



Breaking the Silence

Addressing Harmful Practices and 'Honour'-based Abuse in
Romani (Gypsy), Welsh, Scottish and Irish Traveller Communities



December 2025

About the Traveller Movement

The Traveller Movement is a registered UK charity promoting inclusion and community engagement with to Romani (Gypsy), Roma and Irish Travellers. The Traveller Movement seeks to empower and support Romani (Gypsy), Roma and Irish Traveller communities to advocate for the full implementation of their human rights.

Contents

1	Acknowledgements	3
2	Foreword	4
3	A Survivor's Foreword	5
4	Terminology	7
5	Executive Summary	10
6	Key Findings	13
7	Recommendations	15
8	Introduction	17
9	Community Responses	21
	a. Methodology	21
	b. Table of Respondents	22
	c. Survey Findings	23
	d. Interview Findings	32
10	Responses from Support Services	40
	a. Methodology	41
	b. Survey Findings	42
	c. Interview Findings	47
11	Conclusion	52

1 Acknowledgments

This peer led report would not have been possible without the bravery, trust and dedication of the Romani (Gypsy), Welsh, Scottish and Irish Traveller individuals who took part in this research – either as peer researchers, survey respondents and/or interviewees.

Our sincere gratitude goes to all the individuals who shared their experiences and insights with us. We deeply appreciate the time, honesty, and trust shown by those who completed the survey and took part in interviews. Speaking about such sensitive issues requires great courage and generosity. We recognise that, at the outset of this project, there were differing views and some unease within parts of our respective communities. Despite this, many still chose to engage constructively in an open and thoughtful way. Your contributions have made this work possible and will help to build greater understanding, safety, and support for others in the future. We want to also extend our sincere thanks to the support organisations who agreed to partake in this research, the contributions we received have been truly invaluable.

In recognition of the highly sensitive and sometimes controversial nature of this work and to protect confidentiality and safeguard all those involved, individual names have not been included. This report stands as a collective effort made possible through trust, courage and shared commitment to improving understanding and safety for all women and girls within our communities.

The Traveller Movement would also like to thank our funders The Mayor's Office for Policing and Crime (MOPAC), London Community Foundation and Tudor Trust for their support of this critical work.



M O P A C

MAYOR OF LONDON
OFFICE FOR POLICING AND CRIME

the
Tudor trust

2 Foreword



It is a real honour to write the foreword for this landmark report by the Traveller Movement. The courage, insight, and honesty of the survivors who contributed to this research cannot be overstated. They have generously shared experiences that are deeply personal, and in doing so, have created a powerful foundation for understanding and action. The Traveller Movement's leadership in centring these voices, and in guiding this work with sensitivity and respect, is truly exemplary.

At Karma Nirvana, over the past year, our national honour-based abuse helpline has responded to 14 cases from the Romani (Gypsy) and Irish Traveller communities. We know this represents only the tip of the iceberg, as this report carefully highlights. Countless individuals are affected but may not yet recognise their experiences as abuse or may not feel able to reach out for support. While the helpline has supported a relatively small number of cases from Romani (Gypsy) and Irish Traveller communities, it highlights the importance of understanding and responding effectively to different needs. To ensure that their voices and perspectives are central to our work, Lisa, a member of the Traveller community, sits on our Survivor Advisory Panel, bringing vital lived experience and insight to guide our approach.

This report provides crucial insight into the lived realities of Honour Based Abuse in Romani (Gypsy), Welsh, Scottish, and Irish Traveller communities. It emphasises the urgent need for safe, confidential, and culturally informed support, and the importance of listening to survivors on a case-by-case basis rather than making assumptions based on "culture" or community identity.

Work like this is transformative. By shining a spotlight on these abuses, acknowledging their existence, and providing practical guidance for support, the Traveller Movement and the survivors who contributed are driving the shifts and changes needed to protect future generations and ensure that every victim-survivor can be seen, heard, and supported.

This report is not just research – it is a call to action. It is a testament to the bravery of survivors, the dedication of the Traveller Movement, and the urgent need for all of us to act. May it inspire services, policymakers, and communities alike to ensure that no survivor of Honour Based Abuse is ever left invisible or unheard again.

Natasha Rattu CEO,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Natasha Rattu'.

Karma Nirvana

3 A Survivor's Foreword

This foreword has been written by Teresa (name has been changed), an Irish Traveller woman in her thirties, a proud mother and 'honour'-based abuse survivor. Her story reflects her own lived experience. While 'honour'-based abuse is not part of Romani (Gypsy) or Irish Traveller culture as a whole, some families hold to traditions and expectations around reputation and control that can lead to harm. Her courage in sharing this truth gives voice to many others who have lived in silence.



I am an Irish Traveller woman in my thirties, and a proud mother.

I am also an honour-based abuse survivor.

If you'd seen me on the street, you might not look twice. But if you did, you would see the pain and struggle in my eyes.

Many people from my community really need help. Honour-based abuse is not always loud or visible.

It can be quiet, hidden, and passed down through words, expectations, and shame.

It's often woven into childhood, family life, and ideas about respect and reputation, so familiar that you may not even see it for what it is.

I grew up in a typical traditional Traveller family.

In my early teens, I became frustrated with the rules for girls.

I asked my mother, "Why is it this way?"

She said, "You have to look after your reputation."

Being young, I said, "I don't care what anyone thinks... I'm not doing anything wrong."

She replied, "It's not just you that you have to think about. It's your father's and brothers' reputation and name. Whatever you do wrong will be thrown into their faces."

Those words never left me.

Those words kept me in check.

Those words crippled me.

Those words led me into a forced arranged marriage.

Those words kept me in a violent marriage.

Those words stole my dignity.

Those words stole my voice.

It has been a long and painful journey one that took years to understand.

For a long time, I didn't even have a name for what I was suffering.

3 A Survivor's Foreword



The Traveller Movement has been a lifeline. For the first time, I no longer feel insane. I am seen. I am heard. I have hope.

With their help over the years, I was able to get connected and the expert support I needed.

It took a team of people to safeguard my children and me from my own family.

I dread to think what might have happened if I didn't know the Traveller Movement and they hadn't run its honour-based abuse workshops.

Honour-based abuse is not the norm or culture for Romani Gypsies or Irish Travellers.

But in some families, old traditions around honour, shame, and reputation can still cause harm.

It was my experience, and it is the experience of many others who live lives of quiet desperation and fear. Its real and is happening!

This report gives voice to those people.

It speaks for anyone, woman or man, who has lived under the weight of shame, control, and reputation.

It takes bravery to speak out, and only through courage can we change things.

I want a better life for my children, one where they have options, choices, and freedom to live without fear or shame.

I welcome this report with all my heart. I know it is a difficult and uncomfortable subject, but it is necessary.

Only by naming it and facing it with courage can we begin to change it.

4 Terminology

Throughout this document we refer to Romani (Gypsy), Roma, Welsh, Scottish and Irish Traveller communities. This terminology refers to the distinct ethnic groups which are protected under the Equality Act 2010 ('the Equality Act').¹ The Equality Act specifically protects ethnic 'Gypsy, Roma and Traveller' people providing a framework to protect the communities from unfair and discriminatory treatment. Most importantly the Equality Act creates a duty for public bodies to monitor and tackle discrimination in the provision of public services.

¹ UK Government, [Equality Act 2010](#), (2010).



Often the term ‘Gypsy, Roma and Traveller’ is used to encompass ethnic groups such as Romani (Gypsies), Roma, Irish Travellers, Mincéirs, Pavees, Nachins/ Nawkens, Scottish Gypsy/ Travellers, Welsh Romani, and non-ethnic nomadic people such as Showpeople, Boaters, and Bargees. This document acknowledges that any umbrella terms used to group together a wide and diverse range of distinct ethnic minorities with shared cultural norms, traditions and values, whose mostly common shared cultural norm is their nomadic traditions cannot be universal or wholly reflective of diverse communities. There are limits to categorisation and no categorisation framework can exhaustively take into account complex and interconnecting ethnicities, identities and communities.²

The Traveller Movement uses the language of state or the Equality Act to ensure the protections afforded under that act are relied upon for the communities the organisation represents, while continuing to advocate for disaggregation of data and the acknowledgment of the unique experiences of each community.

With regards to “‘honour’-based abuse’ and ‘harmful practices,’ some voluntary sector organisations and statutory agencies use these terms interchangeably, whereas others may refer to “‘honour’-based abuse’ only or vice versa. Others, as can be seen in the below definition, may include “‘honour’-based abuse’ within the wider definition of ‘harmful practices.’ In light of this, the Traveller Movement uses the terms interchangeably throughout this report.

This research thus examines whether ‘harmful practices,’ and “‘honour’-based abuse’ occur within the Romani (Gypsy), Welsh, Scottish and Irish Traveller communities and if so, what forms these might take. The research also aims to explore whether this terminology should be used with reference to the different communities, and what support organisations can do to better support victim-survivors from Romani (Gypsy), Welsh, Scottish and Irish Traveller backgrounds.

The following definition of ‘harmful practices’ (hereafter HP) has been provided by The Harmful Practices Strategic Partnership (HPSP).

HP definition (The Harmful Practices Strategic Partnership):



‘Harmful practices, including so-called “honour”-based abuse, are forms of gender-based violence and domestic abuse where escalation of abuse and associated risks happen due to notions of power and control within intersectional contexts of oppression. In these cases, religion, culture, patriarchal codes of behaviour, and perceived notions of honour are used by one or more perpetrators as an excuse for coercive control, threats, and abuse. While harmful practices are perpetrated disproportionately and primarily against women and girls, men, other genders, and gender non-conforming persons can also be victims.’³

When the Traveller Movement initially embarked on this project, the organisation adopted the terminology used by some organisations within the Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG) sector, referring to “‘honour’-based abuse’ as ‘so-called honour-based abuse.’ However, following the announcement by the government in August 2025 regarding the

² The Traveller Movement, *The importance of accurate ethnic monitoring and data inclusion for Romani (Gypsy), Roma and ethnic Traveller communities*, (2025).

³ Harmful Practices Strategic Partnership, *Written evidence from Harmful Practices Strategic Partnership (HPSP) [HBA0032]*, (2022).

crackdown on “honour”-based abuse’,⁴ the Traveller Movement made the decision to adopt the terminology of the state. As such, the term “honour”-based abuse’ (hereafter HBA) is used within this report.

Defining HBA can be difficult. Unlike domestic abuse, there is currently no statutory definition of HBA in England and Wales. As such, the term is understood differently by voluntary sector organisations and government agencies. The following definition provided by the Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) has been widely used and has been adopted by the National Police Chiefs’ Council (NPCC) and the government’s Tackling Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG) strategy:



‘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.’⁵

During the consultation phase, representatives from the different ethnic communities noted that community members may not be familiar with the term HBA and may not resonate with the above referenced definition. Representatives from the different communities did, however, resonate with Karma Nirvana and other sector organisations’ proposed statutory definition of HBA. Karma Nirvana is the longest-established charity specialising in providing support for individuals impacted by HBA⁶ and has been campaigning with other sector organisations for a statutory definition of ‘honour’-based abuse. In light of this, the Traveller Movement has drawn on this definition for this research project:

Proposed Statutory HBA definition



‘Any incident or pattern of violence, threats of violence, intimidation, coercion, control or abuse (included but not limited to psychological, physical, sexual, economic, spiritual, faith related or emotional abuse) motivated by the perpetrators perception that an individual has shamed, or may shame, the perpetrator, the family, or community or has otherwise broken, or may break, the perceived norms of the community’s accepted behaviours, including by speaking out about the abuse and where the perception of shame may also prevent a victim from accessing support or help.’⁷

This definition provides a framework to explore how concepts of shame, control, and expectations can be linked with abuse. Using alternative words like ‘shame’ instead of ‘honour’, may make these concepts easier to understand and may be more recognisable to individuals from the Romani (Gypsy), Welsh, Scottish and Irish Traveller communities.

4 UK Government, ‘Honour’- based abuse crackdown in raft of new measures, (2025).

5 Crown Prosecution Service, ‘So-Called Honour-Based Abuse and Forced Marriage: Guidance on Identifying and Flagging cases,’ (2019).

6 Karma Nirvana, ‘Karma Nirvana calls for a statutory definition of Honour Based Abuse in memory of Fawziyah Javed,’ (2023).

7 Ibid.

5 Executive Summary

This report primarily aims to examine the prevalence and forms of ‘harmful practices’ (HP) and “‘honour” based abuse’ (HBA) within the Romani (Gypsy), Welsh, Scottish and Irish Traveller communities. The research also explores whether this terminology should be used in reference to the different communities and what support organisations can do to better support victim-survivors from the Romani (Gypsy), Welsh, Scottish and Irish Traveller communities. A secondary aim of this research has been to raise awareness amongst individuals from the different communities about HP and HBA, and to start up the conversation about these difficult topics.



