



## Safeguarding Children From Honour-Based Violence

Honour based violence (HBV) can be described as a collection of practices, which are used to control behaviour within families or other social groups, to protect perceived cultural and religious beliefs and/or honour. Other terms used may be Izzat, Ghairat, Namus or Sharam.

Such violence can occur when perpetrators perceive that a relative has shamed the family and/or community by breaking their honour code. HBV takes many different forms and, while it is mostly females who experience it, for instance by being abused, disowned, or possibly being forced into having an abortion, boys and men can be victims too. For young victims, it is a form of child abuse. Examples of HBV include:

- physical abuse such as kicking and beating
- psychological pressure such as strict monitoring, humiliation, threats, harassment
- domestic and/or sexual violence including rape of themselves or other family members
- forced marriage or abortion
- kidnap and/or abandonment (leaving someone in their country of origin or sending them back to such)
- forced suicide or honour killing (murder)
- female genital mutilation (see separate policy)

HBV can be distinguished from other forms of violence, as it is often committed with a degree of approval and/or collusion from other family and/or community members. Women, men and younger members of the family can all be involved in the abuse.

Statistics from the Home Office ([www.gov.uk](http://www.gov.uk)) show that in the year ending March 2023, there were 2,905 HBV related offences recorded by the Police in England and Wales (excluding Devon and Cornwall). This showed a slight increase of 1% when compared with the previous year. In that year (2022) a 6% increase had been seen from 2021. Within this:

- 84 offences related to Female Genital Mutilation
- 172 were forced marriage offences
- 19% of offences reports were for controlling and coercive behaviour.
- Within the total, assault with injury and assault without injury accounted for 16% and 12% respectively.

While there is no specific offence of HBV, the Crown Prosecution Service describes 'honour'-based violence as an incident or crime "which has, or may have, been committed to protect or defend the 'honour' of the family and or the community." 'Honour' can be the motivation, excuse or justification behind a range of violent acts against women and girls.

### Risks

Young victims may find themselves in abusive and dangerous situations against their will with no power to seek help due to the involvement of family members and those within their communities. Behaviour that could lead to HBV responses include:

- Wearing what is considered to be inappropriate make-up or clothing
- The existence of a boyfriend or relationship which is perceived to be unacceptable e.g., a gay/lesbian relationship
- Rejecting a forced marriage
- Pregnancy outside of marriage
- Being a victim of rape
- Inter-faith relationships (e.g., same faith, but different ethnicity)
- Leaving or attempting to leave a spouse or seek a divorce
- Kissing or showing intimacy in a public place
- The use of alcohol and drugs

## Indicators

It is likely that an awareness that someone has been the victim of an honour-based crime will only come to light after an assault of some kind has taken place or if a child is reported as missing. There are inherent risks for victims in disclosing such abuse, with added pressure associated with the fear of criminalising parental behaviour as young people may face significant harm if their families and/or communities realise they have asked for help. They are also likely to have a fear of retribution from their family or community of being forced into engagement and/or marriage. Unreasonable restrictions on the young person, such as removal from education or virtual imprisonment, may also occur.

Some families go to considerable lengths to find those who run away, and children and young people who leave home are at risk of significant harm if returned to their family. They may be reported as missing by their families with no mention made as to the reason. Therefore, it is important that underlying reasons for a child or young person going missing are fully explored.

## Protection and Action to be Taken

It takes a lot of courage for a child or young person to disclose that they are afraid either that they will be, or have been, subjected to HBV. It is essential, therefore, that Foster Parents and staff take such matters seriously and that agencies work together to act in a manner that will not further jeopardise the child or young person's safety.

Where a child or young person discloses fear of HBV in respect of them or another, Foster Parents should:

- Take the disclosure seriously. Any suspicion or disclosure of violence or abuse against a child in the name of honour should be treated as seriously as any other suspicion or disclosure of significant harm against a child.
- Explain to the child or young person the limits of confidentiality, what information may have to be shared, with whom and for what purpose.
- Make a clear recording of all the information that is disclosed.
- Contact their Fostering Social Worker and the Child's Social Worker **immediately**, following Safeguarding procedures.
- Do not approach the family or community leaders or share any information with them.

In cases of violence in the name of honour and of forced marriage, it will be essential for the multi-agency team to consider other siblings in the family that may be experiencing, or at risk of, the same abuse. Any information of this nature which is given to a Foster Parent by the young person should be clearly recorded in detail, and information shared immediately, as per AFA's Safeguarding Policy.

## Issues

Addressing the needs of the individual is key, as HBV victims will require a tailored response dependent on a number of factors, including language and cultural barriers, their time in the country, social and family networks and their economic circumstances. A Foster Parent will

need to work alongside other professionals to ensure that the child is safe, while supporting his or her emotional needs. Any relevant cultural and religious needs will also need to be respected and supported in an appropriate way.

### The 'One Chance Rule'

All practitioners working with victims of HBV need to be aware of the 'one chance' rule. That is, they may only have one chance to speak to a potential victim, and therefore only one chance to save a life. This means that all practitioners working within statutory agencies need to be aware of their responsibilities and obligations when they come across these cases. If the victim is not heard and supported, that one chance might be wasted.

### For further information and relevant online training go to:

**Halo Project:** <https://www.haloproject.org.uk/> Call: 01642 683 045

**Karmina Nirvana:** <https://karmanirvana.org.uk/> UK Helpline: 0800 5999 247  
Monday to Friday, 9-5

**True Honour:** <https://www.truehonour.org.uk/> Telephone: 07480 621711 or email  
contact@truehonour.org.uk

**Refuge:** Freephone, 24-hour National Domestic Abuse Helpline **0808 2000 247**

### Connected Policies or Guidance

Name of Policy / Guidance	Relevant for
Record Keeping and Confidentiality Policy	All staff and Foster Parents
Safeguarding Policy	All staff and Foster Parents
Children Missing from Care	Foster Parents, Fostering Social Workers
Foster Parent's Handbook	Foster Parents, Fostering Social Workers
Staff Handbook	All staff
Safeguarding Children from Trafficking	Foster Parents, Fostering Social Workers
Safeguarding Children from FGM	Foster Parents, Fostering Social Workers

January 2024

Version 1.3