



'Honour Based' Violence Practice Guidance

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Contents

Number	Section Title	Page(s)
1	Introduction	4
2	When does Honour Based Violence Occur	4-6
3	Impact on Children and Young People	6
4	Responding to Honour Based Violence or threat of Honour Based Violence	7
5	What to do	7-10
6	Support and Advice for Children and Young People	10-11
7	Resources and Reference List	12

1. Introduction

Honour Based Violence (HBV) is a crime or incident committed to protect or defend the honour of a family and/or community.

HBV does not cover one specific crime; it generally occurs in domestic settings and can involve a range of offending behaviours which are used against individuals, families or other social groups to control and protect perceived cultural / religious beliefs and honour.

HBV may include murder, fear of or actual forced marriage, controlling sexual activity, domestic violence and abuse (including psychological, physical, sexual, financial or emotional), child abuse, rape, kidnapping, false imprisonment, assault, harassment and forced abortion. This list is not exhaustive.

These crimes cut across all cultures, nationalities, faith groups and communities. They transcend national and international boundaries; they are violations of human rights and there is no 'honour' in the commission of them. Offences of Honour Based Violence are prosecuted under the specific offence committed e.g. common assault, grievous bodily harm, harassment, kidnap, rape and murder.

2. When does Honour Based Violence Occur?

HBV may occur when the perpetrator(s) perceive that a person (or persons) has shamed the family or community by breaking an honour code. The violence used can include planning, premeditation and family or community conspiracy; often the belief held is that the victim(s) is 'deserving' of the punishment.

Honour Based Violence can often be a form of domestic and / or sexual violence. The Home Office definition of domestic violence and abuse (2013)¹, which Honour Based Violence is related to, now applies to young people aged 16 years and over. All offences against children and young people under 18 are Child Protection concerns.

Honour/ Izzat

Honour Based Violence is perpetrated for a number of reasons. These include:

- 'Izzat' (an Urdu word which means protecting family honour or reputation);
- To control un-wanted behaviour and sexuality (including perceived promiscuity or being lesbian, gay, bisexual or Transgender);
- As a response to family, community or peer group pressure;
- Strengthening family links;
- Protecting perceived cultural and/or religious ideals (misguided or dated);

¹ <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/domestic-violence-and-abuse>

- Retaining wealth, property or land within the family;
- Preventing unsuitable relationships;
- Assisting claims for residence and citizenship in the UK;
- Perceived immoral behaviour including:
 - Inappropriate make-up or dress;
 - Possession and / or use of a mobile telephone;
 - Kissing or showing other forms of intimacy in public;
 - Rejecting a forced marriage;
 - Being a victim of rape or other serious sexual assault;
 - Inter-faith relationships;
 - Seeking a divorce.

This could occur through:

- Defying parental authority;
- Becoming 'westernised' in style of clothes, make-up, behaviour and attitudes;
- Women having sex, relationships and/or pregnancy outside of marriage;
- Use of drugs; alcohol, or cigarettes;
- Gossip – family honour can be damaged by rumour and gossip that is not true but believed to be true by other members of the community;
- Leaving a spouse or seeking a divorce;
- Having a boyfriend / girlfriend; and
- Wishing to marry outside of faith.

Children and young people can be victims of Honour Based Violence either directly or indirectly. The consequences for the victim include:

- Ostracism / disownment of the victim by their family and community;
- Physical / emotional abuse of the victim by family members, spouse and in laws;
- Restriction of freedom/loss of independence for the victim;
- Isolation from their family and community, but also being on 'house arrest' or kept from seeing friends;
- Internalisation of guilt / shame by the victim and feeling conflicted for not wanting the marriage but also not wanting to hurt or shame their family;
- Forced marriage (see [Forced Marriage Procedure](#))
- Murder;
- Being sent (or threatened) to live elsewhere, either in the UK or overseas.

Notions of honour framed within culture and religion are used for justification of primarily (but not always) male violence against women and children.