The report concludes that support organisations should avoid making assumptions about individuals from the different communities and their experiences with different forms of HP and HBA.

In undertaking this research, the Traveller Movement has aimed to ensure that:

- Victim-survivors are supported to understand their rights and recognise when behaviour crosses into control or abuse, even when it is justified as protecting family honour or reputation;
- Mainstream and specialist services are equipped to respond with cultural understanding and sensitivity, and
- Community and sector organisations have the confidence and knowledge to identify, address, and safely refer cases where there is risk.

The findings, gathered from surveys and interviews with community members and support organisations, indicate that some forms of HP and HBA do occur within the different communities. The evidence points to the following:

‘Shame/Scandal’ is the most cited form of HP and HBA by community members and representatives from support organisations. Community members highlighted the high level of importance placed upon maintaining one’s reputation, particularly for women. The consequences of bringing shame and/or reputation damage upon oneself can be severe. Community members almost unanimously identified a need for support services to understand the impact of reputation damage on victim-survivors from the different communities;

The use of ‘lie detectors/swearing on the Bible’ was also commonly cited by both community members and representatives from support organisations as examples of HP and HBA that occur within the communities.

“‘Forced/early’ marriage’ was also cited by Romani (Gypsy) and Irish Traveller respondents and representatives from support organisations as an example of HP and HBA within the communities. However, Romani (Gypsy) and Irish Traveller respondents clarified in their interviews that ‘forced’ marriages were uncommon within the communities, although not unheard of. Romani (Gypsy) and Irish Traveller communities more frequently referenced ‘pressured’ or ‘encouraged’ marriages as practices that may occur to protect a woman’s reputation and/or fix a damaged reputation.

Both community members and support organisations provided mixed responses with regards to the question of whether to use the term “‘honour’-based abuse’ in reference to the different communities.

Crucially, the research findings indicated that *only* 56.82% of support organisations surveyed said they were aware of how to engage and support members of Romani (Gypsy), Welsh, Scottish and Irish Traveller communities who are experiencing HP and HBA.

The report concludes that support organisations should avoid making assumptions about individuals from the different communities and their experiences with different forms of HP and HBA. Crucially, the research findings indicated that *only* 56.82% of support organisations surveyed said they were aware of how to engage and support members of Romani (Gypsy), Welsh, Scottish and Irish Traveller communities who are experiencing HP and HBA. Based on the themes identified through the research process, the Traveller Movement team worked with the project's peer researchers to develop recommendations to tackle this lack of understanding. These recommendations consist of actions applicable to multiple stakeholders across the sector.

To ensure individuals receive the appropriate support, cases should be handled on a case-by-case basis. The report's core recommendation is the need for culturally appropriate, co-produced educational resources for Romani (Gypsies), Welsh, Scottish and Irish Traveller communities on these issues. For community members to identify with language that is used predominantly by services, there needs to be a greater awareness amongst community members about what 'harmful practices' and "'honour"-based abuse' entails. Only then will victim-survivors from the different communities be able to make informed decisions about whether their experiences are adequately reflected in the language used by service providers.

6 Key Findings

- 1 Overall, **94.3%** of Romani (Gypsy), Welsh, Scottish and Irish Traveller survey respondents stated that having a good reputation is either ‘extremely important’ or ‘very important.’ Most interviewees from the Romani (Gypsy) and Irish Traveller communities also highlighted the importance of reputation.
.....
- 2 **57.2%** of Romani (Gypsy), Welsh, Scottish and Irish Traveller survey respondents said that they began to think about the issues of shame, scandal and reputation between the ages of 11-15, and **25.7%** said they were under 10.
.....
- 3 ‘Shame/scandal’ and the use of ‘lie detectors/swearing on the Bible’ are two forms of HP and HBA that survey respondents across all four ethnic groups stated they have heard instances of within their communities.
.....
- 4 The awareness of the term HBA varied amongst survey respondents to the communities’ survey. Combining the data from the survey and interviews, **51.5%** of community members in this data set said they had heard of the term HBA. **48.5%** stated that they were not aware of the term.
.....
- 5 **51.6%** of Romani (Gypsies) and Irish Travellers interviewed said that the term “‘honour’-based abuse’ should be used for their community. **35.5%** of participants stated that the term shouldn’t be used, and **12.9%** were unsure whether the term should be used in reference to their communities.
.....
- 6 **65.71%** of community survey respondents agreed that individuals from their communities could be at risk of HBA from their families or community.
.....
- 7 **79.5%** of support organisations stated that they had supported victim-survivors of HP and HBA from the Romani (Gypsy), Welsh, Scottish and Irish Traveller communities.
.....

6 Key Findings

- 8 **Just over half (56.82%)** of support organisations surveyed said that they were aware of how to engage and support members of the different communities, however **38.64%** were not aware and **4.54%** were 'unsure'. This highlights the need for more services to receive community led training to ensure they are all providing effective support to victim-survivors from the Romani (Gypsy), Welsh, Scottish and Irish Traveller communities.
.....
- 9 Representatives from support organisations provided mixed responses to whether HP and HBA frameworks should be used for victim-survivors from the different communities although most agreed that they would use this language if community members identified their experiences as such.
.....
- 10 Support organisations identified a need for greater partnership working between different organisations to ensure that victim-survivors can access holistic support.
.....
- 11 Support organisations also identified a need for training and improved understanding of the different communities, as well as the need for awareness-raising programmes for community members. Community members also expressed a need for culturally appropriate education on HP and HBA.
.....

7 Recommendations

Based on the themes identified through the research process, the Traveller Movement team worked with the project's peer researchers to develop recommendations. These recommendations consist of actions which are applicable for multiple stakeholders across the sector.

- 1 Support services should adopt a person-centred approach and not make assumptions about individuals from the different communities or their experiences with forms of HP and HBA. Each case should be reviewed on its own terms, recognising the diversity within and across communities.
.....
- 2 Training should be delivered to support services by representatives of the different communities around the impact of shame and reputation damage on individuals from Romani (Gypsy), Welsh, Scottish and Irish Traveller backgrounds.
.....
- 3 Support services should seek to employ representatives from the different communities and provide culturally appropriate education to Romani (Gypsy), Welsh, Scottish and Irish Travellers to ensure that community members are able to access information about HP and HBA in a culturally informed way.
.....
- 4 Identify their experiences with the language used by services, namely HP and HBA. Service providers should use the language that victim-survivors feel is best for them and is reflective of their experiences.
.....
- 5 All efforts should be made to ensure that support services are accessible, and that victim-survivors are provided with safe ways to communicate, flexible appointments, and face-to-face support if needed.
.....
- 6 Statutory agencies and voluntary organisations should work together to ensure that victim-survivors can access holistic support, including legal advice, housing, education, mental health and advocacy services.
.....
- 7 Education programmes addressing HBA, consent, and healthy relationships should include input from community voices to ensure relevance and cultural sensitivity.

7 Recommendations

- 8 Schools and youth services should be supported to deliver accessible materials that help young people understand boundaries, safety, and respect within their own cultural contexts.
.....
- 9 All agencies should improve the accuracy of recording Romani (Gypsy), Welsh, Scottish and Irish Traveller ethnicity within crime and safeguarding systems, including for cases involving HBA, coercive control, and domestic abuse. Without correct data, victims and trends remain invisible.
.....
- 10 The Home Office, Ministry of Justice, Department for Education and Department for Health and Social Care should ensure that Romani (Gypsy), Welsh, Scottish and Irish Traveller women and girls are explicitly referenced in all national frameworks addressing Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG) and 'Honour'-Based Abuse.
.....
- 11 Government departments, police forces, and local authorities must correctly record and monitor ethnicity data for Romani (Gypsy), Welsh, Scottish and Irish Traveller people across all safeguarding and VAWG datasets. Current gaps mean that abuse within these communities may be hidden or misrepresented. Better data collection will enable accurate policy responses and resource allocation.
.....
- 12 VAWG partnerships and funders should proactively reach out to and invest in small, trusted, community-led NGOs working with Romani (Gypsy), Welsh, Scottish and Irish Traveller women. These organisations often provide the first, and sometimes only, safe contact point for victim-survivors, yet remain chronically under-resourced.
.....
- 13 National and regional VAWG boards and wider services should include representation from Romani (Gypsy), Welsh, Scottish and Irish Traveller-led organisations and ensure accountability for inclusion in all planning, delivery, and evaluation.
.....
- 14 Although under 18s were not included in the research, the majority of community members surveyed (57.2%) indicated that they were between the ages of 11-15 and 25.7% said that they were under 10 when they became aware of concepts such as 'shame' and 'scandal,'. These findings indicate a need for tailored support for under 18s, particularly for those who are unable to leave the family home to access support.

8 Introduction

In response to cases the Traveller Movement has received on matters relating to ‘harmful practices’ (HP) and “honour”-based abuse’ (HBA), this peer-led research project was conducted by the Traveller Movement to investigate the prevalence of HP and HBA within the Romani (Gypsy), Welsh, Scottish and Irish Traveller communities and if so, what forms these might take.



When someone is identified as experiencing HBA, they are entitled to enhanced support, including:

- Priority housing and relocation for safety
- Specialist refuge spaces
- Increased police protection and safeguarding measures
- Specialist legal support
- Additional advocacy and casework services
- Support for children⁸

HP and HBA are significant concerns within the broader framework of gender-based violence and domestic abuse. In the year ending March 2024, there were 2,755 HBA-related offences recorded by the police in England and Wales.⁹

It is important to state that *'honour'-based abuse* is not something that belongs to, or should be narrowly or wrongly associated with, any one group or culture, though it often disproportionately affects minority communities.¹⁰ Both HP and HBA are characterised by controlling, threatening, or abusive behaviour that is carried out in response to perceived or alleged transgressions of accepted cultural or familial behaviours. HBA can start or escalate when it is believed that a person has brought shame to their family or community by doing something that goes against the traditional values or beliefs of their culture or family.¹¹

HBA cases often involve multiple perpetrators, with 54% of victims/survivors being abused by multiple people.¹² These often include the (ex-)partner, family members, and sometimes the wider community. Victim-survivors of HBA face significant barriers to reporting abuse due to fears of the consequences including further and more severe violence, shame, stigma, or ostracism.

It is true that concepts of 'shame' and 'family honour' can play a significant role in discouraging victims-survivors from seeking help. This means that victims-survivors do not often receive the level of support they need and are less likely to report the abuse when it occurs.¹³

HBA disproportionately affects women and girls; however, men, other genders, and gender non-conforming persons can also be victim-survivors of HBA.¹⁴ The existing data on harmful practices and HBA remains insufficient and inconclusive in determining whether they occur within Romani (Gypsy), Welsh, Scottish and Irish Traveller communities. According to the existing research, victims of HBA in the UK are typically ethnic minority women of South Asian and Arab heritage. Lesser recognised are male victims, LGBTQ+ and those from 'Gypsy, Roma

8 The Traveller Movement, *We are aware that our recent survey has been taken out of context*, (2025).

9 UK Government, *'Statistics on so called 'honour-based' abuse offences, England and Wales, year ending March 2024.'* (2024).

10 Harmful Practices Strategic Partnership, *Written evidence from Harmful Practices Strategic Partnership (HPSP) [HBA0032]*, (2022).

11 Pan London Harmful Practices Strategic Partnership (HPSP) and Coaction Hub (AWRC X STADA), *'HPSP Factsheet 'Honour' Based Abuse.'* (2023).

12 Safe Lives, *'Your Choice: 'honour'-based violence, forced marriage and domestic abuse.'* (2017).

13 Karma Nirvana, *Karma Nirvana calls for a statutory definition of Honour Based Abuse in memory of Fawziyah Javed*, (2025).

14 Harmful Practices Strategic Partnership, *Written evidence from Harmful Practices Strategic Partnership (HPSP) [HBA0032]*, (2022).

and Traveller' communities.¹⁵ The lack of understanding within different agencies around HP and HBA may, in part, explain why victim-survivors from these communities are lesser recognised as such. This lack of understanding can be exacerbated by 'poor risk assessing and the inadequacies of standardised risk assessment tools.'¹⁶ Furthermore, as these tools do not address harmful practices, victim-survivors are not being 'routinely asked about these forms of abuse'.¹⁷

The language of "'honour"-based abuse' is not one that is commonly understood or used by many Romani (Gypsy), Welsh, Scottish, or Irish Traveller people within the context of their own communities. Indeed, many of those interviewed as part of this peer research project identified this terminology with Asian communities. However, the peer researchers found that once the concept of HBA was explained in accessible, culturally grounded ways, many individuals and practitioners recognised that similar patterns of control, coercion, and violence can and do occur.

