

New laws to protect victims of 'honour'-based abuse

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Government takes decisive action by rapidly introducing a new legal definition for 'honour'-based abuse.

Victims and survivors of 'honour'-based abuse will be kept safer through a new legal definition and guidance to help improve how frontline professionals support victims and pursue perpetrators.

Recent statistics show that nearly 3,000 'honour'-based abuse related offences were recorded by the police in England and Wales in the year ending March 2025. However, due to the hidden nature of 'honour'-based abuse, this is likely to be just the tip of the iceberg, as it is believed many of these harrowing incidents and crimes go unreported.

A legal definition of 'honour'-based abuse has been brought into the government's flagship Crime and Policing Bill. Alongside a power to issue crucial statutory guidance for authorities, the new legal definition will help the police, social workers and other public authorities better support victims, and set clear expectations for professionals with safeguarding responsibilities in the handling of these cases.

It will also help stop vital information, which could hold perpetrators to account in a criminal trial, from falling through the cracks.

The move is supported by over 60 charities, including Karma Nirvana, which has campaigned for these reforms since the tragic murder of Fawziyah Javed in 2021.

Fawziyah, from Leeds and pregnant at the time, was brutally killed when her husband pushed her from Arthur's Seat, in a case that showcased how harmful ideas of perceived 'dishonour' can lead to tragedy.

Fawziyah experienced domestic abuse which was compounded by 'honour'-based abuse in the lead-up to her death, highlighting the need to improve the way that statutory systems recognise this form of abuse.

Minister for Safeguarding and Violence Against Women and Girls, Jess Phillips, said:

There is no honour in 'honour'-based abuse.

For too long, these devastating crimes have often been misunderstood and victims badly let down.

Now we are tackling these crimes head on and bringing them out of the shadows. Introducing a new definition and important guidance into law will ensure professionals will work together to ensure more victims are protected and more perpetrators face justice.

'Honour'-based abuse can include 'honour'-motivated killings, female genital mutilation (FGM), and

forced marriage, all which are crimes that often take place in deep secrecy.

The definition, alongside a power to issue statutory guidance, has been introduced via an amendment at Report stage of the Crime and Policing Bill in the House of Lords, making both measures law across England and Wales.

The bill aims to restore public confidence in the criminal justice system and drive forward the government's highly ambitious missions to halve both knife crime and violence against women and girls within the next decade.

Executive Director of Karma Nirvana, Natasha Rattu, said:

Karma Nirvana welcomes the tabling of an amendment to introduce a statutory definition of honour-based abuse. For too long, the absence of a clear legal definition has contributed to inconsistency in recognition and response, leaving victims at risk and perpetrators unchallenged.

A statutory definition is a vital step towards ensuring that police, prosecutors, health professionals and social care services can identify abuse earlier and respond more effectively.

We are pleased to see this commitment being progressed and will be carefully watching as it moves through Parliament to ensure it delivers meaningful protection for those at risk.

In addition, the Home Office is exploring the feasibility of a prevalence study for forced marriage and FGM, first announced in August, to better understand how widespread these crimes are, alongside a community engagement campaign encouraging victims to come forward.

These initiatives will help uncover the true scale of the abuse, ensure more victims receive the support they deserve, and bring the most dangerous offenders to justice.

The measures follow the publication of the VAWG Strategy in December, which unveils how every lever of the state is to be used to protect women and girls and halve VAWG crimes in a decade.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/new-laws-to-protect-victims-of-honour-based-abuse>