Proprietary Content:** *The format and content belong to Karma Nirvana. Unauthorised use or adaptation is not permitted.*
- **Guidance Only:** *This tool is designed to support frontline professionals and does not replace professional judgment.*
- **Not a Professional Opinion:** *The results do not reflect Karma Nirvana's professional opinion.*
- **Direct Communication Required:** *This tool does not replace speaking directly with Karma Nirvana. For individual case advice, please contact the Helpline.*
- **No Follow-Up:** *Karma Nirvana will not follow up on tool submissions. If further support is needed, you must contact the Helpline directly. 0800 5999 247.*

**This tool is available online and can be accessed [here](#).**

## Guidance for using this tool

### Before using this tool

#### 01 Familiarise Yourself with this Guidance Document:

- Review this guidance in full, including our [‘Exploration Questions’ section](#) to open up the conversation with the person you are supporting. It will also enable you to understand the appropriate steps to take after identifying potential signs.

#### 02 Aim to Complete the Tool with the Individual Present:

- This tool is designed to be completed with the individual present. By engaging with the individual during the screening, you can collect more accurate responses, allowing for a better understanding of their situation.
- Please note that if you cannot complete the screening in their presence, it may affect the accuracy of your answers. This may lead to false or inaccurate indications of HBA.

#### 03 Create a Safe Space:

- Before starting the screening, ensure that the individual is comfortable, feels safe, and has everything they need to be able to answer the questions. They must be able to speak freely without fear of being overheard by family members or anyone else who might have influence over them.
- You should provide reassurance, acknowledging the multiple barriers that individuals with lived experience may face. In the case of using interpreters, you must also be live to barriers that interpreters can present, for example, perpetuating adherence to an honour code.

#### 04 Ensure You Have Allocated Enough Time:

- We recommend allocating 30–40 minutes to complete this tool with the individual.
- While the closed questions may not require much time to complete, you may require more time to pose [exploration questions](#). Please be mindful that there is enough time to complete these questions appropriately before you start.

## 05 Explain the Process:

- Let the individual know that the screening is voluntary, and they are not required to answer any questions they are uncomfortable with. Emphasise that this is a tool to help identify potential harm, not a formal assessment.
- Please be mindful that if questions are not answered or missed, that this may impact the accuracy of the final assessment.

## 06 Confidentiality Assurance:

- Reassure the individual that their answers will be kept confidential and that their participation in this screening is important for supporting their safety and well-being. If you are required by virtue of your organisations policy and procedure to share the results of the assessment with others, ensure that you let the individual know in advance, providing the rationale for this. Victims of HBA may have specific concerns around confidentiality, and information being shared with others. It is important that potential concerns relating to this are fully addressed.
- The tool is confidential, and the results can be stored for reference. You can choose to receive an email copy of the results, but make sure to keep the information secure and accessible only to relevant professionals. If you are unsure how to store or share results, refer to your organisation's confidentiality policy.
- At Karma Nirvana, we respect your right to the privacy of the personal information you provide us. We collect information in a way that does not identify anyone, and responses to this form are not routinely reviewed. We review aggregated data submitted through this form to inform future learning and practice opportunities. We use [Typeform](#) to host and collect responses for this tool.

## While using this tool:

### 01 Answer the Tool Questions and Exploration Questions:

- The questions in this tool are answered with a Yes/No response. As you go through the questions, the individual may provide more context, examples, or explanations. It is important to capture these details separately, as they may be relevant for future assessments or referrals.
- This document provides '[Exploration Questions](#)' to explore the subjectivity of the person's lived experiences of HBA, but any further information disclosed should be recorded in line with your organisation's record-keeping procedures.
- You should ask these [exploration questions](#) while using the tool for a more comprehensive understanding, and to ensure you provide the right support.

### 02 No Question Is Too Small:

- Each question should be taken seriously. Even if some questions may seem less relevant or uncomfortable, they could reveal important indicators of HBA.
- If the question does not seem applicable, answer "No."

### 03 Do Not Rush:

- Take your time and allow the individual to provide thoughtful answers. The goal is to understand the full extent of any potential harm or abuse.

### 04 Sensitive and Trauma-Informed Approach:

- Use a trauma-informed approach, being mindful of the potential for re-traumatising. Keep the individual's emotional state in mind and provide them with the option to stop the screening at any time if they feel overwhelmed.
- Recognise that shame can act as a barrier for the person seeking help. They may feel shameful and guilty for speaking against potential perpetrators. It is important to validate their experiences, recognising that they deserve to live safely and on their terms.

## After completing this tool:

### 01 Scoring Process:

- As the individual answers the questions, the tool will score their answers based on the likelihood of HBA being present and present the score at the end. However, please note that this screening tool does not assess risk—it is solely for identifying indicators of possible HBA.