This research has been conducted to understand whether HP and HBA occur within the communities, what forms they may take, and how services can best support victim-survivors from the Romani (Gypsy), Welsh, Scottish and Irish Traveller communities. The research also looked at the use of terms like 'harmful practices' and "'honour"-based abuse' and whether this terminology should be used in reference to the different communities.

Through the organisation's casework, training, and engagement with community members and in partnership with other sector organisations, including leading HBA specialists, the Traveller Movement is aware that these issues do exist within the Romani (Gypsy), Welsh, Scottish and Irish Traveller communities and that victim-survivors from the different communities are seeking support from specialist HP and HBA organisations. That being said, no assumptions were made regarding the prevalence of HP and HBA amongst the different communities at any stage of this research project. The research findings indicate that HP and HBA do occur particularly in the forms of shame and reputation damage and the use of lie detectors and swearing on the Bible. Despite this, we believe that it is crucial that services engage with individuals from these communities on a case-by-case basis and do not make assumptions on the basis of the victim-survivors ethnicity.

Due to the sample size, the data presented in this report should not be used to make generalisations about entire communities. Rather, it should be used as guidance to help professionals understand what types of HBA they may encounter when supporting someone from these ethnic groups. As mentioned earlier in this report, the decision to undertake this research has always been about making sure that individuals who are fleeing abuse get the support they deserve.

15 Harm Network, 'Honour Abuse Research Matrix: What is 'honour' based abuse?', (2025).

16 Harmful Practices Strategic Partnership, Written evidence from Harmful Practices Strategic Partnership (HPSP) [HBA0032], (2022).

17 Ibid.

Some community members also expressed concern about being given *another label* or being further defined and/or stigmatised by negative narratives.

The Traveller Movement is also aware that some community members have expressed concerns about the Traveller Movement *opening up* the conversation on this topic. The Traveller Movement fully acknowledges and understands that concern. Conversations about *honour, shame, family reputation, and control* are extremely difficult for any community to have, especially when there is fear of stigmatisation or misrepresentation. Some community members also expressed concern about being given *another label* or being further defined and/or stigmatised by negative narratives.

However, as a charity whose mission is to empower and give voice to Romani (Gypsy), Welsh, Scottish and Irish Traveller people, the Traveller Movement also has a duty of care to address issues that affect the safety, wellbeing, and rights *of all* community members. Silence, even when motivated by protection, can unintentionally allow harm to continue.

The Traveller Movement used a mixed-method approach for this peer research project to gather data on HP and HBA within Romani (Gypsy), Welsh, Scottish and Irish Traveller communities. The organisation conducted a review of existing literature and data, held consultations with community members, issued two surveys – one for community members and one for organisations/support services – and conducted semi structured interviews with community members and support services. Section 8 of this report consists of the research conducted with community members. Section 9 of the report consists of findings from research conducted with representatives of support organisations.

9 Community Responses

a. Methodology

Initially, the Traveller Movement recruited eight Romani (Gypsy), Roma and Irish Traveller peer researchers for this project. The role of the peer researcher included designing the interview and survey questions, conducting semi-structured interviews with members of their communities, and reviewing the final report. Before stepping into the role, the peer researchers were required to attend peer-research training, in addition to specialist training on HBA with Karma Nirvana and in-house safeguarding training.

The Traveller Movement, with support of the peer researchers, developed an online survey for community members using Survey Monkey. This survey focused on the effects of shame and reputation damage within the Romani (Gypsy), Roma and Welsh, Scottish and Irish Traveller communities. The survey was sent to community members via email and across our social media platforms in January 2025. In total, 40 responses were received from the community survey. The majority of respondents were women (31), although a number of men did complete the survey (9). Most respondents identified as Romani (Gypsy) (14) or Irish Traveller (18), with smaller numbers identifying as Welsh Traveller (1), Scottish Traveller (2) or Roma (1). Four respondents had identified their ethnicity as 'other', this is discussed in more detail in the following section.

The peer researchers conducted semi-structured interviews with community members. Most of the interview participants were recruited through the peer researchers' personal networks; however, the Traveller Movement also reached out to those who indicated that they wanted to be interviewed in the survey. Interviewees were given the option to attend an in-person interview or via a phone call and each interview lasted between 30 minutes to an hour. Overall, our peer researchers conducted 31 interviews in total. This was a smaller number than the Traveller Movement had anticipated at the outset of the research. The lower number of interviews can be attributed to the negative backlash the organisation received on social media during the early phases of the project. Unfortunately, the backlash raised significant concerns for some peer researchers' safety and ultimately, four peer researchers decided to withdraw from the project including the Roma peer researcher.

As with the survey, most interviewees were Romani (Gypsies) or Irish Travellers, and most were women. While the project was peer-led, participants were also given the option to speak to a researcher from outside the community if they preferred. All community interviews were recorded with consent, anonymised during transcription, and handled securely in line with our data protection regulations. All interviewees were given a participation voucher for their time.

b. Table of Respondents

Ethnic Group/Gender	Interviewed	Responded to Survey	Total
Romani (Gypsy) – Male	1	2	3
Romani (Gypsy) – Female	19	12	31
Irish Traveller – Male	2	6	8
Irish Traveller – Female	9	12	21
Roma – Male	0	0	0
Roma – Female	0	1	1
Scottish Traveller – Male	0	0	0
Scottish Traveller – Female	0	2	2
Welsh Traveller – Male	0	0	0
Welsh Traveller – Female	0	1	1
Other	0	4	4
Total	31	40	71

The table above shows the breakdown of all participant responses we received from community members through the survey and interviews. Out of the 40 responses received to the survey, 35 of these were included in the final analysis. Three out of the four responses categorised as ‘Other’ have been removed from the final data set, as it was not possible to ascertain whether they were community members. For example, one respondent had identified themselves as ‘Scottish’ in the survey with no reference to being a ‘Traveller’. The fourth individual who had categorised themselves as ‘Other’ identified as a ‘Scottish Traveller and Irish Gypsy Traveller’ and was therefore included in the final data analysis as ‘Scottish/Irish Traveller.’ The Traveller Movement also removed one response due to evidence of response bias. Response bias occurs when people respond inaccurately or falsely to questions, whether accidentally or deliberately.

Roma communities were initially included within the proposed scope of this project due to existing partnership work with Roma organisations and practitioners. However, as the research progressed, it became clear that a separate, dedicated approach would be needed to reflect the distinct experiences, cultures, and dialects of Roma communities. The Roma peer researcher who was part of the initial team was unable to continue, and only one Roma participant completed the survey. The Traveller Movement, therefore, made the decision to remove Roma from the scope of the research. This means that the survey response from the singular Roma participant was removed from the data set.

In summary, the data analysis of community members’ responses contained within this research report is reflective of the survey and semi-structured interview responses gathered predominantly from Romani (Gypsies) and Irish Travellers, in addition to limited responses gathered from Welsh and Scottish Travellers.

c. Survey Findings

The survey consisted of 10 questions (not including demographics), combining a mix of both closed (quantitative) and open ended (qualitative) questions. It was designed to gather views and experiences on shame, reputation damage and HBA within the different communities. The survey questions focused on the importance of reputation, the consequences of perceived shame, awareness and prevalence of HBA, and if cultural expectations could influence certain behaviour.

During the design process, the Traveller Movement consulted with members of the Romani (Gypsy), Roma and Irish Traveller Communities (alongside the peer researchers) to shape the survey and interview questions, with particular attention given to the use of language to ensure it resonated with community members.

In this section, the survey findings have been presented question by question, with a summary of responses and key themes identified throughout all responses.

Reputation and Shame

● 'In your community, how important is maintaining a good reputation?'

Overall, 94.3% of respondents stated that having a good reputation is either 'extremely important' or 'very important'. The data does slightly vary for the different communities. Irish, Welsh and Scottish Travellers all stated that having a good reputation is either 'extremely important,' or 'very important'. For Romani (Gypsies), the majority said it is either 'extremely important' or 'very important' (86%) however 14% (2 people) described maintaining a good reputation as 'somewhat important'.

Table 2					
	Extremely Important	Very Important	Somewhat Important	Not so Important	Not at all Important
Romani (Gypsy)	8	4	2	0	0
Irish Traveller	13	4	0	0	0
Welsh Traveller	1	0	0	0	0
Scottish Traveller	1	1	0	0	0
Scottish/Irish Traveller	1	0	0	0	0
Total	24	9	2	0	0

As demonstrated in the table above, no respondents selected 'not at all important' or 'not so important,' indicating a strong agreement among all respondents that maintaining a good reputation is considered important amongst the different communities.

● **‘What are some examples of actions that could be seen as shameful/damaging to a family’s reputation?’**

Respondents were asked to give some examples of actions that could be considered ‘shameful’ and ‘damaging’ to a family’s reputation. Across all 35 responses, 6 key themes emerged:

Table 3	
Key Themes:	Interviewed
Female Behaviour and Expectations	Respondents stated having sex before marriage, having multiple relationships, infidelity, promiscuity and having close relationships with men who were not related to you could have a negative effect on your reputation.
Not Fulfilling Gendered Expectations	A man being lazy, unable to make a living, not going out to fight when needed, must be the provider and for women it would be not keeping a clean home, not getting married, not having children etc.
Identifying as LGBTQ+	A man or a woman coming out as LGBTQ+ may also be seen as shameful.
Relationship and Family Unit Breakdown	Respondents referenced divorce, affairs, leaving a relationship, social services involvement, children in care.
Substance and Alcohol Use	A woman drinking before marriage or a man or woman taking drugs can have a negative effect on your family reputation.
Personal Presentation	How you are perceived by people, the cleanliness of your home, your character, how you dress and how you portray yourself can also have an effect on one’s reputation and a family’s reputation.

These themes were prevalent across the ethnic groups, with female behaviour and expectations mentioned most frequently by each of the different communities. The actions seen as damaging to a family’s reputation largely focused on women engaging in certain behaviours such as drinking before marriage or involvement in extramarital or pre-marital relations. There was also a significant emphasis on gendered expectations, with respondents commonly stating that it is ‘shameful’ when a man or a woman does not live up to their expectations and roles within the community.

Although reference to female behaviour and gendered expectations were prominent throughout all community responses, other forms of behaviour that deviate from social expectations, regardless of gender, were identified as shameful or damaging to a family’s reputation. For example: Romani (Gypsy) respondents in particular, also identified substance and alcohol use and crime (e.g. theft) as ‘shameful’ actions within their community.

*‘Anything from dresswear to conduct can bring shame on the family.
Anything outside of the box. No matter how minor.’*

Irish Traveller woman.

.....

● **‘If someone’s reputation is damaged, how would people in your community typically react? Give an example.’**

An analysis of the survey findings suggests that reactions to reputation damage vary across the different communities, with ‘social exclusion’ being the most reported reaction across the ethnic groups. 27 responses indicated that individuals whose reputation had been damaged may be disowned by their family, avoided or shunned by others in the community. Some respondents mentioned that friends could also start to distance themselves out of fear that their reputation could be damaged by association. ‘Gossip’ and ‘shaming’ were frequently mentioned, with 13 respondents referring to the prevalence of community members gossiping about others within their community online or in person. Only a few responses mentioned instances of physical abuse as a consequence of a damaged reputation. Respondents also highlighted that having a damaged reputation may ruin future marriage prospects for women.

‘It depends on how far the news has spread and who knows but normally people wouldn’t want to be associated with someone who has a bad reputation, as it can be spread to them.’ Irish Traveller man.

‘They’d be thrown out of our community and families would disown them.’

Romani (Gypsy) woman.

● **‘At what age did you begin to think about issues like reputation, shame, and scandal?’**

Most respondents reported becoming aware of issues like reputation, shame and scandal before the age of 15. The majority (57.2%) indicated that they were between the ages of 11-15 and 25.7% said that they were under 10. A smaller proportion of respondents (17.1%) stated they were over 16. These figures indicate that Romani (Gypsies), Welsh, Scottish and Irish Travellers predominantly become aware of these concepts during childhood or during early teenage years.

An analysis was also conducted into whether the age at which respondents became aware of reputation, shame and scandal differed between males and females from the communities. The survey data shows little to no difference in the ages both male and female participants become aware of these concepts. However, it is important to take into consideration the smaller number of male respondents compared to female respondents.

● 'What kinds of things were you most concerned/worried about at that age?'

