

Advice note for investigators

This page is from APP, the official source of professional practice for policing.

First published 12 August 2025

This advice note has been developed to provide advice to investigators who are investigating 'honour'-based abuse (HBA) cases.

Due to the nature of the abuse, there are some nuances which are unique to HBA. The content of this section has been designed to assist investigators with these differences and considerations.

For the purposes of this advice note, investigators include:

- police constables
- trainee or substantive detective constables
- civilian investigators

The following documents should be read as a prerequisite or in conjunction with this advice note.

- [HBA background advice note](#)
- [HBA advice note for first responders](#)
- [Vulnerability-related risk guidelines](#)
- [Investigation authorised professional practice \(APP\)](#)
- [Victims and witnesses APP](#)
- [Risk principles APP](#)

Investigative strategy

Investigators should understand the different factors which can affect or feature in an HBA [investigation](#). These can include the following.

Arrest

An arrest at the earliest opportunity should be considered in the interest of safeguarding and securing evidence for the [motivation](#) of the offences. Failing to secure evidence at an early stage may prevent opportunities for an [evidence-led](#) prosecution.

Investigators should ensure that decisions regarding the timing of an arrest are balanced with any risks identified. This will require careful communication with the victim, ensuring safety plans are put in place. Decision logs or information management documents will be required to document and justify any decisions. For further information go to [family dynamics](#).

Safe means of contact

Investigators should consider the victim's safety at every stage of the investigation.

At the earliest opportunity, investigators should confirm the preferred safest means of contact with the victim (and anyone else at risk) and a preferred single point of contact (SPoC).

Investigators should share SPoC contact details with the [Crown Prosecution Service](#) (CPS) and the [Victim Witness Care Unit](#) so it is clear who is responsible for communicating with the victim and for recording any actions.

Investigators should consider alternative contact provisions for victims who may have difficulty accessing technology. This could include arranging a meeting at a school or a friend's address through an individual trusted by the victim.

When investigators need to contact the victim, 'safe' words or phrases should be agreed if not done already between the two parties to ensure the:

- investigator is speaking to the victim
- suspect(s) is not in close proximity to the victim or in earshot of the communication taking place
- victim can seek help if needed

Collusion

Collusion by its nature can increase the risk to victims, as well as significantly impede an HBA investigation. Unlike other crimes where the victim's family and friends are likely to want to assist with enquiries, investigators may encounter individuals who are not willing to liaise or choose to deviate from the truth following coercion from other family or community members.

Investigators should not accept admissions at face value and should explore all lines of enquiry, especially where collusion is suspected. In an effort to reduce their own culpability, [suspects](#) may

engage with younger family members to take responsibility for offences or present a claimed sense of duty to the family as mitigation.

When it is suspected that collusion is taking place, investigators should:

- not use local interpreters or interpreters who are not on an approved list and be mindful that they may have links to the victim or suspects
- not appoint local influential individuals as interpreters?
- check that there are no concerns from the victim about the interpreter
- check with the victim whether any family or known community members work in organisations that the victim uses, for example local health care settings
- ensure information relating to the victim is shared through confidential lines
- be aware that conducting lines of enquiry may involve services or organisations that could be colluding with the suspects and explore alternative routes for conducting the original lines of enquiry
- be alert to misinformation being fed into the investigation by family or wider community members

Family dynamics

Investigators should conduct enquiries to establish where the 'power' and freedom of choice exists in family relationships. This could identify possible **motivational** factors and the presence of HBA.

This can include looking at who is working, earning, managing finances, in education, language proficiency and whether immigration or citizenship status has been secured. This information could come from:

- bank statements
- payslips
- immigration documents
- school attendance
- securing digital devices where the above material could be found

Suspects

To help identify possible suspects and establish lines of enquiry, investigators should:

- create a genogram of family members, relatives and friends

- identify social, religious and cultural practices which have affected the victim(s)
- conduct thorough checks on police intelligence and information databases, for example Police National Computer (PNC), Police National Database (PND), violent and sex offender register (ViSOR) and ACRO Criminal Records Office (ACRO) where suspects have significant links with another country. For example, if they have previously lived abroad, have a second home, close family or business ties there, or are a foreign or dual national
- make sure suspects' and victims' names are spelt accurately for intelligence recording purposes and that nicknames or alternative names are recorded
- make sure suspects' and victims' dates of birth are recorded
- consider if there are any variations of the spelling of the suspect's name during intelligence searches
- use their professional curiosity to enquire into the behaviour and background of the suspect, especially when there is no previous history of abuse and it is suspected an 'honour code' exists. Seeking information from partner agencies will help build a more comprehensive picture.

