

# Slough Harmful Practices Strategy 2026-2029





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# Foreword

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Harmful practices such as Female Genital Mutilation (FGM), forced marriage and so-called 'honour-based' abuse are serious forms of abuse that have no place in Slough. They are criminal offences, violations of human rights, and acts that cause lasting physical and emotional harm. Above all, they place children, young people and vulnerable adults at significant risk.

As Cabinet Members responsible for Children's Services and Public Protection, we are clear that safeguarding must always come first. Every child in our borough has the right to grow up safe, protected and free from coercion or fear. Every individual deserves dignity, equality and protection under the law.

We recognise that harmful practices are often hidden and complex. Victims may experience intense pressure and feel unable to speak out. For some victims, coming forward can mean speaking out against their own parents or close relatives, and the fear of family breakdown or rejection within their community can be overwhelming.

That is why a strong, coordinated and confident multi-agency response is essential. This Strategy sets out our commitment to prevention, early identification and decisive intervention. It reinforces the responsibility of all professionals across education, health, social care, policing, and community services, to act swiftly and appropriately when concerns arise.

Lasting change also requires partnership. Through our work in public protection and community cohesion, we will continue to engage with community leaders, faith organisations and local groups to raise awareness, challenge harmful narratives and empower residents to stand against abuse. Protecting children and vulnerable people is a shared responsibility across our whole borough.

Through this Strategy, Slough reaffirms a clear message: harmful practices will not be tolerated. By working together, we will ensure that those at risk are safeguarded, survivors are supported, and our borough remains a place where everyone can live safely and with respect.



**Cllr Puja Bedi**  
Cabinet Member for  
Children's Services



**Cllr Ejaz Ahmed**  
Lead Member for  
Public Protection

# How this strategy was developed

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This Strategy was developed collaboratively, drawing on the expertise of local partners including HCRG, NHS Foundation Trust, Frimley ICB, Slough Children First, and the Slough Integration Service. By working closely with these organisations, we have ensured the Strategy reflects a shared understanding of the challenges and opportunities in protecting vulnerable individuals across our borough.

The overarching aim of this Strategy is that, over the next three years, Slough will be a place that does not tolerate harmful practices such as Female Genital Mutilation (FGM), forced marriage, or other forms of so-called Honour-Based Abuse. Slough will be a town where residents and professionals are well-informed, protective measures are consistently applied, and vulnerable individuals are safeguarded effectively.

# Introduction

Harmful Practices adversely impact the health, safety and wellbeing of women and children. This strategy has adopted the UK government and UN strategic principles which state that some harmful practices, such as FGM, are:

- A crime
- A form of child abuse
- A form of violence against women and girls
- A violation of human rights and form of torture

See Appendix A, 1.

Professionals and volunteers from all agencies have a statutory responsibility to safeguard children from being abused. Equally, they have a duty to protect adults at risk, particularly those who may be vulnerable due to coercion, cultural pressures, or other factors that limit their ability to seek help. Therefore, this strategy provides a framework to support all ages.

See Appendix A, 2.



# What are Harmful Practices?

Harmful traditional practices are rooted in tradition, culture, custom, religion, or superstition and are often deeply ingrained within communities due to longstanding societal pressures. These practices are frequently carried out or supported by parents or influential adults within a child or young person's community.

Such practices encompass rituals, traditions, or actions that negatively impact the victim's physical, mental, and emotional well-being. They often reflect bias against certain groups, particularly girls and children with disabilities. Many involve physical abuse or infliction of pain, sometimes resulting in severe injury or death, while others cause significant psychological harm.

Deep-rooted gender inequalities mean that women and girls are mostly affected, however any gender can be at risk of harmful practices.

## Examples of Harmful Practices

This strategy focuses on the three most prolific forms of harmful practices:

- Female Genital Mutilation (FGM)
- Honour Based Abuse (HBA)
- Child/Forced Marriage

However, please recognise that there are many different harmful practices and forms of Honour based abuse across the globe, including, but not limited to, the list below:

- Bride Price and Dowry Violence
- Breast Ironing
- Virginity Testing See Appendix A, 3
- Spirit Possession, Witchcraft, Religious Fervor See Appendix A, 4
- Son Preference/Sex Selection
- Preventing women from controlling their own fertility
- Conversion Therapy

The same referral pathway and processes should be followed by practitioners in all cases of harmful practices.

Beware of the following supposed 'shameful' behaviour that may include:

- Being LGBTQ+ or questioning your sexuality/gender identity
- Wearing make-up or 'unacceptable' clothing
- Having a relationship with an individual disapproved of due to culture, religion, etc.
- Not obeying family/community values/rules
- Seeking a divorce
- Refusing a marriage

# Multi-Agency Partnership Priorities and Action Plan



## 1. Prevent and Destigmatise Harmful Practices through Awareness and Community Empowerment

**Aim:** Focus not only on raising awareness and understanding of harmful practices among professionals and affected communities, but also on preventing their occurrence through culturally sensitive engagement, empowerment, and education. It should challenge misconceptions, break the silence, and promote cultural change by working directly with communities, especially those disproportionately affected.