'Personal conduct' and 'appearance' were the most common responses to this question across the different ethnic groups and for both males and females. Respondents noted that they often worried about how they looked, how they were viewed by other families, how they behaved and how they presented themselves around their community and other communities.

'Well, I was aware of being shamed from under the age of ten [...] around the conduct of female behaviour in my community. The do's and don't[s]. I had to protect my reputation at all costs.' Irish Traveller woman.

'People thinking I was dirty because I wasn't cleaning all the time. Making sure I didn't talk to any boys as I didn't want to be shamed.' Romani (Gypsy) woman.

'Going against the moral code of your family even if this went against your own.' Romani (Gypsy) woman.

'[I was worried] about how my family were viewed by other communities.' Romani (Gypsy) man.

Other commonly cited concerns were around shame and scandal, marriage and being able to provide for their family. Similar to the previous question, an analysis was conducted into whether the concerns differed between males and females from the communities. Men within the communities mentioned that they were most worried about their reputation, being able to earn a living, being seen as a 'real man', and about how they were viewed by others.

Women, on the other hand, were more concerned about 'ruining their reputation' or getting scandalised, not getting married, the cleanliness of their home and the types of friends/people they would associate with as well as how they were viewed by others.

'My name and how to keep it from getting ruined[...]could never talk to a boy in case I got scandal[ised][...] Not allowed boys who wasn't family on social media.' Irish Traveller woman.

'Being talk[ed] about, which would lead to getting a bad reputation and not getting married.' Irish Traveller woman.

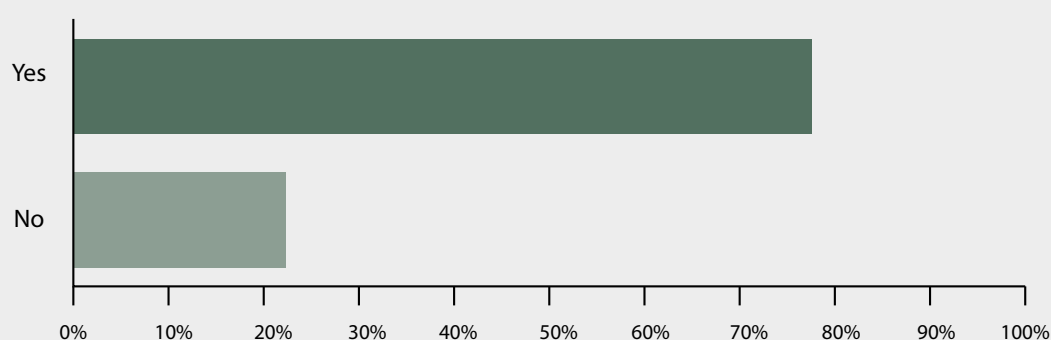
'My parents trusted me to go up town and my friends' parents never, so I was worried they would make lies about me.' Welsh Traveller woman.

'I was worried about being able to earn a living when I grew up.' Irish Traveller man.

● 'Have you ever changed your behaviour to avoid your reputation being damaged?'

Survey respondents were also asked whether they had ever altered the way they act or behave to avoid their reputation being damaged. 77.14% of respondents (27) indicated that they had changed their behaviour, while only 22.86% (8) respondents said they had not done this. Out of the 27 respondents who had said they had changed their behaviour, 37.04% (10) were Romani (Gypsy), 51.85% (14) were Irish Travellers, 7.41% (2) were Scottish Travellers and 3.7% (1) identified as a Welsh Traveller.

Figure 1



Honour Based Abuse and Harmful Practices

● ‘Have you heard of the phrase “Honour Based Abuse?” If yes, what does it mean to you?’

	Yes, I have heard of the phrase	No, I have not heard of the phrase	
Romani (Gypsy)	7	7	
Irish Traveller	11	6	
Welsh Traveller	0	1	
Scottish Traveller	0	2	
Scottish/Irish Traveller	1	0	
Total	19	16	35

52.5% (19) of respondents said that they had heard of the phrase “honour”-based abuse, while 47.5% (16) had not. The table below breaks the responses down into the awareness of HBA within the different ethnic groups.

As can be seen in Table 4, the majority of Irish Traveller respondents (11) answered ‘yes’ to the above question, compared with 6 who selected ‘no’. Romani (Gypsy) respondents were evenly split when asked about awareness of HBA, with 7 having heard of the term and 7 who had not. Scottish and Welsh Traveller respondents stated that they had not heard of the phrase – except for the individual who identified as a Scottish/Irish Traveller. However, it is important to note that the sample size of respondents from the Welsh and Scottish Traveller communities is too small to be considered reflective of the wider Welsh and/or Scottish Traveller communities.

Respondents were then asked what the phrase HBA meant to them. While many individuals had a general understanding of the term, there were some respondents who had heard the term but were unsure of its exact meaning. Some respondents identified HBA as a form of ‘abuse’ that is ‘committed in the name of family “honour”’ or when ‘someone has shamed the family’.

Below are some examples of responses to the question ‘if yes, what does it mean to you?’

‘It describes what sometimes happens in the Traveller community. I understand it’s not as harsh as maybe some other cultures, however, still has a huge negative impact on the lives of those effected by HBA.’ Irish Traveller woman.

‘It’s a form of abuse to control an individual in a disguise of protecting one’s reputation. To keep the family name intact.’ Irish Traveller woman.

‘Where family members abuse someone because they’ve shamed the family.’

Romani (Gypsy) woman.

‘Abuse or violence in the name of family “honour.”’ Romani (Gypsy) woman.

There were a few respondents that stated they had only heard of HBA occurring within other communities, but not within Romani (Gypsies), Welsh, Scottish and Irish Traveller communities. Across the different ethnic groups, HBA was frequently associated with being ‘something that

happens in Asian communities'. This perception of HBA can be attributed to the fact that 'Gypsy, Roma and Traveller' communities are lesser recognised victims of HBA,¹⁸ as discussed earlier in this report.

● **'The following are examples of forms of so-called honour-based abuse. Have you heard of any of the following before?'**

The responses to this question have been presented in the below table, broken down into the number of responses from each of the ethnic groups. Respondents were asked to select all that apply.

Types of HBA	Romani (Gypsy)	Irish Traveller	Welsh Traveller	Scottish Traveller	Scottish/ Irish Traveller	Total
Spiritual Abuse (controlling someone's beliefs or religious practices, using faith as a means of coercion)	5	6	0	0	1	12
Forced/Early Marriage (being pressured or forced into marriage, sometimes at a young age)	9	10	1	1	0	21
Virginity testing (invasive procedures to 'prove' virginity)	5	7	0	1	1	14
Lie detectors/swearing on the bible (being forced to prove innocence or honesty using lie detectors or religious oaths)	10	17	1	1	1	30
Shame/scandal (social shaming or exclusion due to behaviour seen as dishonourable)	12	14	1	1	1	29
Acid attacks (e.g., ammonia) or scarring (physical harm used as a punishment or a warning)	7	9	1	1	0	18
Curses/ witchcraft (threats of spiritual harm or being accused of having a supernatural power)	8	7	1	0	0	16
Conversion therapy (attempts to change someone's sexual orientation or gender identity)	3	6	0	1	0	10
None of the above	0	0	0	0	0	0

The above responses indicate a good level of awareness of the different forms of HBA listed above in the table across the different communities. Respondents were then asked whether they had heard of any of these forms of HBA happening within their respective communities.

¹⁸ Harm Network, 'Honour Abuse Research Matrix: What is 'honour' based abuse?', (2025).

- ‘The following are examples of forms of so-called honour-based abuse. Have you heard of any of the following happening within your community?’

Types of HBA	Romani (Gypsy)	Irish Traveller	Welsh Traveller	Scottish Traveller	Scottish/Irish Traveller	Total
Spiritual Abuse	4	4	0	0	1	9
Forced/Early Marriage	4	8	0	0	0	12
Virginity Testing	3	2	0	1	1	7
Lie Detectors/Swearing on the Bible	8	14	1	2	1	26
Shame/Scandal	11	15	1	2	1	30
Acid Attacks or Scarring	0	7	0	0	0	7
Curses/Witchcraft	3	5	1	0	0	9
Conversion Therapy	0	2	0	1	0	3
None of the Above	2	2	0	0	0	4

As can be seen in Table 6, there are some forms of HBA that respondents from each of the ethnic groups identified as practices that occur within their own communities. The majority of respondents across all ethnic groups stated that they had heard of ‘shame/scandal’ (85.7%) and the use of ‘lie detectors and/or swearing on the Bible’ (74.3%) occurring within their communities.

To note, one Irish Traveller respondent had not selected ‘shame and scandal’ in response to the previous question where they were asked to select the forms of HBA they had heard of but later selected ‘shame and scandal’ in response to the question about its occurrence within their community. This explains why 14 Irish Travellers stated that they had heard of ‘Shame/Scandal’, in general and 15 Irish Travellers stated that they had heard of ‘Shame/Scandal’ occurring within their community. We can attribute this to human error.

Other forms of HBA were also identified, including ‘forced/early marriage’ (12 respondents) and ‘spiritual abuse’ (9) and ‘curses/witchcraft’ (9). A smaller number of respondents mentioned ‘conversion therapy’ (3) and ‘virginity testing’ (7). ‘Acid attacks/scarring’ was only mentioned by Irish Travellers (7) as a form of HBA. Notably, 4 individuals stated they had not heard of any of these forms of HBA occurring within their communities.

It is important to reiterate that the small sample size in this study means that the above data should not be used to make generalisations about the different communities and/or the prevalence of these forms of HBA within them. Rather, this data should be used as guidance to help professionals understand what forms of HBA they **may** encounter when supporting a victim-survivor from the Romani (Gypsy), Welsh, Scottish and Irish Traveller communities.

● **‘How much do you agree with the statement?’ “*Romani (Gypsy), Roma and Irish Travellers can be at risk of so-called honour-based abuse from their families or community*”**

When asked their level of agreement with the following statement ‘Romani (Gypsy), Roma and Irish Travellers can be at risk of so-called honour-based abuse from their families or community’, 65.71% (23) of respondents selected ‘Strongly Agree’ or ‘Agree’.

It is important to remind readers that ‘Roma’ communities are included in the wording of this statement as the survey was initially designed with the intention of including Roma within this research project.

Table 7					
	Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree
Irish Traveller	7	5	5	0	0
Romani (Gypsy)	5	4	3	1	1
Welsh Traveller	1	0	0	0	0
Scottish Traveller	0	1	0	1	0
Scottish/ Irish Traveller	0	0	1	0	0
Total	13	10	9	2	1

d. Interview Findings

Following the survey, a series of peer led interviews were carried out to explore the issues of HP and HBA in greater depth. While the survey offered both qualitative and quantitative insights into the prevalence and awareness of HP and HBA within the Romani (Gypsy), Welsh, Scottish and Irish Traveller communities, the interviews were designed to explore these issues further.

The interviews consisted of 13 questions, many of which expanded on those asked in the survey. All interviews were conducted by the project's trained peer researchers, transcribed and analysed to identify common key themes across all the responses. In total, 31 interviews were conducted with members of the Romani (Gypsy) and Irish Traveller communities. Please see Table 1 (pg. 22) for the full breakdown of interviewees from each ethnic group.

It is important to note that this section only contains responses from Romani (Gypsy) and Irish Traveller communities, as no interviews were conducted with Welsh or Scottish Travellers. Therefore, the findings and insights discussed throughout this section of the report will only reference those two ethnic groups.

The findings from the interviews have been categorised by the key themes that arose below.

Reputation, Shame and Gendered Expectations

● The Importance of Reputation

It would appear that within Romani (Gypsy) and Irish Traveller communities, maintaining a good reputation is very important to most community members.

Interviewees talked about reputation as showing '*the class and status of each family*' which can significantly impact how they are perceived and treated by other members of the community. A good reputation is seen as a reflection of good character, good morals and a good upbringing.

'Amongst Travellers, we have different status, and we look at each other in different prospects of name, power and all that and it means we can make decisions on that family, whether they're quiet people or rowdy people.' **Irish Traveller man.**
.....

For many individuals within these communities, reputation isn't only about an individual's behaviour, it is linked to the whole family's standing within the wider community. The actions of one individual within the family unit can in turn affect the other members of the family. In some cases, it can even extend to those who associate with that family or person. Community members often mentioned feeling as though they represented their whole family and as though their actions would affect the reputations of wider family members, and potentially even ruin their family's 'status' within the community.

'I represent my family and anything I do looks bad on the family.' **Irish Traveller woman.**
.....
'It's a really strong belief that everybody you know should have a have a good name.'
Romani (Gypsy) woman.
.....

