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Hosts: Monica and Kate

Guest: Payzee Mahmood and Sunny Angel

OAC representative: Sobia and Rubie

Kate: Hey everyone,

Kate/ Monica: I'm Kate and I'm Monica and this is the Perspectives podcast by Oxford Against Cutting, also known as OAC.

Monica: OAC is a rights-based charity working to end harmful practices suffered by girls and women.

Kate: In today's episode, we are going to be talking about honour-based abuse and forced marriage, and are joined by Payzee Mahmood and Sunny Angel, along with our OAC colleagues Sobia and Rubie Marie

Monica: Before we kick off, please note that this episode covers topics of a sensitive nature including domestic abuse and violence. This podcast is age-appropriate for 16+

Monica: Today, we are joined by Payzee and Sunny to discuss the topic of honour-based abuse. I am actually going to hand over to you ladies, so, Payzee if you could kick-off for us and tell us a bit about yourself and your campaigning journey.

Payzee: Thank you so much, Monica. So, my name is Payzee, and I am a campaigner at IKWRO – Iranian & Kurdish Women's Rights Organisation.

What has brought me onto my campaigning journey is my own experiences, and that I have gone through when I was younger, so I went through child marriage when I was 16. I saw honour-based abuse when I was growing up within my family, and one of my sisters was actually taken out of our home due to the abuse. Which meant that me and my other sisters were sort of the target for making up for what was deemed shame and dishonourable for my sister leaving.

So, both me and my sister – Banaz, were 16 and 17 at the time and were put through child marriages. Sadly, we both went through various types of abuse, and my sister left her marriage, and as a result of that, she became a victim of a so called 'honour killing'.

I thankfully managed to leave my husband after two years in the marriage, so that is why I campaign to raise awareness on honour-based abuse. Also, to ensure that the law in England and Wales, which it currently does not protect children from this type of abuse and from being really at risk of going through our physical, mental, sexual and all sorts of detrimental effects to their lives and to their futures.

That is really what inspired my campaigning journey and specifically choosing to work with IKWRO because they were very heavily involved in my sister's case and in pursuing justice for her. Ensuring that it was the first type of its kind, the first type of case where perpetrators were given life sentences, and justice was really served – so that is my journey.

Monica: Thank you, Payzee and just thank you for always being so transparent and open about your journey and also your sister's story.

Sunny, over to you - if you could just tell us a bit about yourself and your campaigning journey as well, please?

Sunny: Thank you. Basically, I changed my name to Sunny Angel by deed poll so my family would not be ashamed, and they would not be recognised. My birth name is not Sunny Angel; I just needed a new start and a new life. When I was a child, I was abused sexually, so growing up was quite hard for me. I had a lot of trust issues, and I was self-harming.

When I became a teenager at college, I, unfortunately, had a stalker who then tortured and abused me, and because of the journey that had led me there, my parents, instead of offering support and help, they decided to force me into marriage to basically get rid of me.

They saw me as a problem. I actually needed some other form of help, such as therapy and things – I did not want to be touched. You know, having been raped and tortured - I just needed to heal, let alone be someone else's wife immediately. My parents did not understand; they just saw me as shame on the family because to them, I had run away. The Asian mentality at that time was like, you know, you have left home. It was not that you know you have been tortured, so we just need to get rid of you; we need to get rid of this shame.

So, I was forced into marriage. I really did not want to do it, so I had left and gone to a homeless shelter and took an overdose, but it did not work out. Then my only other option was to go through with the forced marriage.

I did everything I could to keep my parents happy. They could see that I was not happy, and the marriage did not work out because of dowry abuse. The family was too demanding on my parents, so after about five months, it ended up in divorce, and it was just a horrible journey. I came back even more ashamed to my parents, and then they were looking to do another forced marriage, but it just was like there was no connection. There was no understanding, so I basically just kind of run away from home, in the end, just to make a new life.