Although HBA is predominantly patriarchal in nature, investigators should not assume it will only be male members of a family or community who will be suspects in an investigation. Female members can also be suspects of HBA by inciting, assisting or carrying out acts of abuse against victims.

Victim's account

During an investigation, victims may report behaviour which amounts to offences such as common assault or battery.

However, they may also disclose patterns of behaviour which could be indicative of more serious offences, such as:

- coercive or controlling behaviour
- stalking or harassment
- forced marriage
- slavery or servitude
- sexual offences
- false imprisonment
- female genital mutilation (FGM)

Investigators should build a detailed case file to support the CPS and present a clear account to the court. When planning the suspect interview, investigators should fully understand the victim's account and aim to draw out evidence of motivation and offence details.

Investigators should ensure case files include information about:

- motivation for the offending and behaviours perpetrated against the victim
- the **vulnerabilities** of the victim and the impact of the abuse on them
- the context of the circumstances surrounding the case

Code of practice for victims and special measures

During an investigation, investigators should explain the different rights HBA victims are entitled to and the special measures they may be eligible to apply for. These can improve victims' trust and confidence in the police and the wider criminal justice system, especially as HBA victims may be reluctant to engage.

The **Code of Practice for Victims of Crime in England and Wales** sets out the services and minimum standard for these services that must be provided to victims of crime by organisations (referred to as service providers) in England and Wales.

These include:

- requesting to be interviewed by an officer of the sex of their choice
- being supported by a specialist service during the investigation and court proceedings
- agreeing safe ways to provide regular updates on the investigation
- the right to make a **victim personal statement** which can be read in court on behalf of the victim or by the victim
- referral to a support service for further assistance

During an investigation, investigators should also discuss the special measures victims may be entitled to apply for under the **Youth Justice and Criminal Evidence Act 1999**. Special measures include:

- being offered a video recorded interview
- giving evidence from behind screens or via link
- being supported by a registered intermediary if appropriate

HBA is not an offence in itself. Victims of some offences committed as part of HBA will be classed as vulnerable or intimidated and will trigger the automatic right to apply for special measures under the **Youth Justice and Criminal Evidence Act 1999**. Many, but not all, offences committed as part of HBA will trigger the automatic right.

Go to [working with victims and witnesses](#) for more information.

Charging and case preparation

Investigators should seek advice from the **CPS** early in investigations for HBA cases. Specialist advice can be sought from the **Complex Case Unit** in more complex cases where there are multiple victims and suspects.

Investigators should consider an **evidence-led** prosecution when the victim does not support a criminal prosecution, but the criteria for charge has been met. This will help to safeguard the victim and hold the suspect accountable through the criminal justice system.

Victim care, support and safeguarding

Investigators should recognise that their response and interaction with victims can build, or undermine, trust and confidence.

Investigators should also understand the personal beliefs and cultural barriers victims may have had to overcome before contacting the police. Find out more in 'honour'-based abuse [background advice note](#).

Investigators should:

- be empathetic in their approach
- not be afraid to be professionally curious and ask questions about the victim's family beliefs, heritage, religion and culture (go to 'honour'-based abuse [background advice note](#) for more information)
- not allow assumptions or misconceptions about victims or perpetrators of 'honour'-based abuse (HBA) to affect a thorough [investigation](#)
- listen to the victim and reassure them they will be taken seriously
- obtain biometrics, for example photographs, fingerprints, DNA sample for inclusion on the vulnerable person's DNA database. This should be taken with consent from the victim (providing

they understand why it is being requested) or from a trusted parent or guardian

- not attempt mediation or counselling with family, community members or religious leaders, or arbitrate through religious courts or tribunals
- assess the risk to the victim by gathering information from the victim or other sources, for example intelligence databases, partner agencies. Go to [**Annex B – Risk assessment tools**](#)
- assure the victim that they will do what is in their power to protect them and discuss appropriate and proportionate options. Be mindful that these options may need to be revisited if circumstances change. Go to [**Public Protection Tactical Menu of Options**](#) (you will need to login to College Learn)
- [**share information**](#) with partner agencies appropriately and seek consent from victims where necessary
- consider completing a pre-emptive statement using a visually recorded interview about:
 - the victim's concerns
 - who is likely to cause them harm, and, in the event of their disappearance, where they are likely to be
- conduct a needs-based assessment under the [**Victims' Code**](#) regarding their health, safety, support and communication requirements

