

*“The main purpose to bring me to the U.K was to get a free carer as well as a free slave”*

# Understanding Forced Marriage: A Critical Analysis

## Summary report

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## Foreword

# Introduction

Violence against women is a form of gender-based violence (GBV) that historically is a construct of unequal power relations and systemic gender-based discrimination, within a highly male-dominated patriarchal society with misogynistic views on women.

Women and girls are at increased risk of experiencing domestic violence (DV), forced marriage, so-called Honour-Based Abuse (HBA), and other forms of violence compared to men on a ratio of one to four. Globally, approximately 736 million women (representing 1 in 3 women and girls) experience physical or sexual violence in their entire lifetime which is perpetrated by an intimate partner (UN Women, 2020). In 2016, it was estimated that 15.4 million people were living in forced marriages, of which, 88% were women and girls (APIGBV, 2017).

In England and Wales, between 2019-2021, the Forced Marriage Unit (FMU), reported receiving 1,080 calls from women seeking advice and support. These figures represented 80% of all calls received from women compared to 262 (19%) received from men (FMU, 2021).

There were 2,383 honour-based abuse (HBA) related cases recorded by the UK police forces in 2020 and 2,725 cases recorded in 2021 (Home Office, 2022). Statistics also show that 12-15 honour killings are reported in the UK every year (Halo project, data accessed on 08/05/2023).

The majority of inquiries to FMU were from London with 61 callers representing 20% of all calls received, West Midlands with 57 callers at 19%, Northwest with 49 callers representing 16% while 6 individuals made the call from Wales representing only 2% of the total calls received.

According to the FMU, cases represented 25 from focus countries which included Pakistan at the top with 147 cases (49%); Bangladesh with 41 cases representing 14%; India with 20 cases at 7%; Afghanistan with 9 cases at 3% and Iraq with 7 cases at 2%. It is also indicated that 78% of all the cases received and recorded were residing in the UK at the time the calls were received (FMU, 2022).

Analysis of Bawso's internal data showed that 29 women who identified as victims of forced marriage were supported in 2018/2019 and 4 women identified as victims of forced marriage, and 23 victims of HBV were supported in 2019/2020. In 2020/2021, Bawso supported 7,446 persons of which 5 were victims of forced marriage and 35 were victims of HBV. In 2021/2022 Bawso supported 7,826 persons out of which 6 women identified themselves as victims of forced marriage and 24 women as victims of HBV.

# Focus of the research

The research focussed on forced marriage and honour-based violence (HBV) that takes place within BME communities in Wales.

## The research sought to:

- Gain an in-depth understanding of the ideologies behind forced marriage and HBV.
- Identify individuals behind 'multiple perpetration' with the aim of directing prevention programmes and tackling perpetrations at all levels.
- Understand the role that culture and religion play in amplifying forced marriages and HBV against women.

The experiences of victims that which the research draws upon were predominantly women, while the perpetrators were men. Focussing on the victim's perspective and experience rather than a perpetrator's position was with the aim of avoiding empowering perpetrators to orchestrate violence and find justification for it.

## Methodology



**Participatory engagement**

Focus group discussions with Bawso frontline staff and Bawso service users.



**Survey questionnaire**



**Secondary sources**

Literature review, news articles, analysis of Bawso ex-service users' case studies.

## Summary of findings

# 49

### Participation

A total of 49 people participated, (includes Bawso frontline support workers and ex-service users).

# 33

### Case studies

We reviewed and analysed 33 case studies from ex-service users who were supported by Bawso between 2018 and 2022.

# MEDIA

We also analysed cases of forced marriage and HBV that took place in the UK as reported by the media (BBC, the Guardian and the Independent).

# 3

### Police

Three police and crime commissioners' offices responded to questionnaires. These include North Wales PCC, South Wales PCC, and Gwent PCC.

## Key themes and recommendations

### Extent of violence

We found that women were subjected to extreme forms of violence and threats were used to force them into submission. Forms of violence included arson attacks, acid burning, forced suicide, physical abuse, threats to kill and murder. Others included forced abortion, honour killings, abduction, the threat of abandonment and being disowned, drugged, and imprisoned in their homes to stop them from fleeing forced marriages.

