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abuse  
commissioner



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Dear Home Secretary

### **HMICFRS inspection: Honour Based Abuse**

We write to you as Commissioners to share joint concerns on the progress of the HMICFRS Honour Based Abuse (HBA) inspection recommendations from December 2015. This is particularly pertinent given the Home Office's publication on the number of HBA-flagged incidences by the police this week.

We were heartened to see this report in 2015 and were hopeful that there would be further inspections, however we note that to date little progress has been made on the recommendations arising from this report.

These concerns were flagged in a letter from the national charity Karma Nirvana in May 2019 and remain outstanding as a growing concern. A response to this letter from the Home Office indicated that Ministers were not convinced that a follow up inspection was necessary "*at this point*" but that the Home Office would review the position in a year's time.

As a year has now passed since the Home Office agreed to review the position on the "*need for HMICFRS to hold a follow up inspection*", we write to implore the Home Office to support the commission of a follow up inspection.

The preliminary inspection in 2015 arose as a consequence of joint sector concerns that victims and survivors of HBA, at that time, were being failed by police. The majority of the inspection findings concurred with this position. The inspection provided valuable insights into the extensive work required to bridge the disparity in police service that victims of HBA receive, compared to other issues with stronger leadership and accountability.

It demonstrated that many forces felt *“constrained in their response to HBV by deficits in national leadership, guidance and policy”*.

We commend the preliminary inspection into HBA for its honest and frank representation of a deeply concerning picture of how policing HBA across England and Wales is both inconsistent and overwhelmingly a postcode lottery.

It is estimated that since the last inspection a further 75 victims have been murdered in the name of ‘so-called’ honour in the UK. In the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, the national HBA helpline has experienced increased call volumes by up to 264%. This is against a backdrop of declining HBA related prosecutions, which has fallen by 43% since 2014/2015 according to a CPS annual VAWG report.

The call for a second follow up inspection is essential to curtailing the regression of policing in HBA. The failure to follow up on the inspection recommendations not only undermines victim confidence to engage with police, but fundamentally exacerbates the hidden nature of HBA, thus intensifies victims’ risk and compromises victim safety.

Yours sincerely



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Dame Vera Baird QC  
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