So, what I have decided to do was to write my own book, self-publish – it is called 'Wings' by Sunny Angel. There's a couple of music videos. I am now a campaigner, speaker and being an author, I help various charities and do as much as I can really to help as many people as I can, so they just do not suffer like I did.

Monica: Thank you so much, Sunny. I have read your book, and it is truly inspiring because it is so raw in terms of the emotions, and you know, just delving into it can be very emotional for you as well - so thank you so much for sharing your story with us.

We are also joined here today by two members of our OAC team – Sobia and Rubie. I am going to hand over to you, and if you could introduce yourself as well, please, Sobia?

Sobia: Thank you, Monica, and thank you for Payzee and Sunny to talk about your experiences again. We really appreciate that. My name is Sobia Afridi, and I am a facilitator for Oxford Against Cutting for the last year and a half; and I specialise in honour-based violence, forced marriage, and also looking at cousin marriage. Recently been involved in lots of web cafes that we have been doing in lockdown.

Monica: Thank you, Sobia and Ruby?

Rubie: Hi, my name is Ruby Marie; I am a survivor of forced marriage and honour-based abuse. My story started when I was 15. My sister left home, and that brought shame and a lot of disrespect to the family in their eyes, and they thought that I was going to do the same because I had a secret boyfriend.

So, they took me to their country - Bangladesh. I got forced into marriage when I was 15. I was not allowed to come back to the UK without being pregnant, so I got raped repeatedly by this man who was twice my age, and I got pregnant. I came back to the UK, and for years after that, I suffered mentally and physically with the hands of different types of perpetrators because I did not quite understand what the world was about. I ended up in so many dysfunctional relationships due to the fact that I was searching for a male figure to just protect me.

I ended up in a domestic violent relationship which then carried on for over a decade. When I was 27, I actually dug deep into trying to cut these codes of honour, shame, and things like that my family have put on me and started to change my life around.

I have two children now; I campaign for honour-based abuse and domestic violence etc. I am a proud ambassador for two charities in the UK. I public speak, I am an activist, and I share my experiences to educate health professions, and I just want to help people to come forward and share their stories as well and help them heal too; because a lot of people have come to me independently and ask for my help and then I refer them to a charity that I have helped me in the past six years – so that is me.

Monica: Thank you so much. So, Payzee and Sunny - I have a question for you around the definition of honour-based abuse. There are public definitions of it, but in your own words and through your own experiences and campaigning journey, how would you define honour-based abuse? Sunny, could you kick that off for us, please?

Sunny: Well, for me personally, see honour to me and to my daughter is something completely different now. We have changed the narrative, but for me and my parents, so you know all these different generations. So, like you have just asked me, what does it mean to me? To me, it is like about the love, but a different version of love.

So, when my parents say if you love me, you will do it, but, in my head, it is like if you love me, you would not make me do it, so it is a different version. Their version of honour, honour it is a twisted to what is my version of honour, should I explain it kind of different?

Monica: No, I completely get it. It is almost a translation to what is attached to that word – honour.

Sunny: For me, my daughter, my love for her is unconditional. So, when she grows up if she wanted to marry a man or a woman or not marry and just be on her own because she was happy and say that is all that I would care about. I would not want her to be married to a man and have domestic violence all her life and be unloved. But to my parents, I would have to find someone that is the same caste, the same religion, same colour.

They would not care if I were happy or not; that would not come into it, so to them, their honour is tainted. It is conditional love. In fact, I do not even know if they know what love is. Love and honour are two different things. Do you know what I mean? It is more like honour and obey; it is not like love and obey.

Monica: Yep, and also the influences as well. Like there is so many community pressures, and love should just be almost like a neutral feeling that comes about. It is not forced, is not manipulated anyway, so yeah, definitely understand that definition.

Sunny: I mean for me; I do not feel loved by them. I feel loved by my daughter, and I asked, you know, does she feel loved? So, you know, with the whole honour banner, it just boils down to just abuse.

Monica: Thank you, Sunny.

Sunny: Thank you.

Monica: Payzee, what about you?

