

HONOUR BASED VIOLENCE May 2011

1. Introduction

1.1 Honour based violence is the term used to describe murders in the name of so-called honour, sometimes called 'honour killings'. These are murders in which predominantly women are killed for perceived immoral behaviour, which is deemed to have breached the honour code of a family or community, causing shame.

1.2 The Police definition of so-called honour based violence is: 'a crime or incident, which has or may been committed to protect or defend the honour of the family and/or community'.

1.3 Professionals should respond in a similar way to cases of honour violence as with domestic violence and forced marriage (i.e. in facilitating disclosure, developing individual safety plans, ensuring the child's safety by according them confidentiality in relation to the rest of the family, completing individual risk assessments etc). See BSCB procedures for Domestic violence and Forced marriage.

1.4 Victims from black or ethnic minority groups, where the violence is perpetrated by extended family members or relate to forced marriage issues, may be more isolated due to religious and/or cultural pressures, language barriers, having no recourse to public funds or fear of bringing shame to their 'family honour'.

Procedures

These procedures should be read in conjunction with BSCB procedures for Domestic Violence, and where appropriate, BSCB procedures for Forced Marriage.

2. Recognition

2.1 A child who is at risk of honour based violence is at significant risk of physical harm (including being murdered) and/or neglect, and may also suffer significant emotional harm through the threat of violence or witnessing violence directed towards a sibling or other family member.

2.2 Honour based violence cuts across all cultures and communities, and cases encountered in the UK have involved families from Turkish, Kurdish, Afghani, South Asian, African, Middle Eastern, South and Eastern European communities. This is not an exhaustive list.

2.3 The perceived immoral behaviour which could precipitate a murder include:

- Inappropriate make-up or dress;
- The existence of a boyfriend;
- Kissing or intimacy in a public place;
- Rejecting a forced marriage;
- Pregnancy outside of marriage;

- Being a victim of rape;
- Inter-faith relationships;
- Leaving a spouse or seeking divorce.

2.4 Murders in the name of 'so-called honour' are often the culmination of a series of events over a period of time and are planned. There tends to be a degree of premeditation, family conspiracy and a belief that the victim deserved to die.

2.5 Incidents, in addition to those listed above, which may precede a murder include:

- Physical abuse;
- Emotional abuse, including:
 - house arrest and excessive restrictions
 - denial of access to the telephone, internet, passport and friends
 - threats to kill
- Pressure to go abroad. Victims are sometimes persuaded to return to their country of origin under false pretences, when in fact the intention could be to kill them.

2.6 Children sometimes truant from school to obtain relief from being policed at home by relatives. They can feel isolated from their family and social networks and become depressed, which can on some occasions lead to self-harm or suicide.

2.7 Families may feel shame long after the incident that brought about dishonour occurred, and therefore the risk of harm to a child can persist. This means that the young person's new boy/girlfriend, baby (if pregnancy caused the family to feel 'shame'), associates or siblings may be at risk of harm.

3. Disclosure and response

3.1 When receiving a disclosure from a child, professionals should recognise the seriousness / immediacy of the risk of harm.

3.2 For a child to report to any agency that they have fears of honour based violence in respect of themselves or a family member requires a lot of courage, and trust that the professional / agency they disclose to will respond appropriately. Specifically, under no circumstances should the agency allow the child's family or social network to find out about the disclosure, so as not to put the child at further risk of harm.

3.3 Authorities in some countries may support the practice of honour-based violence, and the child may be concerned that other agencies share this view, or that they will be returned to their family. The child may be carrying guilt about their rejection of cultural / family expectations. Furthermore, their immigration status may be dependent on their family, which could be used to dissuade them from seeking assistance.

3.4 Where there is a disclosure of suspicion of honour based violence, staff in all agencies/organisations should respond immediately by referring to Social Care Referral and Assessment Teams, or where there is imminent risk, directly to the Police.

3.5 Referring agencies should make an assessment of risk of harm using a dedicated assessment tool e.g. DASH (<http://www.caada.org.uk/>)

3.6 The Social Care and Police response should include:

- Seeing the child immediately in a secure and private place;

- Seeing the child on their own;
- Explaining to the child the limits of confidentiality;
- Asking direct questions to gather enough information to make a referral to LA children's social care and the police, including recording the child's wishes;
- Encouraging and/or helping the child to complete a personal risk assessment
- Developing an emergency safety plan with the child;
- Agreeing a means of discreet future contact with the child;
- Explaining that a referral to LA children's social care and the police will be made (see section 6. Referral and assessment);
- Record all discussions and decisions (including rationale if no decision is made to refer to LA children's social care).

3.7 Professionals should not approach the family or community leaders, share any information with them or attempt any form of mediation. In particular, members of the local community should not be used as interpreters.

3.8 All multi-agency discussions should recognise the police responsibility to initiate and undertake a criminal investigation as appropriate.

3.9 Multi-agency planning should consider the need for providing suitable safe accommodation for the child, as appropriate.

3.10 If a child is taken abroad, the Foreign and Commonwealth Office may assist in repatriating them to the UK. See also section 5.48 Accessing information from abroad.