

WHAT ARE HARMFUL PRACTICES?

Harmful practices reflect the values and beliefs held by members of a family and/or a community that have been there for generations, some of which are beneficial to all members, while others are harmful.

Some examples of harmful practices are:

- 'Honour'-based abuse (HBA)
- 'Honour'-Based Violence (HBV)
- Early/forced marriages
- Female genital mutilation (FGM)
- Breast ironing/ breast flattening
- Virginity testing/hymenoplasty
- Preventing women from controlling their own fertility
- Dowry payments
- Son preference
- Bride-price
- Conversion therapy/practices
- Sex selective abortion
- Marriage by abduction
- Menstruation exclusion

There are also many other hidden harmful practices that continue to affect people.

Harmful practices reflect an underlying gender discrimination, and are therefore closely linked to other forms of abuse and violence women are mainly at risk or under threat of.

Harmful practices are recognised as a violation of human rights that are rooted in social, cultural and/or religious norms.

This form of abuse/violence leads to physical and psychological abuse, abandonment and also death. Although women are more likely to be at risk of harmful practices, any gender may be complicit in perpetration.

Remember: Cultural traditions and diversity are so important to us all and promote social cohesion within the family and the community, working together to support the vulnerable or those in need.

Those who believe harmful practices are part of their traditional/cultural practices are the minority and not the majority. **It is very important to not stereotype communities/groups or even the family, as many may not follow the same values as other members of the family or community.** You must always ask questions to understand the motive behind each case and person at risk.

Families performing such harmful practices do not wish any harm to their children, but believe that harmful practices are a part of their parenting duties, tradition and religion. For example, they believe that FGM gives them a better future and importantly allows them to be accepted within the community they belong to.

Who Is Affected?

Deep-rooted gender inequalities mean that women and girls are mostly affected, however any gender can be at risk of harmful practices. Harmful practices are used to control behaviour to protect perceived cultural and religious beliefs and occur when it is perceived that shame or 'dishonour' has been brought against a family or community. A common attribute of such practices is that they are related to women's sexuality and an underlying sub context of male domination.

Examples of supposed 'shameful' behaviour include:

- Being LGBTQ+ or questioning your sexuality/gender identity
- Wearing make-up or 'unacceptable' clothing
- Having a relationship outside of the family
- Not obeying family/community values/rules
- Seeking a divorce
- Refusing a marriage

Responding to Harmful Practices

Where someone discloses fear or threat of any harmful practice, professionals in all agencies should:

- Take the disclosure seriously and act on it immediately
- Refer to Adult or Children's Social Care and the Police promptly
- Always follow your organisational policy and other relevant local/national policies and procedures
- Follow the ONE CHANCE RULE at all times. We believe that there might be only once chance to speak to a person at risk or under threat, and, therefore, just one chance to save a life
- Hold an emergency strategy/professional meeting with relevant agencies, - (this should be immediately or within no less than 24 hours)

UNDER NO CIRCUMSTANCES

- Let the family, community or social network know about the disclosure
- Speak to the person at risk in front of family members or within the family home
- Approach the family or community leaders or attempt mediation
- Use members of the community to interpret
- Accidentally give out information which might jeopardise the person's safety

Caution is required about how information is shared, recorded, and safeguarded within the organisation. Information should only be shared on a need-to-know basis.

We will end 'honour'-based abuse and harmful practices

Helpline: **0800 107 0726**

10am - 4pm, Monday to Friday



To make a professional referral to Savera UK, complete our online form:

saverauk.co.uk/get-help/referrals-for-professionals/

If you are an individual who needs help or advice, complete this form:

www.saverauk.co.uk/savera-uk-individual-referral-form/

In an emergency, please call 999.