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| **Honour Based Violence (HBV)**  |  |

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**Definition**

Honour based violence 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.

**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/young people, including forced marriage, rape, physical assaults, kidnap, threats of violence (including murder), female genital mutilation 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. It is almost always restricted to female children and young people i.e. those under 18 years old.

In addition to the physical risks, a child/young person 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/young people, associates or their siblings may be at serious risk of Significant Harm.

Staff should be aware that a child/young person could be the victim of violence/abuse in the name of honour for what an outside person may perceive to be a ‘minor’ issue. Children/young people from particular ethnic groupings/religious groupings will be more at risk of honour based violence.

Behaviours that could be seen to transgress concepts of honour include and therefore act as triggers may include (this list is not exhaustive):

* Inappropriate make-up or dress;
* Smoking in public;
* Truanting;
* Rejection of religion or religious instruction;
* Pre-marital conflict;
* Pre-marital or extra marital affair;
* Objection to being removed from education;
* Reporting domestic abuse;
* Escalation – threats, violence, restrictions;
* Running away;
* Being a reluctant immigration sponsor;
* A relationship not being approved of by family and/or community;
* Rejecting a forced marriage;
* Pregnancy outside of marriage;
* Being a victim of rape;
* Sexual orientation - perceptions that the victim is gay/lesbian bisexual or transgender (LGBT);
* Gender identity, if there is a perception that the victim is transgender;
* Inter-faith relationships (or same faith, but different ethnicity);
* Leaving a spouse or seeking divorce;
* Kissing or intimacy in a public place.

**Risk Factors in HBV Cases**

The risks, and therefore, risk management plan are different for those who fear a forced marriage to those who are actually in a forced marriage. The following can combine to raise unique risk factors for HBV:

**1. Truanting**

This is a risk factor amongst teenage girls, in particular. The reasons for this appear to be twofold.

First, if a girl is in a controlling environment, for example, being dropped off and collected from school and escorted everywhere, they may not have any other opportunities to socialize. Truanting may be the only time for any form of independence. Equally, many girls know that they will not finish their education and once they leave school they may be sent abroad to be married, where a British education may be of little use. Care must be taken to ensure that if girls are truanting that schools or other officials do not inadvertently up the ante by alerting parents to this fact if there are HBV issues to be considered.

**2. Self-harm**

Studies show that more women than men self-harm. In the United Kingdom (UK) it has been found that the prevalence of self-harm is disproportionately high among young Asian women (Bhardwaj, 2001). It is likely that the reasons behind this stem from a lack of support and the clash that can occur when an individual has to conform to differing cultural ideals, some of which are directly associated with HBV i.e. forced marriage. Self-harm is a strong predictor for future suicide or suicide attempts.

**3. House arrest and being ‘policed at home’**

This may include not being allowed out, being supervised by family members and/or escorted to places outside of the home address, restricting access to telephone, internet, finances, passport and friends, for example.

**4. Fear of being forced into an engagement/marriage**

This might be reported to officials or to friends. The risk tends to elevate if the victim is noncompliant with the families wishes. This is heightened further if they have a partner that the family do not approve of. Care needs to be taken if the victim believes they will be taken overseas against their will. Forced marriage places individuals at risk of rape and possible physical harm. Some cases have resulted in the reluctant spouse being murdered.

**5. Pressure to go abroad**

This normally happens just before the summer holidays. Reports to police increase at this time and victims fear they will be taken overseas and forced to marry. If a person holds the nationality of countries, they are a dual national and will have 2 passports. Be mindful of this if you believe they will be taken out of the country. For many young people it may be their first time travelling overseas. If they are being held against their will and forced to marry there are various difficulties they may face if they want to return to the UK. They may find it impossible to communicate by telephone, letter and e-mail. They may not have access to their passport and money. Women may not be allowed to leave the house unescorted. They may not be able to speak the local language. Often individuals find themselves in remote areas where even getting to the nearest road can be hazardous. They may not receive the assistance they might expect from the local police, neighbours, family, friends or taxi drivers.

**6. Isolation**

Individuals forced into marriage often become estranged from their families. Sometimes they find themselves trapped in a cycle of abuse. Many suffer for many years from domestic violence. They may feel unable to leave because of their children, a lack of family support, economic pressures and other social circumstances. Isolation is one of the biggest problems facing victims of forced marriage. They may feel they have no one to speak to about their situation. These feelings are very similar to those experienced by victims for domestic violence and child abuse. Isolation is very real for those who have escaped a forced marriage or the threat of one. For many, running away is their first experience of living away from home and they suffer without their family and friends and usual environment. They often live in fear for being tracked down by their family who may solicit the help of others. In addition to leaving, they may be seen as bringing shame on the honour of the individual and the family in the eyes of the community.

