

Honour'- based abuse, forced marriage and FGM

Definition and Legal Status

Honour based abuse is 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 violence can occur when perpetrators perceive that a relative 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.

For example:

[Forced Marriage](#) - falls under the banner of Honour based violence, is a criminal offence whose provisions, so far as they affect England and Wales, can be found within section 121 of the Anti-Social Behaviour Crime and Policing Act 2014 (the 2014 Act), as amended by the Marriage and Civil Partnership (Minimum Age) Act 2022.

[Female genital mutilation \(FGM\)](#) or witnessing violence directed towards a sibling or indeed another family member. 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 predominantly the victims are women men can be the victim of Honour Based Violence.

It also includes Sexual or physical assault; Rape; Kidnap; Threats of violence (including murder

National VPC Statement

Cadets 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.

In addition to the physical risks, a child may also suffer significant [Emotional](#) harm through the threat of violence or witnessing this directed at a sibling 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), children, associates or their siblings may be at serious risk of [Significant Harm](#).

Practitioners should be aware that a child could be the victim of violence/abuse in the name of honour for what an outside person 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.

Leaders 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 etc. There are inherent risks to the act of disclosure for the victim and possibly limited opportunities 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.

Cadets may face significant harm if their families realise that they have asked for help. All aspects of their safety need to be carefully assessed at every stage and decisions and actions need to be taken quickly. Initially this needs to address whether it is safe for them to return home following a disclosure.

Some families go to considerable lengths to find their children who run away, and young people who leave home are at risk of significant harm if they are returned to their family. They may be reported as missing by their families, but no mention is made of the reason.

Protection and Action to be Taken

Any suspicion or disclosure of violence or abuse against a cadet in the name of honour should be treated equally seriously as any other suspicion or disclosure or significant harm against that person. If this is suspected or reported then the Force and National Safeguarding Policy and [Process](#) should be followed and the incident and concerns reported.

Further Information

Spotlight Report #HiddenVictims: [Research on Honour based Violence in UK 2018](#)

[Report](#) from CPS – Violence against Women and Girls 2017-18

The Met Police have an excellent [resource online](#) when identifying support groups

[Reducing the Risk](#) – Very useful briefing with loads of links to further information, support and guidance