Honour Based Violence involving children means that they are at significant risk of actual physical harm, neglect and emotional harm through the threat of, or witnessing violence. Families may feel shame long after the incident that brought about 'dishonour' occurred; **therefore the risk of serious harm to a child can persist.**

Crimes committed in the name of 'honour' include threatening behaviour, violence or abuse (psychological, physical, sexual, financial or emotional). As specific offences they may include common assault, inflicting Grievous Bodily Harm, harassment, kidnap, rape, threats to kill, murder. Additionally, honour based crimes could include:

- Attempted murder;
- Manslaughter;
- Procuring an abortion;
- Encouraging or assisting suicide;
- Conspiracy to murder;
- Conspiracy to commit a variety of assaults.

3. Impact on Children and Young People

Isolation is one of the biggest problems facing those trapped in, or under threat of violence. Many children or young people who face violence will not even discuss their worries with their friends for fear their families may find out.

Children and young people in this situation can display a wide range of behaviours indicative to any level of abuse and neglect. Practitioners should make themselves aware of the potential indicators related to experiencing honour based violence directly or indirectly. These include:

- Children may go missing (from home and school) in an attempt to keep themselves safe;
- Children may be restricted in their movements and overly supervised;
- Children might not have access to the internet, mobile phones, and their passport or family members;
- Children might be forced to marry, or forced to live elsewhere;
- Being withdrawn from education by those with Parental Responsibility and /or requests for extended leave;
- Unreasonable financial control, for example confiscation of wages/income.

4. Responding to Honour Based Violence or threat of Honour Based Violence

Honour Based Violence places young people and vulnerable adults at risk of possible physical and emotional harm. Some cases have resulted in the child or young person

being murdered. Therefore Honour Based Violence should be considered as a potential risk factor in any Assessment. All agencies need to be aware of Honour Based Violence, its likely consequences and the possibility of dealing with the issue.

It is important that staff of all agencies understand the difficulties that children and young people face when living with the threat or consequences of Honour Based Violence. In addition, they are likely to have no experience of living outside the family and may face rejection and harassment by the family and by the community.

Information or a referral about Honour Based Violence may be received from the child or young person, from a friend or relative, or from a statutory, voluntary or faith organisation.

5. What to do

If a child tells a practitioner about Honour Based Violence in respect of themselves or another family member, the practitioner should:

- See the child alone in a safe and private place to obtain their wishes, views and feelings and explain confidentiality fully, including the need to share;
- Record carefully; caution is required about how information is recorded and shielded within the organisation to ensure the child's safety; and
- Should NOT make contact with the family or community leaders, and should not under any circumstances, tell the family or their social network about what the child has said, attempt mediation or use members of the community to interpret on behalf of the child;
- If a child tells a practitioner about honour based violence, a referral must be made to the relevant Children's Social Care Services , who in partnership with the Police will undertake a Section 47 Enquiry.

If you suspect a child or young person is at immediate risk, professionals should report it to Police, including dialing 999, if appropriate.

The Role of the Police

Although there is no specific criminal offence of "Honour Based Violence" perpetrators may be prosecuted for a variety of offences, such as threatening behaviour, conspiracy, assault, kidnap, abduction, rape and murder.

If the person is under 18, or is an adult identified as at risk the Police will:

- Consult the Police Child Abuse Investigation Unit;
- Inform Children's / Adults Social Care Services;
- Check if the child is the subject of a Child Protection Plan;

- Ensure that an Appropriate Adult and if needed an accredited interpreter is in attendance at all interviews - members of the extended family or community leaders are **not** appropriate in this situation.

The Role of Children's Social Care

Honour Based Violence places a child / young person at risk of Significant Harm therefore should initially be investigated under Section 47 Enquiries.

When a referral has been received by Children's Social Care Services in relation a child or young person who is suffering or likely to suffer honour based violence a Strategy Discussion/Meeting must be convened within two working days. This should be chaired by a Team Manager from Children's Social Care Services, and involve Police and health representatives at a minimum, with other professionals from education and specialist based organisations invited. Consideration should also be given to inviting a Legal Advisor.