### 02 Professional Judgment is Essential:

- This tool is a guideline only, and it is up to the professional using the tool to interpret the answers in the context of the individual's overall situation. Professional judgment should always be used alongside the screening tool to decide on next steps. If there are clear signs of HBA, follow appropriate local safeguarding protocols and make relevant referrals as needed.
- Once the tool is completed, review the answers with the individual to ensure everything has been captured correctly. If any answers need further clarification, address them before proceeding.

### 03 Indicators Can Evolve:

- The signs listed may not always present immediately, and victims may not always show clear indicators. Using the identification tool after any new incident is also recommended as HBA indicators can also change over time.
- Continuous monitoring and updating of the individual's case are essential.

### 04 Use the Screening Results to Inform Further Actions:

- The results of the screening tool will help to guide next steps. If multiple signs of HBA are present, it's important to involve specialists in Honour Based Abuse.
- If fewer indicators are present but there is a safeguarding red flag, it is necessary to monitor the situation further or make referrals to appropriate services.
- Information on interpreting the results can be found on the next page.



## How to Interpret the Identification Tool Results:

- **Starting point** – The screening tool generates a score based on responses, indicating the likelihood of Honour Based Abuse (HBA) but not assessing risk. Professionals should use this as a starting point alongside safeguarding frameworks.
- **A score does not equate to risk** – The tool highlights key indicators but does not replace professional judgment or formal risk assessments. Professionals should use existing risk assessment tools, such as the DASH Risk Assessment to determine risk level. If high risk is identified, refer the case to the Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conference (MARAC) for coordinated action.
- **Create follow-up actions** – If HBA indicators are present, refer to appropriate services such as specialist organisations, social services, or the police. If there is immediate danger, call 999.
- **Specialist HBA risk management (police only)** – Many police forces have received training on the specialist HBA risk tool developed by Karma Nirvana. To check if your force is trained or to seek guidance, contact our Helpline.
- **Involve HBA specialists** – If the tool highlights indicators of HBA it is essential to involve professionals with specialist knowledge and experience. Karma Nirvana's Helpline is staffed by trained HBA specialists who can provide confidential advice, case consultations, and tailored guidance. Whether you're unsure about next steps, need support making a referral, or would like to discuss a potential HBA concern, our helpline is available. We encourage professionals to contact us early in the process. Early involvement can prevent escalation, help clarify concerns, and ensure that the individual receives the most appropriate and safe support.
- **Scoring** – The tool will class the individual's answers based on the number of indicators present:
  - **Limited** – Further exploration may still be necessary, especially if other red flags are present.
  - **Moderate** – Further in-depth assessment and supportive interventions should be considered.
  - **Strong** – Immediate intervention, support, and safety planning may be required.

## Referral and Contact information

If the screening tool highlights risks associated with Honour Based Abuse (HBA), Forced Marriage, or other forms of harm, immediate action may be required. Referrals should be made to relevant local and national support services, including:

### 01 Emergency and Safeguarding Services

#### Police – 999 (Emergency) / 101 (Non-Emergency)

- If there is an immediate threat to life or risk of harm, call 999.
- If the risk is not immediate but concerns remain, contact the police on 101.
- Specialist police teams, such as Forced Marriage Units or Domestic Abuse Units, may be involved in cases where HBA is suspected.

#### Children's and Adult Safeguarding Teams (via Local Authority Social Services)

- For concerns regarding children at risk of HBA, contact the **Children's Safeguarding Team** via the local authority's Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH).
- For adults at risk, referrals should be made to the **Adult Safeguarding Team** under the Care Act 2014.

### 02 Specialist HBA and Forced Marriage Support Services

#### Karma Nirvana (UK Specialist Charity for Honour-Based Abuse and Forced Marriage)

- **Helpline: 0800 5999 247** (Mon-Fri, 9am-5pm)
- Provides confidential advice, risk assessments, and practical support to victims and professionals.

#### Forced Marriage Unit (FMU) – UK Government Service

- **Helpline: 020 7008 0151** (Mon-Fri, 9am-5pm)
- **Out of Hours: 020 7008 5000** (Ask for the Global Response Centre)
- Email: **fmu@fcdo.gov.uk**
- Provides advice and support for those at risk of forced marriage, including overseas cases.

## Honour Based Abuse: Exploration Questions

The exploration of Honour Based Abuse involves understanding several core elements, which can act as key indicators for identifying abuse. These elements are interconnected and can provide insight into the individual's lived experience.

### 01 Expectations:

Expectations are the societal, familial, or community-based norms that individuals are required to follow to avoid dishonouring their family or community. These expectations are deeply embedded in cultural, religious, or traditional beliefs and often serve as the foundation for control mechanisms.