Payzee: Thank you. It is really interesting that Sunny touched on unconditional love because, for me, when I think of honour-based abuse, I really do see it as almost like conditions that are set out. In order to actually live by the honour code, I almost see it as like almost a collection of codes that you have to live by in order to show that you respect that code.

To me, when I think of honour-based abuse, the first thing that comes to mind, I would say, is control and almost stolen freedom. Whenever I think about the different things that people go through when they are experiencing honour-based abuse, whether that is, you know, forced marriage, or FGM, or physical, emotional, psychological pressure. You know, being monitored or being humiliated and threatened that if they do not do that thing that is asked of them, then they face further abuse.

For me, it is really conditions that are set out for you, and if you disobey those conditions or you do not live by those conditions, then it actually puts you at further risk. So, in a way, it is a very difficult way to live, because as I say, if you know, you are told to live by these rules, and if you do not live by these rules, you end up suffering more.

Monica: Thank you, Payzee. I think it is just so interesting how both you and Sunny have expanded on what the word honour means when it comes to different contexts and different cultural influences as well. I think my take on honour may be influenced, not and I do not want to blame culture entirely, but there is some influence there in terms of what upbringing has been around, not what my language or my heritage teaches me, but actually, what has been driven by the wider community and then almost imposed on that culture, I think that brings me on quite nicely to hand over to Kate. So, Kate over to you.

Kate: Leading in beautifully to the next question, so I am going to ask everyone this question actually, but starting out with Payzee if that is ok? Do you think experiences of honour-based abuse are different because of different cultural influences?

Payzee: I would agree that it definitely plays a role into how honour-based abuse is played out or experienced. For example, I know that let us say in my community, the community I grew up in, in the Kurdish community, the level of influence that you have around you from the wider community and the wider family does really impact you know your family or direct family, so your parents.

It really does impact the way that they behave and to what extent they actually believe in that honour code. So, for example, something that I always say within the system of honour abuse, there is a lot of monitoring and so especially for girls and women are seen as the property of that wider family, that community. You can be out and about, you can be anywhere, and if anybody from that

community is to, you know, witness you doing anything that is against the honour code, then that can very easily go back to your family.

That one person that isn't even related to you and it's just part of the wider community can actually have a big impact into the way that your parents behave towards you in your direct home, so you know you could be seen outside with a boy, for example, that is then fed back to your family, and it could very quickly escalate to you being told you are marrying a total stranger; because your parents fear that you may be, you know, taking part in a relationship with a man who you're not married to. They would be in their mind trying to prevent something that they feel is the extreme, you know, against the honour code.

So, I think it definitely does play a role, and we sometimes also have to think about the relationships that our close family members have with cultural influences outside of our home that we live in. I know that, for example, my parents have a lot of communication with their family members back home. That again plays a role, so the cultural influences can travel, and to me, they definitely do play a role.

Kate: That's so interesting. Sunny - how do you feel about that? The difference is that maybe cultural influences play from your perspective.

Sunny: I can completely relate in what happened to me. In regard to my experiences, friends had seen me out talking to others, and that was relayed back to my parents, and so my parents had taken action without knowing the full story.

I was punished for talking to boys. Even though they were not actually a boyfriend, it was just she was seen talking to a boy, and you have got to act on there. It was like, why don't you just have a conversation with me, but you see again in that kind of cultural way, girls do not sit down with parents and have a full-on conversation. It was like, you cannot just ask your parents, well for me, personally to just ask my parents and have a conversation.

I think cultural, it does have a big impact; it definitely does. It is like it is a whole community thing as well, where you just know that whose daughter that is. Like Payzee was saying, it is almost like you are someone else's property. People know whose family that you are from, and it is not a nice feeling. Again, it is like with the control and honour code; you have got your rule set out for you. You know what line not to cross, but everybody in that cultural community knows it as well.

Kate: Thank you, Sunny. Ruby, is this something that also you would relate to in terms of the elements of control and the reach of family and these sort of ideas across a community?