Ongoing support

It is not uncommon for victims to approach the police and then decide not to pursue their complaint any further. When this occurs, police officers and staff should provide the victim with contact details for their force and other [**specialist support services**](#). This will assure them that they will be supported and listened to regardless of whether they feel ready to disclose or engage any further with the police.

A victim's reluctance to engage should not stop safeguarding activity from being carried out and efforts should still be made to build trust and confidence with them.

Investigators should not routinely refer HBA victims who have uncertain or insecure immigration status to immigration enforcement. For more information, go to [**immigration offences**](#). Where a victim of HBA is a member of staff, force welfare leads should be contacted for additional support.

Lack of capacity and age of victims

Where it has been identified that a victim lacks mental capacity (find out more in [adults at risk](#)), under [section 42 of the Care Act 2014](#), investigators must work with partner agencies to ensure a 'wraparound' service is provided to them. This should involve adult social care and mental health services.

Many victims of HBA will be under the age of 18 years, which requires compliance with statutory obligations under [section 11 of the Children Act 2004](#). When complying with [statutory multiagency safeguarding](#), safe referral routes should be used when sharing information (find out more in [collusion](#)).

Investigators must engage with children's social care whenever a child is a risk, which includes lack of capacity.

Partnership working

All police officers and staff must consider statutory safeguarding duties when the victim or potential victim is under 18 years old (go to [Child abuse APP](#)), or is an adult in need of care and support (go to [adults at risk](#)).

You can find more information in:

- [HM Government. \(2023\). Working together to safeguard children 2023: statutory guidance](#)
- [section 42 of the Care Act 2014](#)

Where appropriate to do so, investigators should share information about the risk to the victim and wider family network in strategy discussions with partner agencies to ensure effective safeguarding measures can be put in place.

Multi-agency risk assessment conferences (MARAC) will likely be the most appropriate panel of local practitioners to refer cases for discussion which don't fall within statutory requirements.

Go to:

- [Partnership working](#)
- [Multi-agency responses/mechanisms](#)

Risk management

Robust risk management activity will be required in cases assessed as high risk, using tactical options required to protect the safety of the victim. Risk management plans should be developed, recorded and regularly monitored for compliance (go to [Annex B – Risk assessment tools](#)).

Investigators should:

- make any conditions or prohibitions clear to the suspect
- consider the risk from multiple suspects
- consider if there are multiple victims who need safeguarding from the suspect(s)

Risk is dynamic and will change throughout the investigation and prosecution. For example, release on bail will require the risk to be reassessed.

Investigators should ensure the tactical options for risk management are proportionate to the risks identified. Investigators should also consider relevant protection orders as part of an effective risk management plan.

You can find out more information in:

- [Public Protection Tactical Menu of Options](#) (you will need to log in to College Learn)
- [National operating model for rape and serious sexual offences disruption toolkit](#) (you will need to sign in to the national operating model)
- [Annex C – Civil, protective orders and legislation](#)

Places of safety

Powers exist under [section 46 of the Children Act 1989](#) for police to remove children to places of safety when they identify a significant risk of harm to a child.

When an assessment has been made to either remove or relocate an adult victim or child to a place of safety, investigators should:

- balance any decisions against the needs and wishes of the victim
- place the victim away from the locality of existing family and community members and networks
- work with the victim to ensure that any settings, application programmes or tracking devices that suspects may have set up or installed to track the victim's movements and locations have been identified and removed

- work with the victim to ensure the following are changed or deactivated:
 - passwords for digital devices
 - billing addresses
 - social networking sites/profiles
 - account details for bank accounts, [HM Revenue and Customs](#), [Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency](#) and [Department for Work and Pensions](#) (DWP) for example
- advise victims to keep new passwords and information confidential
- ensure victims are ready for emergency relocation by keeping important personal belongings and documents safe and inaccessible to suspects. These can include passports, birth certificates, immigration papers, clothing and money
- ensure that important information about the victim and any known or suspected risks are passed to the 'receiving force'

Investigators should contact the [forced marriage unit](#) for advice on placements.