● Early Awareness of Reputation, Shame and Scandal

‘Shaming’ and/or ‘scandalising’ refers to actions that are intended to cause someone else to feel shame for being or doing something that another person(s) feels is wrong or goes against their ‘community behavioural standards’.¹⁹

Responses provided in the interviews with community members indicate that individuals from the Romani (Gypsy) and Irish Traveller communities often become exposed to the concept of shame and reputation from quite an early age. Similar to the data in the survey, interviewees reported that they became aware of these issues from roughly around 11 to 15 years old. Many interviewees also commented that reputation, shame and scandal were concepts that they knew about while growing up. One Romani (Gypsy) interviewee commented that *‘it’s strummed into you from being no age really, I’ve always had it in the forefront of my mind’*.

● Shame and Reputation Damage

There are many actions that could be seen as ‘damaging’ or ‘shameful’ to a family’s name or reputation, some examples mentioned included female conduct and behaviour, gendered expectations, criminal deviance, being LGBTQ+, substance and alcohol abuse, infidelity or divorce, premarital or extra marital relations, or any actions that go against the traditions and expectations of the culture. Similar to the survey results, the most common response related to female conduct and behaviour and gendered expectations.

Given the wide range of behaviours that could damage someone’s reputation, interviewees described how they often modify their behaviour and avoid doing certain things to maintain and protect their reputation. 71% of those interviewed said they had changed their behaviour and would avoid doing certain things around other family and community members, while only 29% said they hadn’t. Some examples of behaviour community members stated they would avoid in order to protect their reputation included: drinking alcohol and/or using drugs, having boys on social media, having a boyfriend or speaking to men that were not related to them.

Other interviewees noted how they would alter their words and would avoid certain topics when talking to people, as well as how they dress and present themselves. Some also said they were careful about who they associated with, often avoiding individuals who had a damaged reputation or those from the settled community.

‘I have heard it happen with other girls [...] they’re seen talking to a man, even if they’re only asking directions and they get called a lot of names.’ Irish Traveller woman.

‘I had to become a shadow of myself and suppress myself as much as I possibly could, not to draw attention to myself, or getting myself a bad name, because that would reflect on my family especially my father and my brothers.’ Irish Traveller woman.

Out of the 31 community members interviewed, 90.3% (28 individuals) had heard of someone who had their reputation damaged before. Of those 28 individuals, 16.1% (5 individuals) had stated that they had their own reputation damaged at some point. Only 9.7% of interviewees (3 individuals) said they have never heard of anyone whose reputation had been damaged and had not experienced it themselves.

19 The Traveller Movement, ‘The public shaming game within Traveller communities,’ (2020).

If someone within the Romani (Gypsy) and Irish Traveller community damages their reputation, interviewees indicated that there are almost always consequences. However, several interviewees noted that the nature and severity of these consequences often ‘depend on the family’ and what an individual has done to damage their reputation. Interviewees commonly mentioned that the person could be ‘talked about’, disowned and ostracised, they could lose friends, ruin future marriage prospects (for women), and individuals could also be at risk of emotional or physical abuse. A few mentioned that some women could be pressured to get married to restore her reputation and conform to community expectations.

‘[Reputation is] just a big part of the full culture. Really, you don’t want to be bringing shame on yourself or your family. Doesn’t look good, and people won’t want to talk to you.’ Romani (Gypsy) woman.

If someone damages their reputation ‘they can be outcasted in many ways[...] depending on what the person is accused of doing, she might want to fight back and say I didn’t do it, or I did. And then that would be taken to the local priest and [they’ll] be told to put their hand on the Bible to clear their name and then do a lie detector to clear their name. And even when a woman would jump through all hoops[...] it never goes away.’ Irish Traveller woman.

● Gendered Expectations

While the importance placed on maintaining one’s reputation is shared by both men and women, interviewees noted that the expectations and consequences were much harsher for women than men, if they done something ‘shameful.’ There is a significant amount of importance placed on maintaining women’s reputations within the Romani (Gypsy) and Irish Traveller communities,²⁰ meaning that women and girls from these communities tend to be expected to adhere to stricter rules and/or expectations compared to men, regarding what they should and should not do.

Interviewees stated that women from the Romani (Gypsy) and Irish Traveller communities are expected to ‘have a clean home,’ ‘know how to cook,’ ‘get married,’ ‘be a good mother and a wife’ and ‘to preserve her reputation at all costs’.

‘Up to about the age of 8 or 9 I could have my childhood. [...] And then at 12, it was totally different. [...] you’re expected to be able to run the household at that age at ease [...] By the age of 13, then I was asked to get married, arranged marriage. So, it was just a waiting game until I got legally married at 16.’ Irish Traveller woman.

With regards to gendered expectations for men within the communities, interviewees stated that men from the Romani (Gypsy) and Irish Traveller communities ‘are expected to be the sole provider of the family,’ ‘be a good worker and a good husband’, and to protect his family and live up to the traditional ideals of masculinity.

Findings from the interviews suggest that Romani (Gypsy) and Irish Traveller women are frowned upon if they engage in any pre-marital or extra-marital relations, if they drink or smoke before marriage, and if they do not dress appropriately or act in a certain manner. If women engage in these types of behaviours, they are at risk of having their reputation damaged which

²⁰ Plan International, *The State of Girl’s Rights in the UK 2019-2020* (2020) ; Traveller Movement, *Under the Magnifying Glass: A report on shaming within the Gypsy and Traveller Communities* (2021)

could ruin friendships, future marriage prospects or could destroy her familial and community ties as discussed above. However, for men this is not the case. One Romani (Gypsy) woman explained that if men *'go against the cultural expectations, it can get brushed under the rug, whereas a woman, that would be the talk of a full town.'*

One male interviewee described his own experience of reputation damage. While some people thought he was 'reckless', he did not face any serious repercussions. He maintained his relationships with his friends and family and continued to be accepted as part of the community, which is generally not the case for women who have a damaged reputation. Several interviewees, however, did highlight that if a man was 'to come out' or was perceived as being LGBTQ+, they would face much more serious repercussions, as men within the Romani (Gypsy) and Irish Traveller communities are expected to follow strict ideals of masculinity.

Being LGBTQ+ or being perceived as such may have serious consequences for both men and women within the community. Interviewees explained that this would be considered 'shameful' and could result in disownment, ostracism or risk of emotional or physical harm. Interviewees shared that being LGBTQ+ can be seen as going against the gendered and cultural expectations placed upon men and women within the Romani (Gypsy) and Irish Traveller communities and may be looked down on by some community members.

'One female was caught kissing another female and her parents beat her.'

Romani (Gypsy) woman.

One interviewee reflected on their own experience of being LGBTQ+ within their community: *'I would say they'll definitely be certain people that that wouldn't want to associate with me. A lot of people still do, which has been like a pleasant surprise for me, but a lot of my very close family cut me off when they found out'* - Romani (Gypsy) woman.

● Community Opinions on Accessing Support

Interviewees indicated that seeking outside help for family-related issues is uncommon within the Romani (Gypsy) and Irish Traveller communities. Over half of those interviewed said that they did not know anyone within their community that had sought outside help from police or local authorities for any family problems they may have experienced. However, there were several respondents who mentioned that they had heard of other family or community members confiding in priests or other faith leaders when there had been an issue. Community members highlighted how seeking advice or support from a faith leader is often seen as a more acceptable way to address familial issues and conflicts (as opposed to seeking advice from other services) as it is confidential and community members know that *'it wouldn't go any further.'*

Interviewees said that approaching formal authorities such as the police or social services can be perceived as 'grassing', which may cause tension within the family or community and could further escalate existing problems. One Romani (Gypsy) respondent said that it would be more accepted to speak to a faith leader than the police as *'it's confidential and the Church won't do anything about it, where[as] the police would.'*

'The police is the very last resort, [...] I was married for years, and I didn't call the police once.'

Irish Traveller woman.

● Harmful Practices and ‘Honour’-Based Abuse

As with the survey respondents, awareness of the term “‘honour” based abuse’ amongst interviewees varied. When asked if they had heard the term HBA, just over half (51.6%) of individuals interviewed said they had not heard the term or were unsure, with 48.4% of individuals saying they had heard the term HBA before.

Interviewees who reported that they had heard the term shared a similar understanding of HBA. Many of these individuals linked HBA with shame and reputation damage, while others frequently associated the term with Asian communities. Community members’ association of HBA with Asian communities was also noted in the survey findings.

One interviewee said, *‘it’s usually referred to the Asian community, but, within the Travelling community, it’s a taboo subject, they do it but behind closed doors[...]*’ - Irish Traveller man.

● Whether HBA Occurs within the Communities

Peer researchers provided a definition of HBA to interviewees, who were then asked whether they believed HBA occurs within the Romani (Gypsy) and Irish Traveller communities. Of the 31 interviews conducted, only 15 interviewees answered this question, as some were still unsure of the term HBA and therefore could not determine whether this occurs within their community. Only those who understood the term have been included in the final analysis. Of these 15 interviewees, 80% (12) of interviewees said yes, 6.7% (1) responded no and 13.3% (2) were unsure whether HBA occurs within the Romani (Gypsy) and Irish Traveller communities.

Most interviewees said that forced marriages are not common within their communities, although some acknowledged that forced marriages can happen. One interviewee stated:

‘100% “honour”-based abuse happens in the Travelling community. I had a forced marriage[...] forced, arranged marriage. And my first marriage was arranged when I was 13, and the second one was arranged. You know, that came off and the second one was arranged when I was 14. I did not want to get married[...] I was just cast aside, like it didn’t matter what I thought.’

Irish Traveller woman.

An analysis of the responses indicate that forced marriages are uncommon within the Romani (Gypsy) and Irish Traveller communities, although not unheard of. Some interviewees stated that whilst they weren’t aware of forced marriages taking place within their communities, they acknowledged that ‘pressured’ or ‘encouraged’ marriages do occur under certain circumstances.

On the topic of forced marriage, one respondent said, *‘I’ve never known it so but, I mean, there’s some people that encourage it, but I wouldn’t say forced[...] I wouldn’t use that word[...] You know, the woman is expecting a baby, and then it’s sort of right, you really need to marry this man now to save your reputation’* - Romani (Gypsy) woman.

Some other interviewees provided similar examples of ‘pressured’ or ‘encouraged’ marriages, with the most common example given being if a woman becomes pregnant outside of marriage, she may be pressured into getting married. Likewise, if a woman’s reputation has been damaged, she may be encouraged to get married quickly to restore the family’s reputation.

Some interviewees also spoke about other forms of abuse including domestic abuse and financial abuse, with interviewees describing the latter as something that may happen with a husband towards his wife or a father towards his daughter.

Below are some additional quotes from interviewees sharing their opinions on whether HBA exists within the Romani (Gypsy) and Irish Traveller communities:

'I do think this happens, because in our family, if you don't keep up your reputation, keep it clean, you get outcasted and scandalised.'

Irish Traveller woman.

'I think not[...] I think domestic abuse does. I don't think forced marriages so much and that sort of abuse[...] I can't speak for Irish Travellers [...] I don't know.'

Romani (Gypsy) woman.

'You hear of it all the time[...] Travellers care so much about their reputation that they do it maybe not so much physical abuse, but they do financial control in that if someone has been as shamed of the family and they do isolate them and kick them out family if they have been shameful. Maybe not to the extreme as like forced marriage and that, I wouldn't say that happens, but I'd say financial abuse, like lie detectors, swearing on the Bible, isolation, all that happens[...]'

Overall, interviewees provided mixed responses regarding whether they believe HBA occurs within their communities. Some of those interviewed had never heard the term prior to being interviewed and as such, were 'unsure' as to whether HBA occurs within their communities. It would appear as though forced marriages are uncommon within the Romani (Gypsy) and Irish Traveller communities, although not unheard of. Some interviewees noted that 'pressured' or 'encouraged' marriages do occur within the communities and that these practices often take place to restore a damaged reputation.

● Community Members' Recommendations for Support Services

96.7% of interviewees believed that it is important for services to understand the impact of reputation damage on victim-survivors from the Romani (Gypsy) and Irish Traveller communities. Interviewees expressed the importance of services becoming more aware of the issues affecting Romani (Gypsy), and Irish Traveller communities, highlighting that increased knowledge would help to close the gap between services and community members. Having a better understanding of the culture, the importance of reputation and the potential impacts of damaging that reputation would mean that services could offer better, and more culturally appropriate support to Romani (Gypsy) and Irish Traveller individuals.

'I've seen young people take their lives over the reputation being damaged if more people was aware that that could happen, maybe they could step in.'

Romani (Gypsy) woman.