Ruby: Absolutely yes, I definitely relate to Payzee and Sunny when they talk about community. Community starts to act like your extended family. For the eyes of your perpetrators that are playing a part in honour-based abuse towards victim; they become their eyes, they become the ears, and it does not really matter whether you speak out for yourself or not; it is like their judgment becomes your sentence of what is going to happen to you.

So, like the examples I was given, whether you are talking to a boy, you could just be asking what direction you need to go to get to a place; it is seen as a bad thing. Oh my gosh, you should not be doing that, and it affects the community like as if it is like they are your immediate family in a way. I definitely agree with the views that Sunny and Payzee say, yes, absolutely.

Kate: Thank you, and finally, Sobia, do you have a take on this?

Sobia: I agree with all three of the ladies – it is definite. Actually, in a way, I feel like the cultural influences as the outsiders, the community, they become like the police in a way, they are policing your honour, and they are following you. I am not a survivor, but I have seen it with friends. I remember as a young girl; I think I was 13 or 14 and I was in a supermarket with somebody, and by the time I got home, my mom said, who are you with? I was actually with my older brother, who just came out of the army for a visit, but because in the community, nobody knew who he was before I got home, my family thought I was someone else.

Actually, I was out with my own brother, so that I mean, this is a long time ago, but it made me rethink about community eyes; there everywhere.

Kate: Thank you, Sobia. That is fascinating and also horrifying that you could actually be judged for being in a supermarket with your own brother.

Payzee: Yeah, I definitely think for me that also just reiterates the fact that whenever there's honour-based abuse in the community, that is thriving, and everyone plays a role in it. You do not necessarily have to be the person instigating it, but you are feeding information back, and you know you are witnessing it.

It really adds to you know those, for me, the element that women and girls do not have any safe space that they can go to when you know they are watched all the time when everyone is keeping up with this honour code and keeping an eye on them and monitoring their every move.

It really does feel like that, and having personally experienced it. I never went anywhere when I was still living with my family. I never went anywhere thinking that I can do whatever I want because I always had in the back of my mind that if someone were to see me, then it could escalate for me at home.

I think whenever we talk about honour-based abuse, we know that, obviously, the community plays a big role. I am not sure if your others who are outside of this conversation really grasp that so many people play a role in this. We are talking about people in the community, in the shops, people that you come across in the market, drivers, taxi drivers, anyone can really contribute to this and almost keep that system going. To break it down, it does take a big effort from everyone to actually acknowledge their part in what they are taking part in.

Sobia: Could I just say something there? Payzee, you made a really good points that I think others do not actually understand the influence of the community. As you said, it can even sometimes be an NHS worker who is of trust that can have the eyes of the community as well. I have seen that, so I think it is quite hard to explain or for people to understand who are outside of this community of what the cultural influence and the community influence is, and I think it is taking a long time for that message to get across even now.

Monica: I remember going to school, and there would be so many pressures from other people that did not understand what happens in the community - like oh just come, come out and let us skip school, we are going to go and see some boys. In principle, that does not sound bad, like skipping school – yes, it is. But the fear behind what could potentially happen and trying to communicate that to someone that does not come from your community or your culture is quite difficult, and so you almost end up leading like a bit of a double life, which is really difficult.

Payzee: Monica, can I just add one final thought to that? I always think for anyone who might be listening, that might be thinking - I am really struggling to understand this honour code, this concept. I always think like the way to really break it down for someone who is not familiar or cannot really grasp on every level because it is very multi-layered. I think if you think about the Royal family and the fact that every decision they make because they are in the public eye is every decision is thought about, then every move is discussed and calculated.

It is almost as though when you are going through honour-based abuse, it is almost like you are part of the most well-known family in the world, except you are not. You are supposed to be just a regular family, but you have almost the world, your wider community - watching every single thing you do. I think if you think about it in that context, you would sort of grasp it in a more human way, and you do not have to necessarily be from the communities where honour-based abuse is thriving.

