



Understanding and Responding to Disclosures of Domestic Abuse by Migrant Victims

Definitions

Domestic abuse

'Any incident or patterns of incidents of controlling, coercive, threatening behaviour, violence or abuse between those aged 16 or over who are, or have been, intimate partners or family members regardless of gender or sexuality.'

Domestic abuse can affect anyone, from any background and at any age. It occurs in a range of relationships, including with an intimate partner, a child, a sibling, an ex-partner, a casual partner or a family member. It can happen at any point in a relationship, whether you live with the person or not. Domestic abuse isn't always physical- any type of threatening, controlling or coercive behaviour is abuse whether it's physical, psychological, sexual, economic or emotional.

Honour based Abuse:

'A collective and planned crime or incident, mainly perpetrated against women and girls, by their family or their community, who act to defend their perceived honour, because they believe that the victim(s) have done something to bring shame to the family or the community.' (IKWRO definition)

Honour based abuse is 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.

Harmful Practices:

'Harmful practices' refers to a number of regular or customary practices and behaviours that cause harm. These arise from deep-seated inequalities and discriminatory beliefs due to a person's sex or gender, race or ethnicity, age, religion or immigration status and other grounds which can be multiple and/or intersecting. They can be due to cultural and religious tradition, the attainment or maintenance of power/control, or learned social behaviours. Victims/survivors can be of all ages and genders, however the majority are women and girls, and these practices can cause physical, sexual and/or psychological harm.'

'Harmful practices' is an umbrella term for many practices that take place as a result of belief systems. There are many different practices worldwide, examples include child marriage, forced marriage, female genital mutilation, breast flattening, child abuse linked to faith or belief and so-called 'honour'-based abuse.

Handling and Responding to Disclosures

Handling disclosures of domestic abuse by migrant victims requires sensitivity, cultural awareness, and some legal understanding. These survivors often face heightened vulnerabilities such as immigration insecurity, language barriers, and fear of deportation that make disclosure especially difficult.

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What to Do When a Disclosure Happens?

Ensure Safety First

- Speak in a private, secure space—never in front of others, especially family or community members.
- If on the phone, ask if they're safe to speak and agree on a safe word or time for follow-up if needed.

Use Trauma-Informed Language

- Reassure them (but do not promise solutions)
- Avoid judgment or disbelief. Many migrant survivors fear they won't be taken seriously.
- Avoid assumptions based on culture or religion

Check for Communication Needs

- Offer an interpreter in their preferred language, ideally of the same gender
- Be mindful of disability or literacy needs that may affect understanding

Understand Immigration-Linked Risks

- Survivors may be on spousal visas, have no recourse to public funds, or fear deportation.
- Refer them to legal support

Maintain Confidentiality and Consent

- Explain what information will be shared and why
- Avoid contacting immigration enforcement unless legally required and with informed consent

Always complete a Safety Plan!

Risk assessing

The DASH Risk Checklist is a useful starting point but not sufficient on its own for assessing HBA or harmful practices. It needs to be supplemented with specialist training, contextual understanding, and an understanding of structural and cultural nuances of honour-based abuse and harmful practices. It is designed to assess immediate risk, particularly of serious harm or homicide, but it struggles to reflect the ongoing, evolving nature of abuse that many women experience.

Further considerations needed:

- Immigration
- Honour based abuse
 - Pre marriage/Forced Marriage
 - Post Marriage
- Mental Health
- Family Mediation
- Community Role
- Transnational Elements
- Faith

<p>High risk indicators DV:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Victim's Fear Separation Pregnancy or Recent Birth Escalation/ Increasing Frequency or Severity Community Isolation Stalking Behaviors Sexual Assault Strangulation or Suffocation Credible Threats to Kill Use of Weapons Controlling or Jealous Behavior Substance Misuse Mental Health Issues Criminal History Suicide Threats or Attempts 	<p>High risk indicators of HBA:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Victim's Fear of Harm or Death Multiple Perpetrators Recent Perceived Breach of 'Honour' Code Threats of Forced Marriage or Actual Attempts Isolation from Support Networks Surveillance and Monitoring Previous Honour-Based Abuse in Family Victim Has Left or Is Planning to Leave Immigration or Residency Vulnerability Community Pressure or 'Gossip' Perpetrator Has Access to Weapons Previous History of Violence or Abuse Mental Health or Substance Abuse in Perpetrators Victim Has Been Taken Abroad or Plans Exist to do so Victim Has Disclosed Abuse But Was Not Believed
<p>Safeguarding and safety planning</p>	
<p>If someone is in immediate danger, call 999.</p> <p>If you are concerned that a child may be at risk you need to make a report to the MASH (Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub) / Children's Social Care or the equivalent in your area.</p>	<p>If you talk to a child or an adult about domestic abuse, please bear in mind the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Find a private space • Use independent translators (if needed) • Avoid judgemental language • Maintain a record of your conversation • Don't promise not to share information <p>*NB. Never approach the family</p>
<p>A tailored Safety Plan must include:</p> <p>Personal Details</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Survivor's name, nationality, immigration status • Languages spoken / interpreter needed • Child's name, age, any care needs or disabilities if necessary • Emergency contacts (trusted individuals, professionals) <p>Pre-Escape Planning</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify safe spaces in the home • Digital and online safety • Teach child adapted emergency signals if the age is appropriate • Prepare a ready to leave bag with: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -IDs, passports, medical/disability records -Medications, assistance devices, comfort items 	

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- Emergency cash and contact list
- Communication
 - Use code words with trusted contacts
 - Connect with specialist advice
- Disability Support
 - Liaise with medical teams/GP
 - Keep medical records and documents
 - Ensure access to mobility aids or communication tools

Post-Escape Planning

- Housing or safe accommodation that considers family needs
- Digital and online safety
- Legal & immigration advice
- Multi-agency support
 - Social services
 - Domestic abuse advocates
 - By & for organisations
 - Disability rights organisations
- Peer support groups
- Explore education/employment pathways

[Safety-Planning-Feb11.pdf](#)
[Honour Based Violence \(HBV\)](#)

Tailored plans are needed for forced marriage and transnational marriage abandonment cases!