Some interviewees also said that if services were more aware of the impact reputation damage has on victim-survivors, services would be better able to provide realistic solutions and advice to victim-survivors fleeing abuse. This could also break down barriers and restore confidence in support services for individuals from the Romani (Gypsy) and Irish Traveller communities.

'[If] they can't do anything to help the person or support them, as service user, then I'm not going to trust them, because they don't understand me. And when I'm explaining something and their undermining me and telling me, "No, you can do that" when I'm telling them I can't do that, then I'm losing all trust and I'm backing away.'

Irish Traveller woman.

'Yes, I do think police and other services need to be aware of what goes on and obviously give some more support for it, as you can't just get up and leave your husband, because there's a lot of stuff that comes with leaving them in our community.'

Irish Traveller woman.

Romani (Gypsy) and Irish Traveller interviewees highlighted the need for better support, providing the following examples:

- More 'safe' and 'confidential' spaces, where individuals could get support from services without the fear of judgement and without the fear of other members of their community finding out. One interviewee commented that there is that added pressure from the wider community finding out and judging which may prevent victim-survivors from getting the support they need.
- Develop more Romani (Gypsy) and Irish Traveller specific education on these issues and employ outreach workers to support young people within the community.
- Communicate with individuals on a case-by-case basis rather than making assumptions based on prior conceptions of Romani (Gypsies) and Irish Travellers. For example, one participant noted that a service had assumed, without asking her, that she would not want to be seen by a male doctor. This was based on the belief that Romani (Gypsy) women may prefer to see a female doctor. This assumption delayed her from receiving the care she urgently needed.
- Services should improve their understanding of what terminology is appropriate to use with community members, particularly with women. Individuals suggested that conversations with women should be in private and not in the presence of men.
- More culturally sensitive support is needed. Services should receive training on the different cultures. This training should include information about the impact of shame and reputation damage within the communities and how this affects individuals from accessing support.

● On Using the Term 'Honour'-Based Abuse

Interviewees had mixed opinions on whether the term HBA should be used in relation to the Romani (Gypsy) and Irish Traveller communities. 51.6% (16) of interviewees said it should, 35.5% (11) said it should not and 12.9% (4) were unsure whether this term should be used. These findings show that there is an uncertainty regarding the relevance and appropriateness of this term within the communities. Many interviewees suggested that an alternative term should be used – one that is easier to understand and that doesn't sound as intimidating as HBA.

'I think it is a scary term. It sounds quite foreign, alien[...] I could understand, if people heard it, they would put their guard up straight away and say "no". However, if they use it as an umbrella term and then highlighted the bullet points, then people could not deny that these are some of the things that are happening.'

Irish Traveller woman.

'I think it should be a different term. I think maybe just label it under domestic abuse. I don't think "honour"-based abuse needs to be used because that's more associated with forced marriage and FGM[...] I do think maybe harmful practices is probably a better word or maybe just label it under domestic abuse.'

Irish Traveller woman.

Others felt that the use of this term could be beneficial for raising awareness on the topic and to show that support is available for people who may be experiencing HBA. Interviewees suggested that although some community members may be reluctant to discuss HBA, acknowledging that it may happen within the communities may encourage others who may be experiencing it to get the support they need.

'It's a good thing to have support if anybody needs it to help them get housing and any support they need financially or whichever way, because a lot of Travellers don't know what to turn to and what to do. So, I think it's good.'

Romani (Gypsy) woman.

'I don't think it could be damaging. I dare say some people wouldn't like it if they admitted to it. You know, some people might judge you, but, but I personally think it's a good thing.' **Romani (Gypsy) woman.**

As has been noted throughout this report, some interviewees felt that the word HBA is widely associated with other ethnic groups, particularly Asian communities. Interviewees felt the term could be stigmatising for their community. As well as this, others expressed that this term could be associated with extreme violence such as 'honour killings' which could stop people from coming forward.

'I think they will all associate it, like I did with the Asian community.'

Romani (Gypsy) woman.

'It kind of infers that it could be violence, and I know it is, but it would deter people coming forward, because [...] you've heard of honor-based killings within other demographics.'

Irish Traveller man.

This question ultimately received mixed responses from members of the Romani (Gypsy) and Irish Traveller communities. Whilst some interviewees suggested that using the term could be beneficial in helping victim-survivors from their communities come forward and access the appropriate support, others noted that the term may not be appropriate for their community. Some interviewees expressed concerns that using the term could stigmatise their communities. It is worth noting the preference indicated by some interviewees for the term 'harmful practices,' over "'honour"-based abuse.'

10 Responses from Support Services

This section of the report looks at the responses provided by support services and organisations through a survey and interviews.



a. Methodology

Survey

The Traveller Movement developed a survey for services and organisations who may have engaged victim-survivors of HP and HBA from the Romani (Gypsy), Welsh, Scottish and Irish Traveller communities. The aim of the survey was to find out whether services had supported victim-survivors from these communities and to highlight any gaps in sector knowledge. The survey was sent to 32 organisations in May 2025 via targeted emails to representatives from a range of services including the NHS, the police, domestic abuse charities, HBA specific organisations, advice services supporting members of the Irish diaspora and Romani (Gypsy), Welsh, Scottish and Irish Traveller support organisations (hereafter ‘Gypsy/Traveller support organisations’).

Organisations were also asked to distribute the survey further through their own networks. Overall, the Traveller Movement received 44 responses. As with the community-facing survey, representatives from the different communities consulted on the wording of the support services’ survey. Survey questions were designed with the explicit intent to establish a snapshot of:

- How different organisations understand and use the term HBA;
- The types of support provided to victim-survivors of HP and HBA;
- Whether organisations have supported victim-survivors of HBA from the Romani (Gypsy), Welsh, Scottish and Irish Traveller communities,
- The extent to which organisations are aware of how to engage and accommodate victim-survivors of HBA from these communities and whether they have received any training on the experiences and barriers they face when accessing domestic abuse and/or honour-based abuse services.

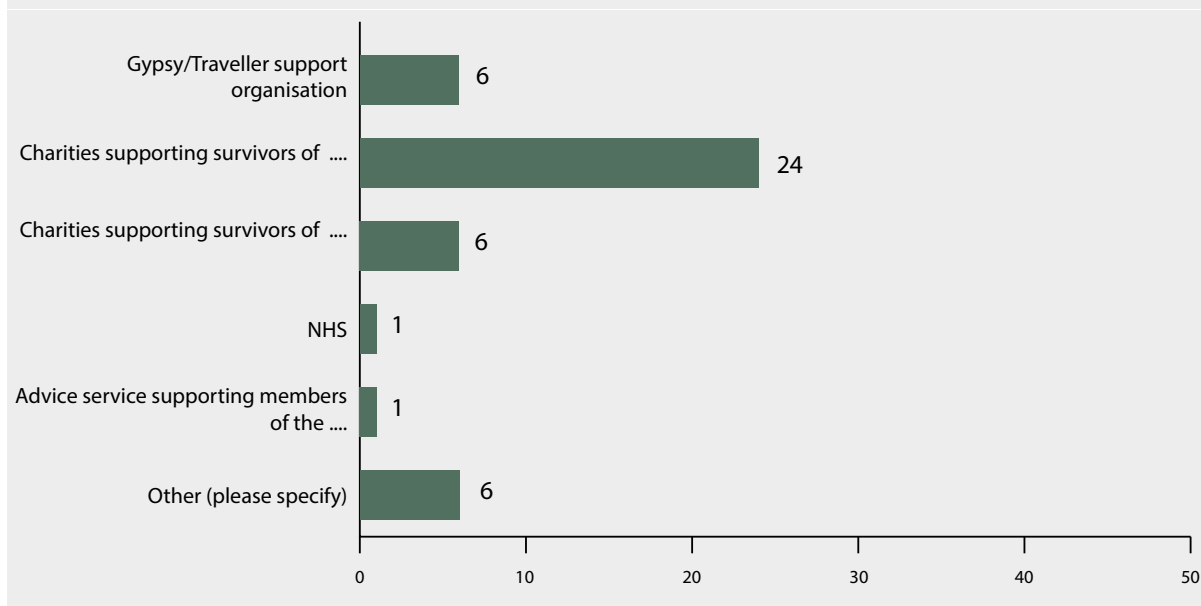
Interviews

For the interviews, the Traveller Movement team sent out targeted emails to both the original list of services contacted for the support services’ survey and those who indicated in the survey that they were willing to be interviewed. Interviewees were given the option to attend an in-person or Zoom interview and each interview lasted between 30 minutes to an hour. Overall, the Traveller Movement team conducted 13 interviews with organisations and services. The purpose of the interviews was to find out whether Romani (Gypsy), Welsh, Scottish and Irish Traveller victim-survivors of harmful practices and/or honour-based abuse had accessed support for issues relating to HP and HBA and to identify how services can better support victim-survivors from these communities.

b. Survey Findings

● ‘What type of organisation do you work for?’

Figure 2



54.6% of survey respondents were representatives from charities supporting survivors of domestic abuse. This was followed by ‘Gypsy/Traveller Organisations’ and ‘Charities supporting survivors of HBA’, each representing 13.6% of responses. A very small proportion of respondents worked within Irish diaspora-specific advice services, the NHS, the police, councils/local authorities, housing services and counselling services.

● ‘How does your service define and understand harmful practices and honour-based abuse?’

As mentioned earlier in the report, the absence of a statutory definition for the term “‘honour”-based abuse’ means that organisations and agencies interpret HP and HBA differently. Services were asked to share the term they use within their organisation and how they define it. The majority of survey respondents stated that they use the term “‘honour”-based abuse’ or “‘honour”-based violence,’ with reference to abuse linked to ‘reputation’, ‘shame’ and breaking ‘perceived cultural norms’ in line with other VAWG sector organisations.

However, the responses provided by ‘Gypsy/Traveller organisations,’ reflect a variety of views on the use and understanding of this term. The majority stated that they use different explanations or words to describe HBA such as ‘interfamilial conflict’ or ‘shaming’ or ‘domestic abuse’. A small number of respondents from ‘Gypsy/Traveller organisations’ stated they do not use or refer to this term within their organisation at all. One ‘Gypsy/Traveller organisation’ said they use the term internally but do not use the term with service users, *‘mainly due to lack of understanding in the community of such titles’*.

● **‘What support does your service provide to survivors of “honour”-based abuse and/or harmful practices?’**

Respondents provided a thorough list of the types of support their organisation or service offers to victim-survivors of HP and HBA. 41 out of 44 organisations responded to this question, and 4 stated that they do not offer any support to HBA survivors.

The most consistently reported types of support offered by services included:

- Person centred 1 to 1 support;
- Wellbeing and mental health support (this includes emotional support as well as mental health specific support, long term or short-term counselling, advice line etc.);
- Legal support and referrals (this include making solicitor referrals, making complaints, referring to the police);
- Housing and accommodation support (this includes making refuge referrals, emergency accommodation/housing, housing grants and bids etc.);
- Advocacy and casework (long term or short-term support to survivors and families)
- Long term support;
- Safety planning and risk assessments,
- Financial support.

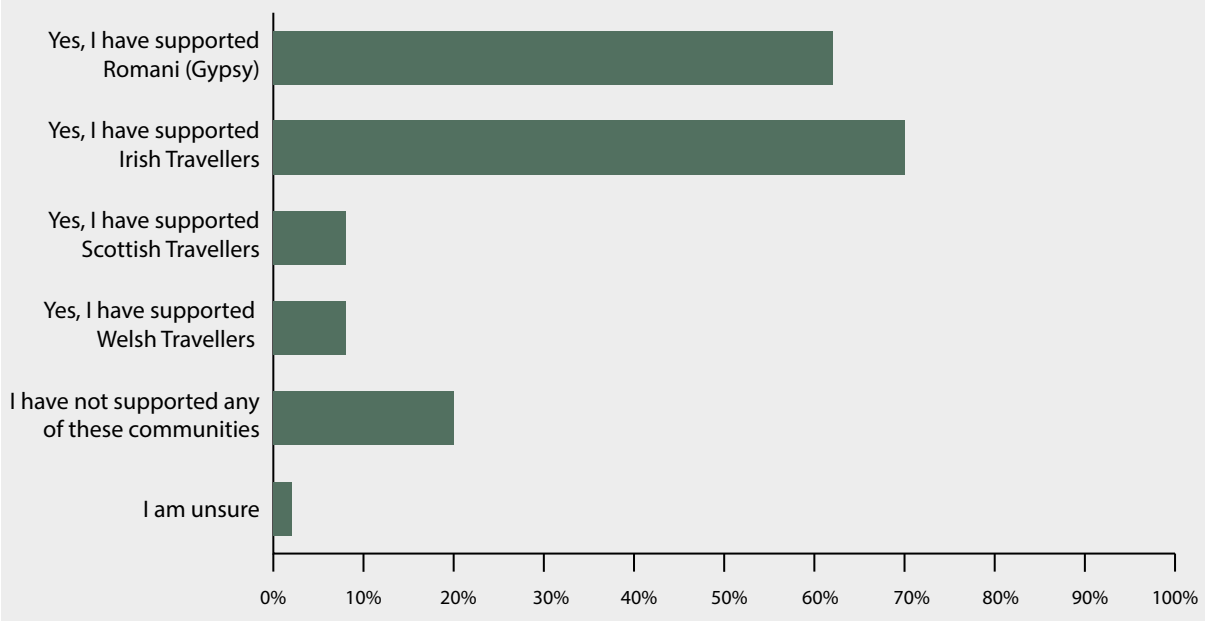
● **‘Have you ever supported any survivors of “honour”-based abuse (HBA) or harmful practices (HP) from Romani (Gypsy), Welsh, Scottish or Irish Traveller communities? If so, what form of so-called honour-based abuse was present?’**

Respondents were asked to select all applicable answers to the question of whether they had ever supported any victim-survivors of HP or HBA from the different communities. 79.5% of respondents (35) stated they have supported survivors of HBA from at least one of the Romani (Gypsy), Welsh, Scottish and/or Irish Traveller communities. 18.2% of respondents (8) had reported that they had never supported anyone from these communities in relation to HP and HBA and one respondent (2.3%) stated they were ‘unsure’.

