



One minute guide

Honour Based Abuse

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What is Honour Based Abuse?

The [Crown Prosecution Service \(2023\)](#) describes so-called 'Honour' Based Abuse (HBA) 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'. Such abuse can occur when perpetrators perceive that a relative has shamed the family and/or community by breaking their code of 'honour'. People of all genders can be victims of HBA.

HBA may be justified by perpetrators on the grounds that a person: has worn unapproved make-up or clothing; is having an unapproved relationship (girlfriend/ boyfriend/ same-sex); has engaged in intimacy in a public place; has rejected a forced marriage; is pregnant outside of marriage; has been a victim of rape; is in an inter-faith relationship; and/ or has left a spouse or sought divorce.

HBA includes practices that are performed by perpetrators on victims for cultural or socio-conventional motives and have harmful consequences; examples of this are forced marriage, [female genital mutilation](#), [breast flattening](#) and dowry abuse. Families may feel shame long after the incident of 'dishonour' has passed. Therefore the risk of serious harm can persist.

Honour Based Abuse can include (this list is not exhaustive):

- Murder/ so-called 'honour' killing, or forced suicide;
- Attempted or actual forced marriage;
- Controlling sexual activity;
- Domestic abuse, including physical abuse such as kicking and beating, as well as psychological pressure such as strict monitoring, humiliation and threats;
- Child abuse;
- Rape and/ or sexual assault;
- Kidnapping or false imprisonment;
- Abandonment - leaving someone in or sending them back to their country of origin.
- Harassment and
- Forced abortion.

What does the law say about Honour Based Abuse?

There is no specific offence of 'honour based crime' and the term Honour Based Abuse (HBA) is used to encompass various criminal offences that are covered by existing legislation. HBA is recognised by the government as a form of [domestic violence and abuse](#) and they define this as 'any incident or pattern of incidents of controlling, coercive, threatening behaviour, violence or abuse between those aged 16 or over who are, or have been intimate partners or family members, regardless of gender or sexuality'.

The abuse can encompass, but is not limited to: psychological; physical; sexual; financial; and/ or emotional abuse. One of the significant differences between domestic abuse and HBA is the multiple perpetrator element. Parents, relatives and members of the community may conspire, aid, abet or participate in HBA for what might seem a trivial transgression.

What are the potential warning signs of Honour Based Abuse?

The potential warning signs of HBA include:

- Going missing (from home and school) in an attempt to keep themselves safe;
- Being withdrawn, upset, self-harm, appearing depressed, angry and/ or desperate;
- Being restricted in their movements and overly supervised;
- Expressing concerns regarding a forthcoming holiday abroad, talk about marriage, being forced to marry, or forced to live elsewhere.
- Not having access to the internet or mobile phones, their passport or family members;
- Having physical injuries, or witnessing or experiencing family disputes or domestic violence. Children who witness HBA may be threatened with or are at significant risk of neglect and/ or physical and/or emotional harm.

What should practitioners do?

Practitioners should make themselves aware of potential signs of honour based abuse. If a child or young person tells a practitioner about HBA in respect of themselves or another family member, the practitioner should:

- **See the child or young person alone:** in a safe and private place to obtain their wishes, views and feelings and explain confidentiality fully, including the need to share the information;
- **Record carefully:** caution is required about how information is recorded and shielded within the organisation to ensure the child's safety;
- **Contact:** Children's Services Duty and Advice Team, who in partnership with the Police may undertake a Section 47 Enquiry (safeguarding).

Practitioners should NOT: make contact with the family or community leaders; tell the family or their social network about what the child or young person has said; attempt mediation or use members of the community to interpret on behalf of the child - as this could put them at further risk of harm.

Key contacts and further information

[Duty and Advice Team](#) tel: 0113 376 0336 - [Out of hours](#) tel: 0113 535 0600

The Government's [Forced Marriage Unit](#) tel: 020 7008 0151

More information is available from the Crown Prosecution Service [guidance on so-called Honour Based Abuse](#) and the website of [Karma Nirvana](#), a specialist national charity for victims and survivors of honour based abuse.

Further local information is available on the West Yorkshire Online Procedures on [so-called Honour Based abuse](#) and [Forced Marriage](#).