



College of
Policing

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Public Protection:

Honour Based Abuse

Version 2.4

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The content of these notes may have an impact on you personally; emotive topics can generate powerful and unexpected feelings and reactions. You may have concerns about studying these topics; and wish to consider talking to an appropriate person or organisation for help, advice, and support. If you are studying these topics at home, or in a public place please ensure others are not able to view the content.

Authorised Professional Practice

These notes are aimed at learners completing their Initial training to meet the learning outcomes specified on the National Policing Curriculum. The primary source of content is the Authorised Professional Practice (APP) and the supporting evidence based research of “what works” in policing.

APP can be found at: <http://www.app.college.police.uk/>

1. Honour Based Abuse

This chapter provides an introduction to honour based abuse. It aims to provide you with key information to help you understand the complexities of incidents of honour based Abuse, warning signs and risk indicators, and assist you in understanding your responsibilities and the actions you should take as a first responder.

1.1 Definition

There is currently no statutory definition of Honour Based Abuse but the National Police Chiefs Council has defined it as;

“an incident or crime involving violence, threats of violence, intimidation, coercion or abuse (including psychological, physical, sexual, financial or emotional abuse) which has or may have been committed to protect or defend the honour of an individual, family and/or community for alleged or perceived breaches of the family and/or community’s code of behaviour”

NPCC (2015)

Honour Based Abuse (HBA) is a collection of practices which are used to control behaviour within families to protect their perceived cultural and religious beliefs and/or honour. The notion of honour has always existed within our societies. In the context of HBA these notions are framed within culture, religion or the need to preserve identity, they are used mainly as a vehicle for justifying mainly violence by men against women, children, and other men.

Honour based abuse is rooted in a patriarchal position which establishes clearly defined gender roles, and where women are viewed as objects or property, and as such they are expected to conform to a prescribed set of behaviours which are deemed appropriate. There is no honour in crimes of this nature; HBA is a fundamental abuse of an individual’s human rights. Violence such as murder, rape, and kidnap may be committed when perpetrators perceive that a relative has shamed them, their family, and their community by breaking their honour code. HBA can be distinguished from other types of violence as it is often committed with some level of approval and/or collusion from family and community members.

1.2 Prevalence of Honour Based Abuse

Women are predominantly, but not exclusively victims of honour based abuse, men can become victims when they are perceived to have brought a woman's reputation into disrepute. Women can also be perpetrators of HBA by inciting and assisting acts of violence against victims, they may be coerced into being involved by other family members, or they may perceive the honour code has been broken and they must take action to restore it. HBA cuts across all cultures, nationalities, faith groups, and communities.

Research suggests there are an estimated 3000 cases of honour based abuse in the UK each year.

1.3 Case Example: Shafilea Ahmed

Shafilea Ahmed was born in Bradford, West Yorkshire in July 1986; aged 17, she disappeared from her home on 11 September 2003. In the period leading up to her disappearance her parents had taken her to Pakistan for the purposes of arranging her marriage. During the trip Shafilea refused the suitor her parents presented and swallowed bleach in protest; badly scarring her throat in the process. Her parents denied attempts to pressure her into agreeing to the marriage.

Shafilea's school informed the police she was missing. A nationwide appeal yielded no results and the police began to suspect she had been murdered, possibly in an honour based abuse case due to her refusal of the arranged marriage. The police placed listening devices in the family home and consequently heard her parents tell her siblings "not to say anything" at school.

In February 2004 Shafilea's body which was badly decomposed, was discovered in the River Kent, near Sedgwick, Cumbria, 70 miles from her family home in Warrington. Due to the condition of her body the pathologist was unable to determine a cause of death. In January 2008, the coroner's inquest recorded a verdict of unlawful killing. Shafilea's parents attempted unsuccessfully to have this verdict overturned and replaced by an open verdict.