Out of those 35 respondents who stated that they had supported a victim-survivor from the different communities:

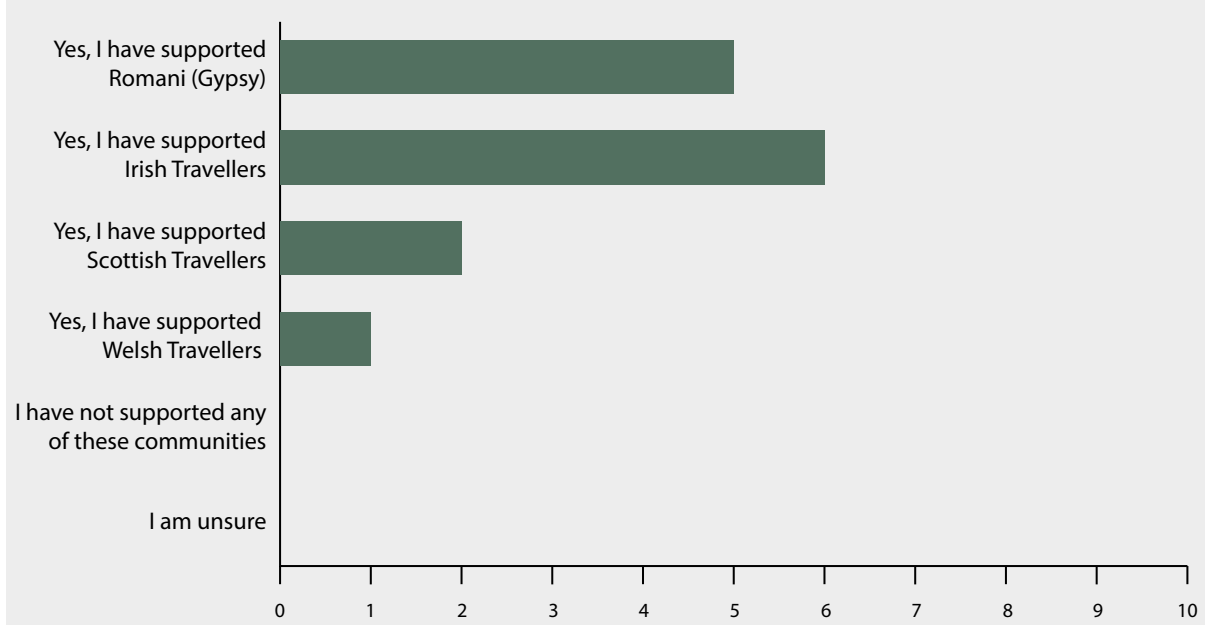
- 88.6% (31) stated that they had supported Irish Traveller victim-survivors.
- 77.1% (27) stated that they had supported Romani (Gypsy) victim-survivors.
- 8.6% (3) stated that they had supported Scottish Traveller victim-survivors.
- 8.6% (3) stated that they had supported Welsh Traveller victim-survivors.

Figure 3



All 6 'Gypsy/Traveller organisations', who completed the survey stated that they had supported a victim-survivor of HP/HBA from one of the Romani (Gypsy), Welsh, Scottish and Irish Traveller communities. All 'Gypsy/Traveller organisations' stated they had supported HBA victim-survivors from the Irish Traveller community, 5 reported that they had supported HBA victim-survivors from the Romani (Gypsy) community, 1 had supported victim-survivors from the Welsh Traveller community and 1 had supported victim-survivors from the Scottish Traveller community. Figure 4 below shows this data.

Figure 4



Where support had been provided, organisations were then asked to identify the forms of HBA experienced by the victim-survivors and to tick all applicable answers. The most reported form of HP and HBA was ‘shame/scandal’, which referred to social shaming or exclusion due to any type of behaviour seen as dishonourable. Additionally, 24 respondents also selected ‘forced or early marriage’ as a form of “honour”-based abuse they had supported victim-survivors from the Romani (Gypsy), Welsh, Scottish or Irish Traveller communities with.

Below is a table outlining the forms of HBA respondents identified that they had supported victim-survivors of HP and HBA from the Romani (Gypsy), Welsh, Scottish and Irish Traveller communities with:

Table 8	
Forms of HP/HBA	Number of Respondents
Spiritual Abuse (controlling someone’s beliefs or religious practices, using faith as a means of coercion)	14
Forced/Early Marriage (being pressured or forced into marriage, sometimes at a young age)	24
Virginity testing (invasive procedures to ‘prove’ virginity)	5
Lie detectors/swearing on the bible (being forced to prove innocence or honesty using lie detectors or religious oaths)	9
Shame/scandal (social shaming or exclusion due to behaviour seen as dishonourable)	36
Acid attacks (e.g., ammonia) or scarring (physical harm used as a punishment or a warning)	5
Curses/ witchcraft (threats of spiritual harm or being accused of having a supernatural power)	9
Conversion therapy (attempts to change someone’s sexual orientation or gender identity)	5

Respondents also commented they had also worked with HBA victim- survivors from the communities who were experiencing physical abuse, pressure to stay with an abuser or in a marriage and getting threats from extended family around an individual’s behaviour.

● **‘Do you feel that your service is aware of how to engage and support Romani (Gypsy), Welsh, Scottish and Irish Traveller survivors of HP and HBA and has your organisation received any training on community members experiences and barriers to accessing domestic abuse and/or so-called honour-based abuse services?’**

The majority of services surveyed identified that they were somewhat aware of how to engage and support members of the Romani (Gypsy), Welsh, Scottish and Irish Traveller communities. 56.82% of organisations (25) stated that they are aware of how to engage and support members of these communities although it is difficult to assess how this self-assessment translates in practice. In contrast, 38.64% (17) of respondents indicated they are not aware and 4.54% (2) were ‘unsure’. Out of the 25 who have said they are aware of how to engage and support members of these communities, 48% (12) had not received training on Romani (Gypsy) and Welsh, Scottish and/or Irish Travellers’ experiences and barriers to accessing domestic abuse and/or HBA services. Twenty-five organisations overall stated that they would like to receive community-led training on HP and HBA in the future.

● **‘What resources would help services to better support survivors from these communities?’**

Respondents were asked to suggest some resources that would better help them support victim-survivors from the Romani (Gypsy), Welsh, Scottish and Irish Traveller communities.

Some of these included:

- ‘I feel there is a greater need for collective work among GRT [Gypsy, Roma and Traveller] led organisations – especially around DA and honour-based abuse. We should all be talking to each other and learning from each other. Most are small and quite isolated.’
- ‘A guide on supporting survivors of so-called ‘honour’ based abuse from these communities would be fantastic and very useful for day-to-day practice, especially centring survivor voices and their understanding of HBA.’
- ‘Statutory services understanding Romani (Gypsy), Welsh, Scottish and Irish Traveller traditions and the barriers they face when reaching out for support.’
- ‘Specialist assessments understanding of the travelling communities and their practices which may impact upon survivors/client.’
- ‘Police, social care and other statutory and non-statutory agencies need to be aware of how to support the different communities. Community members living in bricks and mortar need support, not just those who reside on sites, roadside etc.’
- ‘[There needs to be] more awareness by other professionals, we often find a lack of knowledge and sometimes ignorance with other professionals.’

c. Interview Findings

The Traveller Movement also conducted a series of interviews with support organisations following on from the survey. The survey offered an insight into what support organisations offer to victim-survivors of HP and HBA, whether services were engaging with Romani (Gypsy), Welsh, Scottish and Irish Traveller communities and what further resources services are needed to ensure that services are able to provide culturally sensitive support. The interviews consisted of 8 questions, which were designed to build on some of the questions asked in the survey.

The Traveller Movement interviewed a variety of service providers including Gypsy/Traveller organisations, HBA and domestic abuse services, NHS specialist services, the police, counsellors and therapists and advice services. All interviews were conducted by members of Traveller Movement staff, transcribed and analysed to identify common key themes for each question. In total, 12 interviews were conducted throughout July and August 2025.

● How do services understand the terms ‘harmful practices’ or “‘honour”-based abuse’?

As mentioned at the beginning of the report, “‘honour”-based abuse’ is a term used within the Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG) sector and often refers to abuse that’s linked to ‘honour’ or ‘reputation’ where families or communities exert control through coercion, threats, or violence. The interviews revealed that both the use and definitions of the terms vary across support organisations. This variation can, in part, be attributed to the absence of a statutory definition of HBA.

A few organisations stated that they do not use the term “‘honour”-based abuse’ within their organisation. Reasons for this included not supporting any victim-survivors of HBA, having limited knowledge about HBA, or because they had opted to use the term ‘harmful practices’ as an umbrella term in which HBA would fall under.

● Types of Support Offered to Victim-Survivors of HBA

When asked about the resources and support available for victim-survivors of HBA, services described a variety of support and approaches they may offer to victim-survivors of high-risk abuse. Some of these included:

- Risk assessments;
- Flagging the system / use of “spy markers” to monitor the risk;
- Bespoke victim safety plans;
- Helplines;
- Referrals and signposting;
- Long term and short-term advocacy and casework support;
- Housing and benefit support;
- Advice and advocacy;
- Counselling and therapy;
- Rehousing support and temporary accommodation/ refuges;
- Support for children in schools;

- Assistance navigating civil and criminal justice systems / court proceedings;
- Accessing legal support;
- Individualised one to one support tailored to the survivors' specific needs and preferences;
- Emotional support;
- Advice on financial and welfare matters.

● Language and Terminology

Interviewees were asked if the minoritised communities they support (including but not exclusive to Romani (Gypsy), Welsh, Scottish and Irish Traveller communities) identify with the language of HBA and if not, what alternative language they found to be more effective.

Many interviewees reported that they find that using the term “honour”-based abuse’ can often be hard to understand by their service users and is often never used by victim-survivors themselves in their conversations with support services. This is due to the fact that not everyone will relate to or recognise the language of HBA. Indeed, interviewees reported that they had found that individuals will often associate HBA with extreme gender-based violence and associate the term with ‘honour killings’.

‘Some people have definitely heard of honour killings. So, when they think about “honour”-based abuse, if they don’t have the training and knowledge, they think of the worst possible case scenario where it could be murder, which often is not the case.’

HBA Charity.

Services interviewed stated that they often found that victim survivors may not know they are victims of HBA or may not want to identify their experiences with this label. Several interviewees also noted that they have found it more beneficial to lead the conversation with the language that victim survivors are using themselves, so that it resonates with their experiences and understanding. Interviewees explained that it is often easier to break down the term into simple language and use words such as ‘shame’, ‘expectations’ ‘control’ or ‘family pressures’ when addressing HBA, to avoid jumping to conclusions or using potentially triggering language.

‘I often use different words cause sometimes the words can be alarming or could offend them. [...] I would always change my language so that it’s just a bit more human and less kind of a tick box.’

Community Art Therapist.

‘People rarely say I’m suffering from “honour” based abuse. What they’ll say is, my family want me to do this, and I don’t want to do that. And if I don’t do it, then the head of the family will do this [...] So people will talk to you in a narrative about what’s happening to them rather than I think, always identifying with those terms.’ -

CEO of a specialist domestic abuse service.