The hidden nature of harmful practices is often exacerbated by the perception that these acts are culturally justified or not illegal. Prevention requires shifting these perceptions through trusted voices, inclusive dialogue, and community-led initiatives.

How will we reach the aim?	How will we measure success?	Who is the action for?
<b>Run awareness sessions with Primary and Secondary DSL Networks annually</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Pre and post session evaluations to identify if participants feel more confident in understanding and speaking up.</li> <li>2. Track the no. sessions held.</li> </ol>	Community Safety Team in partnership with Slough Children First
<b>Share the strategy with community groups and faith-based groups, offering to run information sessions</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Record the names of organisations we engaged with and when.</li> <li>2. Track the no. sessions held.</li> </ol>	Community Safety Team in partnership with Slough Children First
<b>Run communication campaigns around specific harmful practices to align with national awareness days</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Create a tracker of the events hosted or supported and content created and disseminated during this time.</li> </ol>	Each Partnership Agencies Communications team and the Community Safety Engagement officer
<b>Encourage all Slough Borough Council and commissioned service staff, as well as health care professionals, to engage in community outreach and challenge misconceptions</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Practitioner survey to explore whether opportunities have been used to discussed issues of Harmful Practices and potential barriers.</li> </ol>	All Partners to participate Survey to be issued by Community Safety

## 2. Proactive Safeguarding

**Aim:** Remain vigilant and proactive in identifying and addressing risks related to FGM, forced marriage, so called 'honour-based' abuse, and other harmful practice by promoting staff professional curiosity, as well as timely reporting and intervention.

How will we reach the aim?	How will we measure success?	Who is the action for?
<b>Create a dataset with multi-agency partners to monitor and identify cases</b>	1. Completion of data dashboard and embedding into routine use.	All partners
<b>Annual training to be delivered for professionals who have statutory reporting responsibilities to better identify risks of harmful practices and respond effectively, including the use of FGM Protection Orders (FGMPOs) and Forced Marriage Protection Orders (FMPOs)</b>	1. Track the number of attendees per training session.	All partners
<b>The distribution of a toolkit (see appendix) to all Slough Borough Council teams, commissioned services and healthcare facilities</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Distribution of toolkit in physical form to all partners.</li> <li>2. Record the number of partners who share the toolkit on their websites.</li> <li>3. Annual reminder and updates via board members.</li> </ol>	All partners

### 3. Positive Protection

**Aim:** Maximising legal protections, use data to improve responses and embed protective measures in practice.

How will we reach the aim?	How will we measure success?	Who is the action for?
<b>Request that partners consistently apply for and enforce FGM Protection Orders (FGMPOs) and Forced Marriage Protection Orders (FMPOs) where appropriate</b>	1. Record the number of FGMPOs and FMPOs collated in Multi-agency data set.	All partners
<b>Track the number of Non-Molestation Orders that the Domestic Abuse provider (IDVA) have supported through the police/court process</b>	1. Track whether figures in Slough equal or better than the national average and averages of statistical neighbours.	Domestic Abuse Board Annually
<b>Prioritising secure housing options for those at risk, including refuge placements, temporary accommodation and move-on accommodation</b>	1. Use housing data to measure outcomes at different risk levels.	Slough Borough Council Housing and wider house providers
<b>Monitor how many protection orders are issued for FGM, Forced Marriage and Domestic Abuse (Including So Called 'Honour-Based' Abuse)</b>	1. Measured through Multi-agency data set with data shared by the police.	Thames Valley Police

# Governance

This strategy will be subject to the governance of the Slough Domestic Abuse Partnership Board that sits within a wider partnership framework. Our action plan with enable progress to be monitored and reported to the Safer Slough Partnership.

The Slough Domestic Abuse Partnership Board will work together to assess ongoing performance against the strategy priorities and support, advise and work together with partners and residents regarding issues relating to harmful practices such as FGM, Forced Marriage and So Called 'Honour-Based' Abuse.

## Domestic Abuse Partnership Board



# Appendix

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1. [National and International Laws on Harmful Practices – Slough Borough Council](#)
2. [Care Act 2014 and Children Act 1989](#)
3. [Virginity testing and hymenoplasty: multi-agency guidance - GOV.UK](#)
4. [Child abuse linked to faith or belief | Thames Valley Police](#)

To understand harmful practices in more depth, warning signs and how to respond, please see the [Slough Harmful Practices Toolkit](#).