The strategy meeting / discussion should recognise the Police responsibility to initiate and undertake a criminal investigation as appropriate.

When assessing the risk of harm, a full family history must be taken to consider any abuse or threat of abuse of any other member of the family as well as a secret boy or girlfriend, pregnancy and self-harming.

No contact should be made with the family until there has been an agreed strategy with the Police due to the need to consider the possible protection of the child from abuse / disappearance.

Following the strategy meeting / discussion, Children's Social Care Services and the Police should arrange to see the child on his / her own in a secure and private place. Consideration should be given to the professionals allocated to talk with the child, to ensure the child is untroubled when speaking to them.

When talking to the child, an approved and trained interpreter must be used in if the preferred language of the child / young person is not English. Care must be taken when identifying an appropriate interpreter to ensure the safety of the child or young person.

Children's Social Care Services must:

- Give the child or young person advice on personal safety;
- Consider the possible need for immediate protection and placement away from the family;
- Discuss with Police any concerns for the safety of any other child or young person and any suspicion that a crime may have been committed.

It should be noted that Honour Based Violence does not stand alone; it is inexorably linked with domestic abuse and consequently any planning and / or interventions should also fit with existing domestic abuse guidance, policy and procedures.

REMEMBER - Cases involving suspicions of Honour Based Violence are NOT suitable for a Family Group Conference to be arranged because of the risk of physical danger and emotional manipulation which the child or young person may experience as a result.

Where an Initial Child Protection Conference is convened, great care must be taken to manage information about the whereabouts of the child or young person. The social worker and his / her manager must discuss the arrangements with the Conference Chair and consider whether the family should be present or not, or at the same time as the child or young person, as threats may be made.

Information, Record Keeping and Confidentiality

It is important for Children's Social Care Services to obtain as much information as possible when a child or young person is first referred, as there may not be another opportunity. A record should be taken of the child or young person's immediate personal details and the family details including any information about the need for an interpreter.

Full details of the allegation should be recorded, including details of any threats or hostile actions against the child or young person.

A record should also be made of the details of the person making the initial referral, including contact details and their relationship to the child or young person.

Concerns about acts of violence should not be discussed with the child or young person's family or friends, and / or information should not be shared with other agencies without the express consent of the child or young person, unless it is necessary to protect the child or young person. See Information Sharing and Confidentiality Procedure for further details.

The worker must think very carefully about the need to disclose information and to whom it may be disclosed. Disclosure may lead to the child or young person's estrangement from the family and increase the likelihood of the child or young person suffering Significant Harm. If approached, parents may deny that the child or young person is at threat of violence, move the child or young person, expedite any travel arrangements and bring forward any perpetration of violence.

All agencies should take particular care to ensure that members of their staff do not:

- Use family members, friends, neighbours or community leaders as interpreters;
- Send the child or young person back to the family home against their wishes;
- Approach the child or young person's family or friends or others within the child or young person's community without the child or young person's explicit consent;

- Notify the family in advance of enquiries;
- Attempt to mediate between the child or young person and the family except at the child or young person's specific request;
- Breach the child or young person's confidentiality, unless this is necessary to ensure their safety.

When a referral is received, the child or young person should be interviewed in a secure and private place, on her or his own. The child or young person may want to be seen by a person of the same gender, and may also want to talk to someone from her or his own community - or to avoid talking to someone from her or his own community.

When arranging to see the child or young person, thought should be given to where and when this should happen, for example, if the child or young person is coming to an office, consider arranging the appointment out of hours to minimise risks to the safety of the child or young person.

The person interviewing the child or young person should:

- Discuss the range of options available to her or him and the possible consequences of each course of action;
- Signpost her or him to an appropriate adviser and / or make the child or young person aware of the right to seek legal advice and representation;
- Develop a "cover story" - a plausible alternative reason for the child or young person to be at the social work office, police station etc, in case she / he is seen there.

