

HONOUR BASED VIOLENCE

CONTENTS

1. Definition
2. Risks
3. Indicators
4. Protection and Action to be Taken
5. Issues
6. Further Information

1. DEFINITION

Honour Based Violence is a range of practices used to avoid, control or punish behaviour within families or other social groups that is perceived to conflict with or disrespect cultural and religious beliefs and/or honour. Such violence can occur when perpetrators perceive that a relative, usually a female, has shamed the family and / or community by breaking their honour code.

It can be distinguished from other forms of violence, as it is often committed with some degree of approval and/or collusion from family and/or community members and is seen as a 'justifiable response' to the behaviour.

2. RISKS

Young victims may find themselves in an abusive and dangerous situation against their will with no power to seek help. The usual avenues for seeking help - through parents or other family members may be unavailable. Honour based violence manifests itself in a diverse range of ways with children and young people, including Forced Marriage, rape, physical assaults, kidnap, threats of violence and actual violence, including murder. Female genital mutilation (FGM) or witnessing violence directed towards a sibling or another family member are also sources of significant harm to children, regardless of gender. Female genital mutilation is an offence contrary to the Female Genital Mutilation Act 2003 and can result in severe physical and psychological injuries and even death. Although the victims of Honour Based Violence are predominantly women, men and boys can also be the victims of Honour Based Violence as a result of relationships that their families or cultures disapprove of.

In addition to physical harm, a child may also suffer significant Emotional harm through the threat of violence or witnessing this directed at a sibling, friend or other family member.

Shame and therefore the risk to a victim may persist long after the incident that brought about dishonour occurred. This means the victim's partner (if new), his or her children, associates or their siblings may also be at continuous and serious risk of Significant Harm for an indefinite period.

Practitioners should be aware that a child could be the victim of violence/abuse in the name of honour something that a person external to their family or culture may perceive to be a 'minor' issue.

Behaviours that could be seen to transgress concepts of honour include:

- Inappropriate make-up or dress.
- The existence of a boyfriend
- Rejecting a forced marriage
- Pregnancy outside of marriage
- Being a victim of rape
- Perceptions that the victim is gay/lesbian
- Inter-faith relationships (or same faith, but different ethnicity)

- Leaving a spouse or seeking divorce
- Kissing or intimacy in a public place
- Engagement in perceived inappropriate social or educational activities

3. INDICATORS

Agencies may become aware that a child is the victim of an honour based crime through a number of routes such as an assault, truancy, missing from home, being taken out of mainstream education, etc. There are inherent risks to the act of disclosure for the victim and possibly limited opportunities for the victim to ask for help for fear that their families will find out.

There may be evidence of Domestic Abuse, self-harming, family disputes, and unreasonable restrictions on the young person such as removal from education or virtual imprisonment within the home.

Young people may be at significant risk if their families suspect or discover that they have asked for help. All aspects of risks to their safety need to be carefully assessed at every stage and decisions and actions need to be taken quickly. This may include deciding whether it is safe for them to return home following a disclosure. The young person may need practical help such as finding appropriate, safe accommodation and financial support, as well as emotional support and information about their rights and choices.

Some families go to considerable lengths to find children who run away, and young people who do leave home will be at a greater risk of significant harm if they are returned to their family (please refer to Children Missing from Home and Care). Children at risk of Honour Based Violence may be reported as missing by their families without any reasons being given as to why they have gone missing. It is important therefore that practitioners explore the underlying reasons before any decisions are made and that the Missing Procedures and debriefings are conducted as a matter of priority where children who go missing are found.

4. PROTECTION AND ACTION TO BE TAKEN

Any suspicion or disclosure of violence or abuse against a child in the name of honour should be treated equally seriously as any other suspicion or disclosure of significant harm against a child. However, there may be significant differences in the immediate response required. Having due regard to the specific practice issues set out above, where there are significant concerns about the welfare and safety of the child or young person, a referral to Children's social care should be made the Referrals Procedure should be followed.

Involving families in cases of forced marriage can be dangerous as it may:

- Increase the risk of serious harm to the victim. Experience shows that the family may punish or even kill them for seeking help
- Involve communicating with the family to ascertain whether they are intending to force their child to marry. In such cases it may be more appropriate to write to the family requesting a meeting about their child's allegation that they are being forced to marry:
 - Require the use of interpreters where the victim or the family's first language is not English. In such cases, relatives, friends, community leaders and neighbours should not be used as interpreters - despite any reassurances that may be given about how safe that person is.
 - Increase risk to other family members including siblings or adults who for example are perceived to have supported the victim in dishonouring the family or protecting them from being discovered.

In cases of threats or violence in the name of honour and of forced marriage, it is essential therefore to consider other siblings in the family that may be experiencing, or at risk of the same abuse.

Accurate record keeping in all cases of violence/abuse in the name of honour is important. Records should:

- Be accurate, detailed, clear and include the date.
- Use the person's own words in quotation marks
- Document any injuries - include photographs, body maps or pictures of their injuries.
- Only be available to those directly involved in the person's case.

Practitioners must take care that information or records that could increase the risk to the child is not inadvertently shared with family members or community representatives.

As a minimum, any practitioner or professional who suspects or receives information or a disclosure relating to Honour Based Violence should be reported to the Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) via the referral procedures and or reported to the police as an emergency. Unless indicated otherwise, i.e. there is evidence that shows the concern is totally unfounded, the police and Children's Social Care should always undertake a strategy meeting to plan and conduct a Section 47 investigation that considers other siblings or relatives who may be at risk.

5. ISSUES

The 'One Chance Rule'

All practitioners working with victims of Honour Based Violence need to be aware of the 'one chance' rule. That is, there may be only have one chance to speak to a potential victim and thus only one chance to save a potential victim's life. This requires that all practitioners working within statutory agencies to be aware of their responsibilities and obligations when dealing with these cases and alert to the potential risks if the issues are not taken seriously, if the child is not in a safe placement and if the child is returned home. If help is delayed or the victim is allowed to leave without an assessment of risk and support being offered, that one chance might be missed.

6. FURTHER INFORMATION

[Legal Guidance](#) - not specifically about children

[Forced Marriage and Honour Based Violence Screening Toolkit](#)

[Honour Based Violence](#) - the Governments reply to the Home Office Committee 2007-2008