A significant proportion of some of the survivors who were supported by Bawso as victims of domestic abuse, identified themselves as being also victims of controlling and coercive behaviour, forced marriage, HBV and in some cases, modern slavery.

### LACK OF KNOWLEDGE AND UNDERSTANDING, AND ITS IMPACT

### Support agencies

We found that there was a lack of knowledge and understanding regarding forced marriage, HBV and support that a victim may require amongst statutory agencies. In addition, disbelief of threats to kill amongst such agencies meant that victims were reluctant to disclose, or report abuse due to fear of the consequences if not supported.

### Victims/survivors

Barriers to disclosing and reporting abuse were many and highlighted in over 50% of cases. These included a lack of understanding of the UK support system amongst victims, language barriers, fear of authority, fear of being deported if they reported the abuse and insecure immigration status including no recourse to public funds (NRPF).

Additional barriers faced by victims included financial dependence on perpetrators, fear of not being believed by supporting agencies, and fear of threats from their own family members as well as threats to their family members by perpetrators.

### Communication

There was a lack of clarity from agencies on how and where victims could seek help from. Further difficulties were highlighted with regards to understanding the language and terminology used within the violence against women, domestic abuse and sexual violence (VAWDASV) sector. For example, domestic abuse, victim, helpline, live fear free helpline etc. Simple and clear messages such as, 'Do you need help?', 'Call for free', were recommended as clear forms of communication.

## PERPETRATION

### Female perpetration

We analysed 33 case studies from Bawso service users, and the data was triangulated with England. We also obtained oral testimony from the BME community and concluded that in approximately 70% of HBV cases, relatives such as mother-in-law and sister-in-law had some involvement.

### Wider family perpetration

Our findings also highlighted the involvement of other perpetrators who included father-in-law, husbands, victim's brothers and male and female in-laws.

### Inter-generational perpetration

From our findings, we concluded that inter-generational perpetration was taking place and it often continued through generations.

## WHY SHOULD SHE HAVE IT EASY?

### The Community

Community informers included shop owners, restaurant owners, taxi drivers and people from the same ethnic background and religion. These may identify a victim escaping and return them back home or inform the family as reported by Enabling Change Rebuilding Lives (EACH, 2012).

Others included professionals such as social workers and the police who may have access to critical information on the victim (Dyer, 2015).

### Bounty hunters

Bounty hunters are often hired by families to track down victims who have escaped from the family and take them back to the perpetrators families'. We heard that bounty hunters gather intelligence on the whereabouts of victims. They often collude with professionals from the same community who can access victim files, for example, social services and the police to reveal information on the victim's whereabouts ((Dyer, 2015).

Bounty hunters may also use their own intelligence to investigate the whereabouts of a victim (EACH, 2012).

### Culture and religion

Religion in its functional state is used by communities to amplify what is considered good or bad conduct and the punishment that accompanies rebellion or breaking of the honor code.

We heard that families often use culture and religion to propagate and affirm masculine doctrines of dominance and submission.

For example, society encourages men to be dominant and women to submit enabling men to maintain their power (Smith et al, 2015). The social ostracization that takes place is also a product of cultural and religious beliefs.

## Recommendations

- There is a need for agencies to adopt a renewed commitment to understanding and tackling forced marriage and HBV.
- A need for comprehensive end - to - end support by agencies from the point when an incident has been reported to when the survivor no longer requires direct support regardless of their immigration status.
- Sustained community engagement to challenge and address harmful cultural practices.
- Continued funding support for organisations that address complex, diverse and intersecting needs of victims.
- Ongoing dialogue on how we can use culture and religion positively to protect women and girls.

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## CYFLAWNI

**Menywod yn cyflawni**

Dadansoddwyd 33 astudiaeth achos gan ddefnyddwyr gwasanaeth Bawso, a thriogrlwyd y data gyda Lloegr. Cafwyd tystiolaeth lafar hefyd gan y gymuned BME a daethpwyd i'r casgliad fod perthnasau megis mam yng nghyfraith a chwaer yng nghyfraith yn chwarae rhan mewn oddeutu 70% o achosion o drais ar sail anrhydedd.