At all times confidentiality and discretion are vitally important.

Information about the child or young person and her / his whereabouts must be kept confidential. Access should preferably be restricted to named members of staff. This includes both paper-based and computer records.

Before making any enquiries, the worker should consider whether there is a risk that the family will become aware that these enquiries are being made.

When considering disclosure of confidential information to another person or agency, the child or young person should be informed, the reasons explained, and their consent sought as appropriate.

Workers should be aware that some families will be intent on finding the child or young person and often private investigators have been used to do this. Many times the family may approach a third party such as a local Councillor or MP with an apparently reasonable request to contact the child or young person; do not provide information without checking with a manager and the child or young person first.

6. Support and Advice for Children and Young People

For children and young people who stay at home they should be offered support regarding safety / escape plans and the option to deposit their DNA, passport number, finger prints and photograph with the Police. It is essential to devise a way of contacting them discreetly without placing them at increased risk of harm. This should include a code word to ensure that contact has been made with the right person. Consideration should also be given to the possibility that written communications including emails may be intercepted and that telephone communications may be detected, for example, through the phone bill.

A child or young person who wishes to leave the family home will need a leaving strategy. This will include issues such as; *Where could they go in an emergency?* If the child or young person is in immediate danger, it may be necessary to consider admission to local authority accommodation, an Emergency Protection Order or Police Protection. In this situation it is not appropriate to rely on the extended family to provide a place of safety unless the child or young person can identify a relative in whom they have absolute trust. It may be necessary to place the child or young person outside her or his community and in a different local authority area.

If the child or young person wishes to remain in the family home A safety plan should be put in place with the child or young person; looking at how to raise the alarm if there are concerns about increased risk to safety; having access to emergency money; having an escape plan.

A child or young person may be taken overseas to protect honour or Izzat and they may be forced to marry. Any such concerns should be taken seriously, but the arrangement of an extended holiday should not be assumed to imply violence or that a forced marriage is planned. As much of the following information as possible should be gathered so that action can be taken, if necessary:

- Any addresses where the child or young person may be staying while overseas;
- Potential spouse's name;
- Date of proposed wedding;
- Addresses of extended family members in UK and overseas;
- Details of travel plans, including estimated return date, and people likely to accompany the child or young person.
- Note of their passport number and the date and place of issue;
- Give the child or young person the address and phone number of the British Embassy in the country to which they are travelling;
- Establish a safe means to make contact with the child or young person, e.g. a mobile phone that will work overseas;
- Encourage the child or young person to memorise at least one telephone number and e-mail address;

- Ask the child or young person for details of a trusted person in the UK with whom they will keep in contact whilst overseas, who will act on their behalf and who can be approached if they do not return;
- Take a written statement from the child or young person that they want the social worker (or another person) to act on their behalf if they do not return by a certain date;
- Ask the child or young person to make contact without fail on their return;
- Record some information that only the child or young person will know this may help later in confirming their identity.

If there is a clear risk of violence or forced marriage and the risk is imminent, it may be necessary to take emergency action to remove the child or young person from home in order to protect them and prevent the travel abroad.

Children or young people may run away from home to escape the threat of violence face particular difficulties. Agencies may be criticised for providing support and protection to a child or young person who has run away from home, and for failing to share information about the child or young person's whereabouts with the family. The first consideration must be for the child or young person's safety and welfare.

Any child or young person who has run away from home should be spoken to on their own to establish why they ran away. Issues related to Honour Based Violence may come to light at this time. If the child or young person is at risk of violence, it may not be in their best interests to disclose any information to their family, friends, or members of their community until their continued safety has been secured.

7. Resources and Reference List

[Metropolitan Police – Honour Based Violence](#)

[Honour Based Violence Awareness Network](#)

[Crown Prosecution Service Guidance](#)

[Karma Nirvana – supporting victims of Honour Based Abuse Website](#)