Suspect considerations

[Suspects](#) can still pose a risk to victims after they have been relocated or removed to a place of safety. To help manage this risk, investigators should:

- consider immediate arrest of the suspects
- consider applying for a [protective order](#)
- place flags on national databases to alert other forces that the suspect, in an attempt to locate the victim, may report them as missing
- where suspects have links to organisations or services the victim uses, ensure information which could identify the victim's location is shared through confidential lines
- consider what details/unique identifiers can be changed or removed from national systems, for example [DWP](#) or the electoral register, which will help prevent the suspect from locating the victim
- contact the [Protected Persons Unit](#) (previously known as the witness protection scheme) to enhance the level of protection needed to safeguard the victim

Risk of victim being taken abroad

If an investigator suspects a 'honour'-based abuse (HBA) victim might be taken abroad, the following safeguarding tactics should be considered.

- Safe words, phrases, a cover story or a contact number to enable safe contact to be made with the victim
- Obtain biometrics, a recent photograph and/or other forms of identification of the victim and enter them on the vulnerable victims' database on the police national computer (PNC)
- Secure the victim's passport to avoid theft by family members. Investigators should be mindful that the victim could have more than one passport because of dual nationality
- Create a PNC2 Locate/Trace entry on the PNC to prevent victims being moved out of the UK
- Alert national ports through alert systems such as 'Watchlist'
- Flag alerts on automatic number plate recognition (ANPR) for relevant vehicles used by suspects and victim
- Civil and criminal orders to support the safeguarding of the victim. For more information on protective orders, go to [**Annex C – Civil, protective orders and legislation**](#)
- Compliance with the [**Government statutory advice for forced marriage**](#)
- Safe referrals through trusted links into local multiagency panels, which could include [**MARAC**](#) and child protection conferences to discuss how partner agencies might help with safeguarding
- Check the victim has the contact details of the [**British High Commission**](#) in the event they are taken abroad
- Contact the joint [**Home Office**](#) and [**Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office Forced Marriage Unit**](#) (FMU) for advice (go to [**GOV.UK guidance on forced marriage**](#) for more information)

Reviewing risk

Investigators should regularly review the risk to HBA victims, particularly when circumstances change. For example, if the suspect is released on bail, investigators should actively manage flags, restrictions or orders that have been placed on force and national systems to check whether they:

- are still applicable to the victim's circumstances
- are proportionate to the risk posed to the victim
- have expired
- need extending

Investigators should also encourage victims to contact them if there has been a change to their risk or circumstances.

Civil and criminal orders

Investigators should also consider using civil and criminal orders to help manage the risk to HBA victims. These can be applied pre-charge, post-charge, on conviction or acquittal. Investigators should include requests for orders in the case file when cases are being prepared for court. For more information, go to [Annex B – Risk assessment tools](#).

When a suspect **breaches** an order, investigators must enforce a robust response and manage the risk accordingly.

Annex A – Specialist support services

Specialist support services include the following.

- [Ashiana](#)
- [Forced Marriage Unit](#) at the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office provides specific services in relation to cases of forced marriage
- [Freedom charity](#)
- [IKWRO](#)
- [Imkaan](#)
- [Independent domestic violence advisers](#)
- [Karma Nirvana](#)
- [National FGM Centre](#)
- [Operation Encompass](#)
- [Refuge](#)
- [Respond](#)
- [Savera UK](#)
- [Southall Black Sisters](#)
- [The Halo Project](#)

Annex B – Risk assessment tools

There are no nationally evaluated evidence-based risk assessment tools for 'honour'-based abuse (HBA).

The following list provides examples of risk assessment and safeguarding tools which are being used in practice by police forces nationally. It is important to note that it's unlikely a single framework will help to identify all risks because circumstances will vary for different events.