**Y teulu ehangach yn cyflawni**

Roedd ein canfyddiadau hefyd yn amlygu cyflawnwyr eraill yn cymryd rhan, gan gynnwys tadau-yng-nghyfraith, gwŷr, brodyr y dioddefwr, a menywod a dynion o'r teulu yng nghyfraith.

**Cyflawni ar draws cenedlaethau**

O'n canfyddiadau, casglwyd bod cyflawni ar draws cenedlaethau yn digwydd ac yn aml mae'n parhau drwy'r cenedlaethau.

**PAM DDYLAI HI EI CHAEL HI'N HAWDD?-GOROESWR 23 OED.**

**Y Gymuned**

Roedd hysbyswyr cymunedol yn cynnwys perchnogion siop, perchnogion bwyty, gyrwyr tacsï a phobl o'r un cefndir ethnig a chrefydd. Gall y rhain adnabod dioddefwr yn dianc a mynd â nhw'n ôl gartref neu roi gwybod i'r teulu, fel yr adroddwyd gan Enabling Change Rebuilding Lives (EACH, 2012).

Roedd eraill yn cynnwys gweithwyr proffesiynol megis gweithwyr cymdeithasol a'r heddlu a all fod â'r hawl i wybodaeth hanfodol am y dioddefwr (Dyer, 2015).

**Helwyr bownti**

Mae teuluoedd yn aml yn llogi helwyr bownti i ddod o hyd i ddioddefwyr sydd wedi dianc oddi wrth y teulu a mynd â nhw'n ôl at deulu'r cyflawnwr. Clywsom fod helwyr bownti'n caglu gwybodaeth ar leoliad y dioddefwyr. Maent yn aml yn cynllwynio gyda gweithwyr proffesiynol o'r un gymuned sy'n gallu cael yr hawl i ffeiliau'r dioddefwyr, er enghraifft, y gwasanaethau cymdeithasol a'r heddlu, i ddatgelu gwybodaeth ar leoliad y dioddefwr (Dyer, 2015).

Gall helwyr bownti ddefnyddio eu gwybodaeth eu hunain hefyd i ymchwilio i leoliad dioddefwr (EACH 2012).

**Diwylliant a chrefydd**

Caiff crefydd, ar ei ffurf weithredol, ei ddefnyddio gan gymunedau i bwysleisio'r hyn a ystyrir i fod yn ymddygiad da neu ymddygiad gwael, a'r gosb sydd ynghlwm â gwrthryfela neu dorri'r cod anrhydedd.

Clywsom fod teuluoedd yn aml yn defnyddio diwylliant a chrefydd i ledaenu a chadarnhau dysgeidiaethau gwrywaidd o ddominyddiaeth ac ymostyngiad.

Er enghraifft, mae cymdeithas yn annog dynion i ddominyddu a menywod i ymostwng gan alluogi dynion i gynnal eu grym (Smith et al. 2015). Mae'r diarddel cymdeithasol sy'n mynd rhagddo hefyd yn codi o achos credoau crefyddol a diwylliannol.

**Argymhellion**

- Mae yna angen i asiantaethau fabwysiadu ymrwymiad o'r newydd i ddeall a mynd i'r afael â phriodas dan orfod a thrais ar sail anrhydedd.
- Angen am gymorth cynhwysfawr o'r dechrau i'r diwedd gan asiantaethau o'r pwynt pan adroddir am ddigwyddiad hyd at pan nad yw'r dioddefwr bellach angen cymorth uniongyrchol waeth beth fo'u statws mewnffudo.
- Ymgysylltu cymunedol parhaus i herio a mynd i'r afael ag arferion diwylliannol niweidiol.
- Cymorth ariannol parhaus i sefydliadau sy'n mynd i'r afael ag anghenion cymhleth, amrywiol a chroestoriadol dioddefwyr.
- Deialog parhaus ar sut y gallwn ddefnyddio diwylliant a chrefydd mewn ffordd gadarnhaol i ddiogelu menywod a merched.

**Cyfeiriadau**

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