**7. Attempts to separate or divorce (child contact issues)**

1. Research and analysis show that attempts to end a relationship are strongly linked to intimate partner homicide. Websdale (1999) states that attempts to leave violent men are one of the most significant correlates with domestic death. Notions of ‘If I can’t have them, then no-one can’ are recurring features of such cases and the killer frequently intends to kill themselves (Wilson and Daly, 1993; Richards, 2003). Threats that begin with “if you were to ever leave me…” must be taken seriously. Victims who stay with the abuser because they are afraid to leave may correctly anticipate that leaving would elevate or spread the risk of lethal assault.

The data on time-since-separation further suggest that women are particularly at risk within the first 2 months (Wilson and Daly, 1993; Richards, 2003).
2. Further, many incidents happen as a result of discussions around child contact or disputes over custody (Richards, 2004). Children should also be considered in the assessment process. Unique risks are raised in terms of shame and honour. Those who leave are seen to bring shame on the honour of the family in the eyes of the community. This may lead to social ostracism and harassment by the family.

**8. Threats that they will never see the children again**

This can have a huge impact on a woman, particularly if they believe they have insecure immigration status where they are concerned about being deported while their children remain in the UK. This is often used as a lever to coerce and gain compliance from the victim.

**9. A pre-marital relationship or extra marital affairs**

This could be real or perceived by the alleged perpetrator(s).

**10. Threats to kill**

Threats to kill tend to be credible and should be treated as such. Assess the antecedents to the incident and the victimology. Care should be taken around networks/organisations being used to track down victims that flee, for example accessing Information Technology (IT) networks, minicabs, employing associates within statutory organisations (i.e. the police, Benefits Agency, Family Law Solicitors).

**Indicators**

It is likely that awareness that a child/young person is the victim of an honour based crime will only come to light after the commission of an assault of some kind. 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 violence and 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 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. Initially this needs to address whether it is safe for them to return home following a disclosure. The young person will need practical help such as accommodation and financial support, as well as emotional support and information about their rights and choices.

Some families go to considerable lengths to find their children/young people who run away, and children/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. It is important that practitioners explore the underlying reasons before any decisions are made.

**Protection and Action to be Taken**

Any suspicion or disclosure of violence or abuse against a child/young person in the name of honour should be treated equally seriously as any other suspicion or disclosure or significant harm against a child/young person. However, there are significant differences in the immediate response required. Bearing in mind the specific practice issues set out, where the concerns about the welfare and safety of the child/young person are such that a referral to children’s social services should be made the [**Referrals Procedure**](http://www.proceduresonline.com/sbni/chapters/p_referrals.html) should be followed.

Involving families in cases of forced marriage is dangerous:

* It may increase the risk of serious harm to the victim. Experience shows that the family may punish them for seeking help;
* Involving the family includes visiting the family to ask them whether they are intending to force their child/young person to marry or writing a letter to the family requesting a meeting about their child/young person’s allegation that they are being forced to marry;

Relatives, friends, community leaders and neighbours should not be used as interpreters – despite any reassurances from this known person. Children/young people may require support workers/interpreters from the same gender and if possible the same cultural background. In cases of violence in the name of honour and of forced marriage, it is essential 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.

Staff must take care that information which increases the risk to the child/young person is not inadvertently shared with family members.

HBV is included in the definition of domestic and sexual violence and abuse (see [**Domestic Violence and Abuse Procedure**](http://www.proceduresonline.com/sbni/chapters/p_dom_viol_abuse.html)). The Domestic Abuse, Stalking & Harassment and Honour Based Violence (DASH) Risk Assessment should be used in such cases. Whilst HBV would be considered ‘high risk’ in any assessment, it is important to identify the specific risk factors associated with that particular individual’s circumstances. Thus in addition to the Domestic Abuse, Stalking & Harassment and Honour Based Violence (DASH) Risk Assessment, the HBV specific DASH Risk Assessment should also be completed (see the [**Documents Library**](http://www.proceduresonline.com/sbni/chapters/docs_library.html)).

**Issues**

The ‘One Chance Rule'

All staff working with victims of honour based violence need to be aware of the ‘one chance’ rule. That is, they may only have one chance to speak to a potential victim and thus they may only have one chance to save a life. This means that all staff working within statutory agencies need to be aware of their responsibilities and obligations when they come across these cases. If the victim is allowed to walk out of the door without support being offered, that one chance might be wasted.

**Further Information**

[**Forced Marriage**](http://www.proceduresonline.com/sbni/chapters/p_force_marriage.html)

[**Female Genital Mutilation**](http://www.proceduresonline.com/sbni/chapters/p_fem_gen_mutil.html)

[**Trafficked Children**](http://www.proceduresonline.com/sbni/chapters/p_trafficked_ch.html)

[**Forced Marriage and Honour Based Violence Screening Toolkit**](http://www.resolution.org.uk/site_content_files/files/forcedmarriage_toolkit_layout_1.pdf)

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