#### **Professional Exploration Questions:**

- **What specific expectations are placed upon the individual by their family or community?**  
*Help the individual explore what norms or behaviours are considered dishonourable or shameful if not adhered to.*
- **How do these expectations influence daily choices and actions?**  
*What areas of their life are heavily impacted, such as education, career, friendships, or relationships?*
- **Do the expectations seem clear or are they ambiguous?**  
*It's important to note if the individual feels pressured to constantly guess what's expected or if the norms are explicitly defined.*
- **What are the consequences or risks if these expectations are not met?**  
*Discuss the potential punishment or social repercussions if these expectations are violated.*
- **How do these expectations affect their mental and emotional well-being?**  
*Explore any internalised anxiety, shame, or fear that may stem from not fulfilling the family or community's honour standards.*

## Honour Based Abuse: Exploration Questions

### 02 Control:

Control within the context of HBA is often subtle, but it can also manifest in overt and coercive ways. Victims are often monitored and their behaviours strictly regulated, especially in relation to education, relationships, and personal freedom.

#### **Professional Exploration Questions:**

- **Who is involved in exerting control over the individual (e.g. immediate family, extended family, community members)?**  
*Recognise the different figures who may be responsible for controlling the individual's behaviour and autonomy.*
- **What forms of control are most prevalent (e.g. surveillance, restrictions, direct threats)?**  
*Understand whether control manifests as monitoring, limiting access to resources, or threats of harm if the individual doesn't comply with the set expectations.*
- **What happens if the individual tries to challenge or resist control?**  
*Examine if there are any consequences when the individual defies control mechanisms, such as threats, punishment, or emotional manipulation.*
- **Is there a pattern in how control is exercised (e.g. through isolation, guilt, or emotional blackmail)?**  
*This can help professionals understand whether the control is psychological or if there are physical elements involved.*

## Honour Based Abuse: Exploration Questions

### 03 Punishment:

Punishment is the consequence for perceived violations of the honour norms. This punishment can range from emotional abuse, such as shaming, to extreme forms of violence, including honour killings.

#### **Professional Exploration Questions:**

- **Has the individual experienced any form of punishment or harm for not adhering to family or community expectations?**  
*Identify any instances of physical, emotional, or psychological abuse or coercion.*
- **What are the forms of punishment used when expectations are not met (e.g. isolation, physical violence, threats)?**  
*Professionals should look for signs of punishment and explore how these actions are justified by perpetrators as a means of restoring family honour.*
- **What is the perceived risk of punishment or violence if the individual refuses to comply?**  
*Understanding how the individual perceives the consequences can help gauge their fear of reporting or seeking help.*
- **Who is responsible for carrying out or facilitating the punishment?**  
*Is it a family member, a group of community members, or a combination of both? Understanding the perpetrators can inform risk assessments and safety planning.*

## Honour Based Abuse: Exploration Questions

### 04 Guilt and Shame:

Guilt and shame are central to Honour-Based Abuse. Victims often internalise feelings of guilt and responsibility for their family's honour. This emotional manipulation is often used to keep individuals compliant and deter them from disclosing abuse.

#### **Professional Exploration Questions:**

- **Does the individual feel guilty or responsible for their family's reputation or honour?**  
*Understanding the emotional burden carried by the victim can reveal why they may be hesitant to speak out or seek help.*
- **Is there a fear that disclosing abuse will lead to further shame for the family or community?**  
*Help the individual explore the perceived social consequences and how it influences their decisions to remain silent or suppress their experience.*
- **How has the individual been manipulated emotionally (e.g., through gaslighting, blame-shifting, or guilt-tripping)?**  
*Recognise if emotional manipulation is being used as a tool to control or silence the individual.*
- **Do they fear being ostracised by their family or community if they speak out?**  
*Consider the social stigma and isolation that may follow a disclosure and how this may impact the individual's willingness to engage with services.*

## Honour Based Abuse: Exploration Questions

### 05 Community or Family Pressure:

In HBA, pressure to conform to expectations can come from immediate and extended family members or even the wider community. This can lead to a further layer of compliance, making it more difficult for victims to disclose abuse.

#### **Professional Exploration Questions:**

- **Who in your family or community reminds you about the importance of upholding honour or a reputation?**  
*Understanding who the key individuals are within their family or community is important to supporting victims. While information should not be shared with family or community members, it's important to understand how widespread expectations are held, and who the victim feels are key perpetrators.*
- **How do you feel they remind you, and how often do you feel this happens?**  
*Consider what forms this takes for the individual, and how frequently they feel this extended pressure from others to uphold certain behaviours.*
- **In what way have you felt judged for your actions by the community or family?**  
*Understanding what actions are considered unacceptable and how this presents in their community or family can help understand types of abuse they have or may be exposed to.*

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