- Domestic abuse, stalking, harassment (DASH) HBA – the DASH is a multi-agency tool used by police and non-police agencies to help identify and assess victims of domestic abuse, stalking, harassment and 'honour'-based abuse. Investigators can use the [**DASH HBA risk questions**](#) as a supplementary document to the DASH risk assessment.
- [**Domestic abuse risk assessment \(DARA\)**](#) – evaluated by the College of Policing and an approved tool for frontline officers identifying and assessing risk in domestic abuse cases.
- [**Domestic abuse, stalking, harassment and honour-based violence assessment \(DASH\)**](#) – multi-agency NPCC tool for assessing risk in domestic abuse cases.
- [**Karma Nirvana**](#) – this specialist charitable organisation has produced an HBA risk tool for use by forces.
- [**Threat, harm, risk, investigation, vulnerability and engagement \(THRIVE\)**](#) – to identify the vulnerability of victims, assess the risk of harm and take action to safeguard.

Annex C – Civil, protective orders and legislation

There are different types of protective orders and legislation which investigators can use to help safeguard 'honour'-based abuse (HBA) victims as part of the suspect(s) risk management plan. Investigators should be mindful of the possible increase in risk to the victim by applying for the protective orders.

Investigators should regularly review and manage the use of these orders to ensure they are proportionate to the victim's situation. Orders should be fully recorded on local and national systems to enable effective monitoring. A robust response to any breach will be required.

Failure to regularly manage and review orders can have a detrimental impact on a victim's quality of life. This is particularly relevant to orders where restrictions have been placed on the victim's ability to travel.

Forced marriage protection order (FMPO)

Investigators can apply for an [**FMPO**](#) alongside any investigation or other criminal proceedings if:

- a victim is being forced into a marriage
- a victim is already in a forced marriage
- there have been previous attempts to arrange a forced marriage

The court can make an order in an emergency so that protection is in place as soon as possible. Legally binding conditions and directions that change the behaviour of a person or persons trying to force someone into marriage will be part of the order.

Breaching an FMPO is a criminal offence with a maximum sentence of five years' imprisonment.

Female genital mutilation protection order (FGMPO)

Investigators can make an application to the family court for an **FGMPO** to safeguard a girl or woman:

- who is at risk of FGM
- if an FGM offence has been committed

A court can also make an order:

- independently, without an application being made to it during other family proceedings or in the course of criminal proceedings for an **FGM** offence
- which prohibits, restricts, requires or includes any such other terms as it considers appropriate to stop or change the behaviour or conduct of those who would seek to subject a girl to FGM or have already arranged for, or committed, FGM

The court must take account of all the circumstances of the case, including the need to secure the health, safety and wellbeing of the potential or actual victim.

For more information go to:

- [Guidance on female genital mutilation](#)
- [Virginity testing and hymenoplasty](#)

Domestic violence protection order (DVPO)

Superintendents or above can issue a domestic violence protection notice (DVPN) to help safeguard an HBA victim and put protective measures in place immediately after a domestic abuse

incident. Where a DVPN has been issued, an officer can apply to the magistrates' court for a domestic violence protection order (DVPO) within 48 hours of the DVPN being issued.

A court may make a DVPO if it is satisfied on the balance of probabilities that a suspect has been violent towards, or threatened violence towards the victim, and the court thinks that making the DVPO is necessary to protect the associated person from violence or a threat of violence from the suspect.

Investigators can also use bail conditions and protective measures simultaneously to maximise the level of protection an HBA victim can have.

- [Go to the Domestic Violence, Crime and Victims Act 2004](#)

Stalking protection order (SPO)

Investigators can apply for an [SPO](#) at any point during the criminal justice process to address stalking behaviours before they escalate in severity and to protect victims from more serious harm.? Investigators can also apply for an SPO following conviction or acquittal.?Applications for an SPO are freestanding and the courts have powers to consider and make the order at any stage.

Sexual risk order (SRO)

Investigators can apply for an [SRO](#) against an individual who has committed a sexual act and it is reasonably believed they pose a risk of harm to the public. This includes children and vulnerable adults abroad. This civil order helps to manage the risk of harm by imposing restrictions and placing positive obligations on an individual.

- [For more information, go to the Sexual Offences Act 2003](#)

Tags

Forced marriage and honour based abuse Victim care