Tips for Professionals

- Inform (adult) victim of your concerns and requirements for a referral
- Identify the victim's details, including religious, ethnic and nationality background, preferred language and specific needs
- Details of the perpetrators
- Immediate concerns/risk and specific details of the abuse - Who? What? Where? When? How?
- Inform the victim and agencies of the actions that have been taken
- Safety plan

Always follow up a safeguarding referral !

Support Services

• Immigration Advice

Law Centres Network - 020 3637 1330

[Law Centres Network](#)

Migrant Rights Network - 07534 488696

[Home - Migrants' Rights Network \(migrantsrights.org.uk\)](#)

AIRE Center (EU rights) - 020 7831 4276

[The AIRE Centre](#)

Public Interest Law Centre - 0203 559 6342

[Public Interest Law Centre • Public Law • Human Rights • Legal Action](#)

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Website: www.sundialcentre.org

Rights of Women - 020 7251 6575

[Home | Rights of Women](#)

Refugee Council - 020 7346 6700

[Homepage - Refugee Council](#)

Migrant Help - 01304 203977

[Migrant Help \(migranthelpuk.org\)](#)

Muslim Women's Network - 0800 999 5786

[Muslim Women Network \(mwnuk.co.uk\)](#)

Safety for Sisters - 0161 464 9505

[Safety4Sisters](#)

Southall Black Sisters - 020 8571 0800

[SBS No Recourse Fund - Southall Black Sisters](#)

Latin American Women's Rights Service - 0808 145 4909

[LAWRS - Latin American Women's Rights Service](#)

Joint Council for the Welfare of Immigrants - 0800 1601004

[Joint Council for the Welfare of Immigrants](#)

• **Accommodation & specialist DV organizations**

No Woman Turned Away (NWTa) project (Women's Aid) - 0800 2000 247

[No Woman Turned Away - Women's Aid \(womensaid.org.uk\)](#)

Ashiana - 020 8539 0427

[Home - Ashiana Network](#)

Halo Project - 01642 683 045

[Get Help \(haloproject.org.uk\)](#)

Latin American Women's Aid - 020 727 50321

[LAWA - Latin American Women's Aid \(lawadv.org.uk\)](#)

Iranian and Kurdish Women's Rights Organisation (IKWRO) - 020 7490 0303

[IKWRO - IKWRO Women's Rights Organisation](#)

Sistah Space - 020 7846 8350

[Sistah Space](#)

Latin American Women's Aid - 020 727 50321

[LAWA - Latin American Women's Aid \(lawadv.org.uk\)](#)

Jewish Women's Aid - 0808 801 0500

[Jewish Women's Aid \(jwa.org.uk\)](#)

Sikh Women's Aid

[Sikh Women's Aid Domestic Abuse Charity \(sikhwomensaid.org.uk\)](#)

Stonewater South Asian Refuge - sawr@stonewater.org

[Domestic abuse | Stonewater's refuges and Safe Spaces | Stonewater](#)

Ubuntu Women's Shelter - 07835 160913

[Ubuntu Women Shelter | Womens Shelter | Block A, Room 8, Adelphi Centre, 12](#)

[Commercial Rd, Glasgow G5 0PQ \(ubuntu-glasgow.org.uk\)](#)

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Salvation Army - 020 7367 4800
[Homelessness | The Salvation Army](#)

• **Destitution & benefits entitlement**

Child Poverty Action Group (CPAG) - 020 7837 7979
[CPAG | We are the trusted voice on child poverty](#)

CORAM (Migrant Children)- 020 7520 0300
[Children's charity : Coram Group](#)

Project 17 - 07701 330016
[Home | Project 17](#)

Together With Migrant Children - 01865 528 658
[Together with Migrant Children | England \(togetharmigrantchildren.org.uk\)](#)

Public Interest Law Centre - 0203 559 6342
[Public Interest Law Centre • Public Law • Human Rights • Legal Action \(pilc.org.uk\)](#)

Youth Legal (community care) - 020 3195 1906
[Home | Youth Legal](#)

• **Other support**

Support Line- 01708 765200
[SupportLine – Confidential Emotional Support for Children, Young Adults and Adults](#)

The Traveller Movement- 0754 1637 795
[Home | The Traveller Movement](#)

Project Salama- 01635 953588
[projectsalama.co.uk](#)

GALOP- 0800 130 3335 helpline
[Helplines – Galop the LGBT+ anti-abuse charity – Galop](#)

LGBT Foundation- 0345 3 30 30 30
[LGBT Foundation – Home](#)

House of Rainbow- +447521130179
[House of Rainbow](#)

Naz and Matt Foundation- support@nazandmattfoundation.org
[Support – Naz and Matt Foundation](#)

Mind Out- 01273 234 839
[MindOut | Mental Health Charity for LGBTQ community](#)

Hidayah – hello@hidayahlgbt.co.uk
[Hidayah LGBT • Gender, Sexuality and Islam](#)

Support U- 0118 321 9111
[Your LGBT+ Resource for the Thames Valley – Support U](#)

Switchboard LGBT+- 0800 0119 100
[Switchboard LGBT+ Helpline](#)

Traveller Pride- [CONTACT | LGBT Traveller Pride](#)
[LGBT Traveller Pride – Gypsy, Roma Traveller support](#)

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