

Breast Ironing and Honour Based Violence Policy reviewed September 2019

Aim

At Twyford Playgroup, safeguarding our children is of the utmost importance. It is the responsibility of the lead safeguarding practitioner, Claire Wing, along with the rest of the staff to keep knowledge of this up to date. We work with children, parents, external agencies and the community to ensure the welfare and safety of children and to give them the very best start in life.

What is Breast Ironing?

Breast ironing is a practice whereby the breasts of girls, typically aged 8-16 are pounded using tools such as spatulas, grinding stones, hot stones and hammers to delay the appearance of puberty.

Why does this happen?

It is often carried out by the girl's mother in the belief that:

- She is protecting her daughter from sexual harassment and/or rape
- She is preventing the risk of early pregnancy
- She is preventing her daughter from being forced into marriage, so she will have the opportunity to continue with her education

Where does it happen?

Breast ironing is a cultural custom that originated in Cameroon; however, it is also practiced in other nations such as Ginea-Bissau, Chad, Togo, Benin and Guinea. This practice also seems to be spreading to other areas.

Warning Signs

Some signs that a girl is at risk from breast ironing include:

- Unusual behaviour after an absence from school or college, including depression, anxiety, aggression, becoming withdrawn
- Reluctance in undergoing medical examinations
- Some girls may ask for help, but may not be explicit about the problem due to embarrassment or fear
- Fear of changing for physical activities due to scars showing or bandages being visible

Consequences

Significant health risks may include:

- Cysts and lesions
- Breast cancer
- An inability to produce breast milk
- Complete or partial eradication of single or both breasts.

How to report it

- Children's services: 0300 555 1384
- In an emergency, contact the police.

What is Honour Based Violence?

Honour based violence (HBV) is the term used to refer to a collection of practices used predominantly to control the behaviour of women and girls within families or other social groups in order to protect supposed cultural and religious beliefs, values and social norms in the name of 'honour'. It may include assaults, disfigurements, versions of sati (burning), sexual assault and rape, forced marriage, dowry abuse, female genital mutilation, kidnap, false imprisonment, stalking. It may also include psychological abuse, written or verbal threats, abusive phone calls, emails etc.

Why does this happen?

HBV may be committed against people who:

- Become involved with a boyfriend or girlfriend from a different culture, religion or caste
- Want to escape an arranged or forced marriage
- Have adopted a Westernised dress or take part in activities, which may not be considered traditional within a particular culture
- Many perpetrators have convinced themselves that they are only doing their duty as a good parent or member of the community.

Signs and Symptoms

These may include:

- Social relationships have narrowed
- Suspected perpetrator makes all the rules and the victim has no say in his/her life
- Extreme restrictions on movement and contact with others
- Victim shows signs of fear
- Victim has been injured
- Victim is withdrawn

- Victim may excel in school work or employment as symbols of freedom

Appropriate professional responses to victims of HBV

- Listen to what the individual is saying about their needs
- Don't use family members, community leaders, friends etc. as interpreters
- Speak to the person alone
- Ensure completion of a thorough risk assessment and remember the 'one chance' rule.
- Mediation, reconciliation and family counselling as a response to forced marriage and honour based violence can be extremely dangerous

How to report it

If you are concerned that a child you know is at risk of HBV:

- Children's Services – 0300 555 1384 Monday to Friday 8.30 to 5.00
- The Professional Line – 01329 225379
- The police – 999 or 101

Legal Framework and Guidelines

- Hampshire Safeguarding Children Partnership
- The Human Rights Act 1998

Date:

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