



# Campaign Briefing

# Statutory Definition of Honour Based Abuse



## Our collective position

**As Expert VAWG Organisations, we call upon the government to introduce a statutory definition for Honour Based Abuse.**

## Support for Change

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The call for a statutory definition for Honour Based Abuse is called for by Survivors of Honour Based Abuse, and the Domestic Abuse Commissioner Nicole Jacobs. It is also supported by Honour Based Abuse Policing lead, Commander Ivan Balhatchet.

**Introducing a statutory definition is also one of the key recommendations from the Women and Equality Committee's inquiry into Honour Based Abuse in July 2023.**

## The Issues

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Honour Based Abuse remains a persistent challenge within the broader framework of Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG). Despite heightened awareness over the past three decades, progress in effectively addressing HBA has been hindered by a lack of clarity and specificity in defining the term within statutory frameworks.

Government approaches, as reflected in Home Office VAWG strategies, have narrowly focused on Forced Marriage and Female Genital Mutilation (FGM), inadvertently excluding a range of abusive behaviours that fall under the broader spectrum of HBA. This oversight not only undermines the effectiveness of interventions and responses to Honour Based Abuse but also excludes various forms of harm associated with Honour Based Abuse, leading to a lack of support for victims who experience abuse outside the contexts of FGM and Forced Marriage.

Additionally, media portrayals have perpetuated a limited narrative, emphasising "sensationalised" cases and contributing to a distorted public perception. This narrative, coupled with a lens that often distorts the issue through the prisms of race, culture, and religion, detracts attention from the fundamental roots of Honour Based Abuse in **heteronormative patriarchy**.

**A statutory definition for Honour Based Abuse is a critical starting point to begin addressing these issues.**



**“As someone who has faced Honour Based Abuse, it’s disheartening to know that we still don’t have a clear legal definition. If we genuinely want to put an end to this, we need to start by accurately defining it. It’s not just a matter of words; it’s about giving survivors the recognition and support they deserve, and that begins with acknowledging the problem for what it truly is.”**

**Survivor**

## “To improve understanding and responses to Honour Based Abuse – we must start by legally defining it”

### The Impact

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Statutory definitions play a vital role in providing precision, uniformity, and legal acknowledgment to critical matters. Establishing a statutory definition for Honour Based Abuse carries several implications:

#### 01 Better Identification through Shared Understanding

- **Consistent Interpretation:** A single, universally accepted definition creates a standard language for addressing Honour Based Abuse across diverse professional sectors.
- **Facilitating Collaboration:** Professionals working together, armed with the same definition, can effectively identify and address cases, ensuring a coordinated and cohesive response.
- **Enhanced Identification:** The shared understanding enables police officers, social workers, educators, and health professionals to collectively recognise and respond to Honour Based Abuse cases promptly and appropriately.

#### 02 Protection of Victims

- **Guidance for Practitioners:** A statutory definition, supported by statutory guidance, forms a robust framework for practitioners. This framework assists in safeguarding victims by establishing clear expectations and procedures for statutory practitioners. It provides practitioners with a practical tool to navigate Honour Based Abuse cases effectively.
- **Victim and Survivor Empowerment:** A clear statutory definition is a significant source of empowerment for victims and survivors of Honour Based Abuse. By validating their experiences and acknowledging the seriousness of the issue, it provides a recognised framework for seeking help, reinforcing the availability of support. This approach sends a powerful message that their voices matter.

### 03 Research and Data Collection

- **Evidence-Based Policymaking:** A statutory definition facilitates accurate data collection and research on Honour Based Abuse. This evidence is vital for policymakers in understanding the scope, patterns, and impact of Honour Based Abuse, leading to the development of effective interventions based on reliable information.
- **Consistent Reporting:** A statutory definition enables consistent reporting of Honour Based Abuse cases. This consistency is vital for accurate record-keeping, which, in turn, supports data collection and research efforts.

### 04 Appropriate Resource Allocation

- **Informed Decision-Making:** Having a statutory definition aids policymakers in making informed decisions about resource allocation. This ensures that the necessary resources, whether financial or human, are allocated appropriately to address the specific challenges posed by Honour Based Abuse.

In summary, **a shared statutory understanding of Honour Based Abuse is crucial for creating a unified approach across services.** This not only aids in better identification and responses to cases but also ensures that victims receive the **support and protection they need.** Additionally, it **provides a foundation for appropriate resource allocation and evidence-based policymaking** to address the complex issues associated with Honour Based Abuse.

## Call to Action

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### 01 Push for a Clear Definition for Honour Based Abuse - #Push4Change

- Advocate strongly for a clear, legal definition to deal with the complex issues of Honour Based Abuse.

### 02 Tell Everyone Why It Matters

- Share why having a unified approach is important for survivors and the sector. Utilise social media to spread the word about the urgent need for a clear legal definition. Campaign assets that can be found on [www.karmanirvana.org.uk](http://www.karmanirvana.org.uk)

### 03 Get Everyone on Board

- Gather support from key influencers, decision-makers, and the public. Ask your MP to support the #Push4Change campaign. Template letters can be [found here](#).

## Definitions

**Patriarchy:** is a system of relationships, beliefs, and values embedded in political, social, and economic systems that structure gender inequality between men and women. Attributes seen as 'feminine' or pertaining to women are undervalued, while attributes regarded as 'masculine' or pertaining to men are privileged. Patriarchal relations structure both the private and public spheres, ensuring that men dominate both.

**Heteronormativity:** refers to the positioning of heterosexuality (a cisgender female in relationship with a cisgender male) as the normal and 'natural' sexual orientation, with any other form of sexual desire, expression, or relationship being considered 'abnormal' or 'wrong.' It is underpinned by binary notions about gender and gender roles that shape ideas about acceptable behaviours and social expectations.