● Advantages and Limitations of using the Term HBA

Harmful practices (HP) and “honour”-based abuse (HBA) frameworks offer both benefits and challenges when addressing abuse. Interviewees were asked to discuss the advantages and any potential limitations of using this framing.

Interviewees repeatedly highlighted that it is hard to recognise such high-risk abuse and train others to deliver specialist support if services do not label and define it. By doing so, services and organisations can have a shared understanding of HP and HBA which means they can identify risks, respond more effectively and ensure that all victim-survivors are receiving the appropriate support for high-risk abuse. Under these frameworks, the police can take additional safety measures, such as photocopying passports and other forms of identification or placing a priority flag on a victim’s case to ensure quicker response times in emergencies.

However, interviewees also stated that HP and HBA labels can also have negative consequences. While they aim to highlight specific risks, they can also have a stigmatising effect for minoritised communities. This can reinforce stereotypes and potentially alienate individuals who may already face barriers in seeking help, such as mistrust in the police or the fear of being judged by support services.

‘Labelling abuse in this way might further stigmatise certain members of the community – people may assume that everyone in the community believes or acts in the same way as the perpetrators of the abuse, which we know that isn’t true.’

Irish Traveller outreach worker.

Another drawback of labelling abuse in this way is that it is not always a term that individuals identify with. There is often a lack of awareness around the term, and many victim-survivors may not understand or relate to that terminology. Services highlighted that the language of HP and HBA can come across as quite ‘foreign’ to individuals. As one domestic abuse worker noted *‘it is very much a language that has been designed and developed by professionals’*.

● Experiences of Supporting HBA Victim-Survivors from Romani (Gypsy) Welsh, Scottish and Irish Travellers’ Communities

Most interviewees reported that they had supported Romani (Gypsies), Welsh, Scottish and Irish Travellers experiencing HP or HBA. Fewer stated that although they had not directly supported victim-survivors from these communities they were aware of cases involving individuals from these communities.

Interviewees were asked to provide brief case studies of HBA within the Romani (Gypsy), Welsh, Scottish and Irish Traveller communities. Interviewees were asked to ensure that any identifying details were changed and/or anonymised. Interviewees predominantly referenced cases involving forced or pressured marriage, shame and scandal, ongoing family surveillance of victim-survivors after fleeing abuse, coercive control, and abuse due to an individual being LGBTQ+ or for not conforming to gendered or cultural expectations.

Referring to their experiences supporting Romani (Gypsy), Welsh, Scottish and Irish Traveller victim-survivors, interviewees noted a number of barriers and challenges. This included difficulties in building trust with victim-survivors due to the fear of authorities and services,

fear of further stigma, and judgement from services and the wider community. Interviewees also mentioned that pressure from families and peers to remain in abusive relationships can also prevent individuals from disclosing abuse, as victim-survivors fear the ramifications for themselves and their relatives.

‘Just engaging, really engaging with me and being honest, I suppose, and being able to disclose exactly what was happening[...] the barrier there was the ramifications and what that would mean to the rest of the family[...] it did mean that she could no longer be around her family[...] it was all very secretive.’

Housing Association.

Low literacy and numeracy levels among some community members can also be a barrier for victim-survivors from accessing support. Local authorities and other statutory agencies often rely on written communication which may discourage individuals from accessing these services and disclosing the issues they are facing.

‘With high illiteracy rates, systems like Universal Credit are just not built for people who struggle to read and write[...] job centres and even council offices aren’t necessarily welcoming spaces for people in crisis who need to sit down with somebody and explain the situation.’

Organisation supporting members of the Irish diaspora.

Interviewees were then asked about the prevalence of HP and HBA within the communities. Most reported that they were unsure or did not know how common these practices may be due to the lack of data around HP and HBA within the communities. As mentioned at the beginning of the report, the existing data on HBA remains insufficient in determining the prevalence of HBA within the Romani (Gypsy), Welsh, Scottish and Irish Traveller communities.

As a result, many services stated that there is not enough evidence to make an informed judgement, while other representatives from support organisations stated that they believe HBA is ‘massively underrepresented’ and ‘under recognised’ within the communities, based on the cases they had previously supported on.

One HBA charity representative interviewed shared that their organisation handled roughly 3000 cases of HBA in 2024, but only a small percentage (10%) of these were from the Romani (Gypsy), Welsh, Scottish and Irish Traveller communities.

● On Using the Term ““Honour”- Based Abuse’

Interviewees were then asked to share their opinions on whether the term ““honour” based abuse’ should be used for the Romani (Gypsy), Welsh, Scottish and Irish Traveller communities. There was an overall agreement from most services that the term HBA should be used for these communities, but only if community members themselves identify their experiences with this term. Interviewees often emphasised that is not their role to decide what terminology is best to use for the communities. Rather, interviewees stated that they wanted to use language that victim-survivors feel is best for them and what reflects their experiences best.

'I think it depends on the survivors. I think that should be the only reason why that term is used, is if those victims do think they are experiencing honour-based abuse.' -

Domestic abuse charity.

'I think if the victims from those communities do genuinely think that it is honour related, then absolutely we should be [using the term HBA]. I think we need to be asking them. There shouldn't be those terms used if those communities don't associate with that.'

IDVA from a domestic abuse charity.

A few interviewees also acknowledged that, while the term may not always seem like the best fit, it does provide a useful framework for recognising high risk abuse that involves extended family or a community rather than one perpetrator. Interviewees emphasised that the term HBA captures the experiences of victim-survivors and describes abuse that is motivated by the concept of 'honour' and 'shame'. They argued that if that concept or motive is evident then the term should be used.

One interviewee noted that it is not a term that should be used for a whole community, rather it should only be used if the term relates directly to an individual's experience.

'I think we need to really reflect an individual's experience [...] rather than looking at it from a lens of community or ethnicity. If their experiences reflect some of those what we've talked about, where it links to honour based abuse, then we should use the term, but only where that experience really reflects it. And I think that should be across the board.'

HBA charity

● What Services Need to Better Support HBA Victim-Survivors from the Romani (Gypsy), Welsh, Scottish and Irish Traveller Communities

Interviewees were asked to identify what they/their organisation may need to better support victim-survivors of HP and HBA from the different communities. Interviewees suggested the following:

- Improved awareness amongst services about the different communities;
- Improved awareness of HP and HBA amongst the communities;
- Community members should engage with professionals about their identity and culture(s) so that support can be tailored to them;
- Culturally appropriate housing and safe spaces for people to talk and disclose abuse;
- Accessible services, including safe ways to communicate, flexible appointments, and face-to-face support if needed;
- Representation and including people with lived experience from the different communities as counsellors, therapists, or community workers;
- Increased partnerships between statutory services and charities to ensure that victim-survivors can receive holistic support,
- Safe, quick, and advocacy-based responses to help survivors navigate complex systems easier.

11 Conclusion

In summary, this research has been undertaken to explore whether HP and HBA occur within the Romani (Gypsy), Welsh, Scottish and Irish Traveller communities, to identify what forms these might take and most importantly how support organisations may best support victim-survivors from the different communities. This report has also examined the extent to which community members identify with the terms ‘harmful practices’ and ‘“honour”-based abuse’ and whether such terms are useful frameworks for service providers supporting individuals from these communities.



The importance of one's reputation, particularly for women across the different communities, cannot be underestimated. Community members highlighted the value placed on maintaining one's reputation and the consequences of behaving in a way that could damage one's reputation and family name.

Survey responses from individuals across the different communities and representatives from support organisations indicate that certain forms of HP and HBA do occur within the Romani (Gypsy), Welsh, Scottish and Irish Traveller communities, namely, 'shame/scandal' and the use of 'lie detectors/swearing on the Bible'. The importance of one's reputation, particularly for women across the different communities, cannot be underestimated. Community members highlighted the value placed on maintaining one's reputation and the consequences of behaving in a way that could damage one's reputation and family name.

Representatives from support organisations also identified 'forced/early marriage' as an example of HP and HBA they had supported individuals from these communities with. Romani (Gypsy) and Irish Traveller survey respondents did identify 'forced/early marriage' as an example of HP and HBA they had heard instances of within their communities. However, the responses provided by Romani (Gypsy) and Irish Traveller community members in their interviews with peer researchers indicate that 'forced/early marriage' may generally be better framed as 'pressured' or 'encouraged' marriages. Community members explained that these practices may happen to preserve a woman's reputation and/or to rectify a damaged reputation. Community members indicated that 'forced marriages' are uncommon within the Romani (Gypsy) and Irish Traveller communities although not unheard of, as can be seen in the interview cited in this report with a victim-survivor of a forced marriage.

Romani (Gypsy) and Irish Traveller interviewees provided mixed responses to the question regarding whether the term 'HBA' should be used in relation to the different communities. Some individuals highlighted the benefits of using the term, namely, that using the term might help victim-survivors from their communities to come forward and access the appropriate support. However, others noted that the term may not be appropriate for their respective communities, with some individuals expressing concerns that using the term could stigmatise their communities. A common theme that arose throughout the survey responses and interviews with community members was the association of HBA with Asian communities. As mentioned earlier in the report, it is worth noting the preference indicated by some interviewees for the term 'harmful practices' over "'honour"-based abuse'.

Representatives from support organisations also provided mixed responses around the use of this terminology with victim-survivors from the different communities. Some interviewees indicated that they would only use the term 'HBA' if the victim-survivor identified their experiences as such. Other organisations highlighted the importance of labelling HBA to identify risks, respond more effectively and ensure that all victim-survivors are receiving the appropriate support for high-risk abuse.

Without access to culturally informed support and information on these topics, community members cannot make informed decisions about whether the language that is predominantly used by services is reflective of their lived experiences.

Romani (Gypsy) and Irish Traveller interviewees raised concerns about accessing mainstream support services and many cited a preference for speaking to a faith leader about family issues and/or instances of abuse. However, interviewees almost unanimously agreed that support services should understand the impact of reputation damage on individuals from the different communities. Community members also raised a need for more 'safe' and 'confidential' spaces, where individuals could get support from services without the fear of judgement and without the fear of other members of their community finding out. The need for culturally appropriate education on HP and HBA was also raised, as was the need for outreach workers to support young people within the community. Without access to culturally informed support and information on these topics, community members cannot make informed decisions about whether the language that is predominantly used by services is reflective of their lived experiences. Community members emphasised the importance of services communicating with individuals on a case-by-case basis rather than making assumptions based on prior conceptions of Romani (Gypsies) and Irish Travellers.

Representatives from support organisations reported a need for training and further understanding about the different communities. Services also cited the importance of awareness raising of HP and HBA within the different communities, as well as representation from community members as counsellors, therapists and community workers. Those interviewed also highlighted the importance of victim-survivors sharing their identity and culture(s) with services, so that support can be tailored to their needs. Representatives from support organisations also raised the need for greater partnership work between statutory services and charity organisations.

It is important that the findings of this research are handled with care and sensitivity. The Traveller Movement urges support organisations to avoid making generalisations about Romani (Gypsy), Welsh, Scottish and Irish Traveller communities and their experiences of 'harmful practices' and "honour-based" abuse. The purpose of this research has always been to ensure that individuals from the different communities, who may be experiencing forms of HP and HBA, are able to access the support they need – and to ensure that that support is culturally appropriate. It is the Traveller Movement's hope that this research marks the beginning of conversations about HP and HBA within the Romani (Gypsy), Welsh, Scottish and Irish Traveller communities – however victim-survivors from the different communities may wish to categorise it.

“

When I was a very young child. I loved to colour in pictures with crayons.

I vividly remember colouring with great joy and freedom. It was a great big, coloured scribble. I loved it.

I showed my work to everyone. Then one day, I was told, ‘(____) *you need to stay within the lines*’.

I was shocked, a bit disheartened, but I was determined to get it right.

The next colouring picture I was summoned every ounce of concentration I had and began to colour in with extreme intensity and carefulness. I did go outside lines slightly. I was crushed but tried and tried to get it right over the course of my childhood.

Little did I know this would be the plot of my life. Staying within the line of a picture that I didn’t draw. To me, this sums up honour-based abuse. You are expected to stay within the lines of the culture. Not daring to go outside of the lines even by accident. Again, it takes every ounce of concentration not to. The pressure is immense, and I became aware of it at just 4 years old.”

Quote from an Irish Traveller survivor of HBA



**The Traveller Movement,
40 Jeffrey's Road, Stockwell,
London, SW4 6QX**

Tel 020 7607 2002

www.travellermovement.org.uk



Copyright 2025 Traveller Movement
Registered Charity: 1107113
Company limited by guarantee no. 4038939