



Llywodraeth Cymru  
Welsh Government



# Intersectionality & Anti-racism

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# Intersectionality



When working with victim-survivors of domestic abuse in the family court, it is essential to consider intersectionality – the way different aspects of a person’s identity (such as gender, race, ethnicity, socioeconomic status, disability, sexual orientation, and immigration status) interact to shape their experiences of privilege and oppression. This in turn affects their experiences of abuse and the potential response from legal system.

**Failing to apply an intersectional approach can result in unfair outcomes and inadequate protection for victim-survivors.**

Barriers to Justice	Many victim-survivors face structural inequalities within the legal system. For example, Black and racially minoritised women often report experiencing institutional racism, leading to their concerns being dismissed or their credibility being questioned. Migrant survivors may fear reporting abuse due to the ‘hostile environment’ policies, which can deter them from seeking legal support due to their insecure immigration status.
Tailored Support	A one-size-fits-all approach does not work. For instance, disabled survivors may struggle to access court buildings or legal processes that are not designed with accessibility in mind. LGBTQ+ survivors may fear discrimination from legal professionals or may not be recognised as victim-survivors if the abuse does not fit heteronormative assumptions.
Understanding Power and Control	Perpetrators frequently manipulate systems to maintain control. An abuser might use a survivor’s immigration status to threaten them with deportation or exploit racial stereotypes to discredit them in court. Financial abuse is also particularly relevant in cases involving victim-survivors on low incomes or with insecure employment.
Avoiding Unsafe Legal Processes	Legal mechanisms such as mediation or shared parenting arrangements may be unsafe for survivors, particularly those from communities where leaving an abusive relationship can lead to honour-based abuse, ostracisation, or financial ruin. Survivors from minoritised backgrounds may also struggle to find legal professionals who understand their cultural context.



# Anti-racism

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The Welsh Government has committed to making Wales an anti-racist nation, with an action plan for achieving this aim.

## [An introduction to an Anti-racist Wales \(GOV.WALES\)](#)

An anti-racist approach requires us to consider how racism is present institutionally and structurally within policies, processes, rules, regulations and laws, and take active steps to address these inequalities that may impact the people we work with. A full guide to ensuring equality, diversity and inclusion in the family court can be found in the following Dartington Trust briefing.

It includes information and further guidance on topics such as anti-racism, intersectionality and best practice when supporting Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic people.

## [Ensuring equality, diversity and inclusion in the Family Court](#)

### Practice Points

Look at differences through a strength-based rather than deficit-based lens when undertaking assessments or reports.

Take time to research and learn how gender norms, discrimination and inequality impact the ability of individuals to parent their children and on the general wellbeing of the adults and children, as well as the social and structural barriers they face in seeking support or life opportunities.

Recognise how perpetrators of abuse use social, cultural, and structural gender norms to reinforce and justify their behaviour.

### So-Called Honour Based Abuse (scHBA)

“Honour Based Abuse is not a cultural tradition or religious practice; it is a form of abuse that can occur within any community, regardless of faith or background. Abuse is abuse – no matter who the perpetrator is or how they justify it.”

Karma Nirvana<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> [What is Honour Based Abuse? – Karma Nirvana](#)

schBA is a type of abuse characterised by a perpetrator's perception that a victim-survivor has brought dishonour or shame upon themselves, the family or community. Honour is held above the safety and wellbeing of victim-survivors in these instances.

It is common for schBA to feature multiple perpetrators and for victim-survivors to be at greater risk of serious harm or homicide.<sup>2</sup>

For further guidance on how to approach instances of schBA, Karma Nirvana has a helpline and further information that is open to victim-survivors and professionals.

**Karma Nirvana**

[FAQs for Professionals – Karma Nirvana](#)

## **Further Support & Advocacy**

BAWSO – [Specialist support and advocacy for black and minoritised victims of abuse, violence and exploitation in Wales](#). Their helpline is available 24 hours, 7 days a week for victim-survivors.

## **Further Reading**

[Understanding the lived experiences of Black, Asian and minority ethnic children and families \(Research in Practice\)](#)

[Progressing anti-racist practice in the family justice system \(CoramBAAF\)](#)

['It's the way they look at you': Why discrimination towards young parents is a policy and practice issue \(Wiley Online Library\)](#)

[Mental health problems among single and partnered mothers. The role of financial hardship and social support \(National Library of Medicine\)](#)

[Poverty: facts and figures \(Child Poverty Action Group\)](#)

[One in four: a profile of single parents in the UK \(Gingerbread\)](#)

[Social inequalities in childhood can affect children's development and outcomes \(University College London Institute of Education\)](#)

[Domestic abuse, human rights and the family courts report \(Women's Aid\)](#)