In August 2010, Shafilea's younger sister Alesha arranged a robbery to take place at her parents' home. She was arrested and during which time she disclosed that her parents had killed Shafilea. Alesha stated that after trying to force Shafilea to accept the arranged marriage they were afraid her refusal would bring shame on the family. Her father pushed Shafilea onto the settee and she heard her mother say "just finish it here"; her father

suffocated Shafilea. Afterwards Alesha saw her mother in the kitchen sorting through a pile of blankets and sheets and holding a roll of black bin bags and two rolls of tape. She then looked out of the window and saw her father leave with a large object wrapped in bin bags with brown tape around it. She then saw her father leaving in a car. Alesha and her siblings were told to say nothing to the authorities amid fear they would suffer the same fate as their sister.

Iftikar Ahmed, 51 and Farzana Ahmed 48, were arrested and subsequently found guilty of Shafilea's murder and were sentenced to life imprisonment with a minimum term of 25 years. The judge told them "Your concern about being shamed in your community was greater than the love of your child."

1.4 Forms of Honour Based Abuse

The following crimes could be committed when a perpetrator perceives a victim has broken their honour code:

- murder/attempted murder
- manslaughter
- rape
- sexual assault
- grievous bodily harm/wounding e.g. acid attacks
- actual bodily harm
- common assault
- threats to kill
- female genital mutilation
- procuring an abortion
- forced marriage
- affray
- threatening behaviour
- firearms offences

- harassment
- blackmail
- false imprisonment
- kidnapping
- criminal damage
- malicious communications
- witness intimidation
- obstructing the course of justice
- conspiracy to pervert the course of justice.

1.5 Catalysts for Honour Based Abuse

Something arbitrary or every day the victim does, may act as a catalyst for the perpetrator in HBA cases. Example triggers which may lead to HBA are:

- smoking in public
- inappropriate dress or make-up
- truanting
- a relationship not being approved of by family and/or community
- inter-faith relationships
- 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
- sexual conduct – talking, kissing, intimacy in a public place

- pregnancy outside of marriage
- rape
- being a reluctant immigration sponsor
- attempts to separate/divorce
- sexual orientation (including being gay, lesbian, bi-sexual, or transgender).

1.6 Warning Signs and High Risk Indicators

Signs a person is at risk of honour based abuse could be:

- truancy
- depression
- self-harm
- attempted suicide
- being subjected to unreasonable restrictions e.g. being kept at home by parents
- fear of forced marriage
- being pressured into going abroad
- cutting or shaving of a girl's hair
- disclosures that a girl has been taken to a doctor to be examined to see if she is a virgin.

1.7 First Responder Actions

When dealing with potential victims it is important to recognise the severity of the situation and the immediacy of the risk – remember the ‘one chance rule’ you may only have one chance to speak to a potential victim and therefore only one chance to save a life. By seeking assistance from the police the victim could be deemed to have brought further shame on themselves, their family, and their community. Victims may be anxious that you share this view, or that you will return them to their family, as such you need to speak to them alone, away from their family, listen to what they have to tell you, offer reassurance and take positive action to ensure their safety. If you believe a person is at risk of HBA you should escalate the incident to your line manager, who in turn will refer the incident to the Public Protection Specialist in your force. You should also carry out the following actions:

- complete appropriate checks
- submit an appropriate intelligence log
- complete relevant risk assessment and management plans
- complete a crime report, ensuring the incident is flagged in accordance with force procedures
- consider whether this could be a critical incident and respond accordingly.

1.8 Revision Questions

- What is the meaning of honour based abuse?
- What are the forms of honour based abuse?
- Why might people commit acts of honour based abuse?
- Who may perpetrate honour based abuse?
- Why is it important to speak to a victim of honour based abuse on their own?

2. Key Legislation

There is no key legislation for this topic.

3. E-learning

In addition to this book the following e-learning is available via the College of Policing Managed Learning Environment (MLE):

- The 'Public Protection Family Disturbance' e-learning includes definitions and common indicators in relation to female genital mutilation; honour based abuse and forced marriage. Using scenario based learning it covers how to identify, and manage cases and reports of honour based abuse and forced marriage.

The MLE is regularly updated with new learning programmes and materials.