



## HARMFUL PRACTICES: DEFINITION AND CONTEXTUAL BACKGROUND

Harmful Practices are forms of violence which have been committed primarily against women and girls in communities and societies for so long that they are considered, or presented by perpetrators, as part of accepted 'cultural' practice. In these cases, religion, culture, patriarchal codes of behaviour and perceived notions of 'honour' are used by one or more perpetrators as an excuse for coercive control, threats and abuse. The most common are forced or early marriage, so called 'honour' based violence, female genital mutilation or cutting (FGM/C) and other lesser reported forms such as faith-based abuse, menstrual huts, acid attacks, so called 'corrective' rape and others. Harmful practices occur across all sexes, sexual identities and genders. They are not unique to a culture or religion. Often one and more forms of harmful practices occur at the same time, escalating risks and resulting in barriers to disclosure.

The notion of 'honour' is as relevant in broader discussions on coercive control and other forms of violence against women and girls globally. It is important that we understand this continuum while distinctively understanding the specific risks (such as multiple perpetrators) and needs of women from BME backgrounds who experience so called 'honour' based abuse and harmful practices. In the UK 'honour' based abuse and harmful practices definitions are shaped by the experiences of global majority/BME women's barriers to access, institutional racism and the specific contexts of escalation of risk in migrant and diaspora communities. Therefore, within the multiagency coordinated community response model of domestic abuse, harmful practices and so called 'honour' based abuse response is more effective when defined, informed and delivered by led by and for BME/global majority women's organizations.

## WHAT IS 'HONOUR' BASED ABUSE?

'Honour' Based Abuse (HBA) is abuse which is committed because there is a misguided notion about honour and dishonourable behaviour in a family and/or community and is in response to individuals trying to break away from constraining 'norms' of behaviour that their family or community are imposing. 'Honour' based abuse has been identified to stem from traditional notions of patriarchy and gender roles and may involve multiple perpetrators. Individuals and communities may not explicitly use the term 'honour' and other words used may include 'shame', 'respect', 'reputation', 'izzat', 'disgrace', 'sharaf' and 'sharam'. Women and girls make up the majority of victims, but men and boys can also be at risk.



## HBA MAY INCLUDE:

- Physical, emotional, and psychological abuse and threats.
- Sexual abuse including 'corrective' rape.
- Coercive control.
- Kidnap.
- Forced marriage.
- Forced abortion.
- Virginity testing and hymenoplasty.
- Spiritual abuse.
- Forced suicide.
- Honour' killing.

## TRIGGERS

HBA can begin or escalate when perpetrators believe someone has brought shame to their family or community by doing something not in keeping with the traditional beliefs of their culture or/and family values. Examples can include:

- Dressing outside of approved norms.
- Being or suspected of being LGBT+.
- Doubt over virginity.
- Having a boyfriend or girlfriend.
- Being seen with a member of the opposite sex.
- Being a victim of sexual abuse.
- Separation or divorce.
- Resisting a marriage.
- Becoming pregnant outside of marriage.
- Marrying outside of family religion, social status or caste.
- Choosing not to practice the religion of family or partner.
- Attempting to leave an abusive relationship, go to refuge or otherwise seek external support.
- Rumours about the victim's behaviour can also trigger abuse.



## WARNING SIGNS & INDICATORS INCLUDE BUT ARE NOT LIMITED TO:

- Self-harm, depression, attempted suicide, eating disorders.
- Restriction in movement, e.g., not allowed to see friends or have a job.
- Truancy from school.
- Running away from home.
- Individuals always being chaperoned by family members/ spouse.
- Isolation including lack of friends, access to phones or internet.
- Lack of access to documents such as passport.
- Substance misuse.
- Having siblings who were forced to marry.
- Arrangements to be taken out of the country at short notice, sometimes due to reported family illness.

## DOS AND DONTS

### DO:

- Follow the ONE Chance rule - this may be the only opportunity you have to speak to the victim.
- Ensure that you see the client alone.
- Use interpreting services to communicate with client if needed.
- Be trauma informed in approach and be led by survivors as they are experts by experience.
- Take them seriously and be patient in understanding the dynamics of power and risks.
- Consider that there may be multiple perpetrators.
- Listen to what the victim wants to happen and be honest if you will need to break their confidentiality (e.g., if a child is at risk).
- Establish safe means of contact.
- Offer specialist support (see agency details below).
- Be extremely careful how information is recorded and shielded within your organisation.
- If under 18, follow child safeguarding procedures.

## HPSP FACT SHEET

# 'HONOUR' BASED ABUSE



- If over 18, follow adult safeguarding procedures.
- If over 16 consider a MARAC referral.
- **ALWAYS REMEMBER - IN AN EMERGENCY DIAL 999.**

### DON'TS:

- Attempt to mediate.
- Send them away.
- Let the family, community or social network know about the disclosure.
- Meet in a place where you could be seen by a member of the family/ community.
- Use members of the family or community to interpret.
- Underestimate the perpetrator/s of HBV.
- Underestimate the risk even if there have been no previous reports - HBA can escalate very quickly.

# HPSP FACT SHEET

# 'HONOUR' BASED ABUSE



## AGENCIES

**Karma Nirvana UK Helpline:** 0800 5999 247

You can refer cases and enquire about training on harmful practices via your local P&ACT Ending Harmful Practices Agencies:

**Women and Girls Network - Bromley, Ealing & Hounslow**

Email: rcc@wgn.org.uk Phone: 0808 801 0660

**Phoenix (P&ACT) Project at PLIAS Resettlement - Barnet, Brent, H&F, Harrow & Ealing**

Email: shirley.ricketts@plias.co.uk Phone: 07494 091586 or 0208 838 6800

**Midaye - H&F, Kensington & Chelsea, Westminster**

Email: contact@midaye.org.uk Phone: 07593440944

**FORWARD - Croydon, Bexley, Greenwich & Merton**

Email: forward@forwarduk.org.uk Phone: 0208 960 4000

**Southall Black Sisters - Ealing, Hillingdon & Hounslow**

Email: info@southallblacksisters.co.uk Phone: 020 8571 9595

**Ashiana Network - Barking & Dagenham, Havering, Newham, Redbridge, Tower Hamlets & Waltham Forest**

Email: info@ashiana.org.uk Phone: 02085390427

**IKWRO Women's Rights Organization - Camden, Enfield, Merton, Southwark & Sutton**

Email: info@ikwro.org.uk Phone: 020 7920 6460

**Kurdish and Middle Eastern Women's Organization - Enfield, Hackney, Haringey & Islington**

Email: referrals@kmewo.com Phone: 020 72631027

**Latin American Women's Rights Service - City of London, Haringey, Lambeth, Lewisham, Southwark & Sutton**

Email: priscila@lawrs.org.uk Phone: 020 7336 0888

**Asian Women's Resource Centre - Brent, Barnet, Kensington & Chelsea, Richmond & Harrow**

Email: info@awrc.org.uk Phone: 020 8961 6549

**DVIP - Kensington & Chelsea, Kingston upon Thames, Lambeth & Wandsworth**

Email: DVIP.al-aman@richmondfellowship.org.uk Phone: 020 8563 2250

**IMECE - Barking & Dagenham, Hackney, Islington, Lewisham, Redbridge, Tower Hamlets & Waltham Forest**

Email: vawgreferral@imece.org.uk Phone: 0207 354 1959