I mean, I do not know if anyone is watched the Crown, but there is a lot of examples in the Crown. For example, who can marry who? And what conditions are set and whether divorcees can marry into the family? All these things actually are part of the wider honour code because it is all about how you are perceived by other people by your community.

Monica: I know this happens in day-to-day life, but I have actually seen a story which has come out recently on Tik Tok, about a girl who was from a very conservative family and she would go and change her clothes in her cellar. She would document her journey about how her dad would be very abusive and controlling over her and how she would have to carry out these steps. She was doing that to empower other girls to not feel like you cannot wear this type of clothes.

It was somebody on Tik Tok that made a conscious effort to find out who her dad was from a different community group, but from the same religious group, to tell her dad, and now her account's been removed.

But it just goes to show how you are watched even if you are not in the same town. You could end up going somewhere else, and one way or another, some uncle or somebody will end up telling your father or your uncle that, oh, I have seen your daughter, your niece doing this. It is all over.

Rubie: Absolutely. May I just add to that as well? When I first left home after I did get forced into marriage, I came to the Midlands trying to escape because my community knew people in the community in the Midlands; they actually got their eyes out. They tracked me down pretty fast within two days, and then all of a sudden, knocking on the door while I was in this person's house, my family were there.

So, it is like the communities do have links to other communities' matter where you are. I mean, even back home people like right here is the name; you know, look out for them. They are like private investigators. Everyone is working with each other, and you put the word out, and you are found.

It is very daunting, very scary of how people can just click their fingers, put the word out, and you are found in a different city. So, when you are leaving honour-based abuse and forced marriage, it is very scary feeling to know that no matter where you go, there could be somebody there that sees you, and they reported it back.

Monica: I just want to add one more thing. it is so funny how, when it comes to issues like this about controlling women and girls, our community becomes so close-knit, but when it comes to fighting

back and say no, this is not ok; we cannot be violent towards women, girls, men, whoever it is - then no one wants to pipe up, and I just, honestly, as you can tell, I am lost for words.

Kate: Thank you so much, Monica. I wanted everyone to carry on speaking there because it was just a really interesting and rich description of the complexity of community and the role of community. That sort of takes me on to the next question that we wanted to ask of you, and given the way that society has had to change in the last, well, a year now because of the pandemic, because of the COVID restrictions, do you think that there is more risk of honour-based abuse or less of a risk? Or have the risks changed?

Perhaps Sunny, we could start with you?

Sunny: There are more risks because previously, when children could go to school, or we could go to the office and nip out to go to the coffee shop or the gym or just pretend to go and see someone else. We could at least have our support buddies and go and see if we had, you know, a secret boyfriend or girlfriend or just a secret friend away from the family. We had support, you know face to face support, and we could actually have a hug. You know hugs are so important, and just go and have a cup of tea with someone, just chat it out.

Now being locked, being with the same family, and it is the emotional abuse, it is the verbal abuse as well that comes with honour abuse. I mean, honour-abuse covers quite a lot of it. It is like with honour-abuse, if someone says to you, you are not good enough. You have got again like Payzee said, a whole list of conditions, and with that, the backlash is like if someone keeps verbally abusing you, like with your parents saying to you – *she is not good enough, you are never going to amount to anything, we are going to marry you off, but first, you have got to do this, this, this, and this*; it is very degrading, and for the mental health, it is not very good.

So, suicides are very high risk at the moment, and I think it is during the pandemic honour abuse is very, very high.

I have had a lot of individuals contact me, asking for help, just reaching out, but I do know that a lot of people will have their phones looked at, so a lot of people are finding it hard.

Kate: Thank you, Sunny. Payzee, do you have any thoughts on this?

Payzee: Just to echo what Sunny said. Honestly, for me, it was as soon as lockdown started. It was one of the first things I thought about, and I immediately started thinking, what if I were still being in those conditions and going through lockdown with my husband that I was forced to marry, who was abusive and being so closely monitored.

See, we went through this globally, and it was something that we all experienced on one level similarly, but actually for anyone who is going through honour-based abuse, as Sunny mentioned: we are talking about people tracking your phone, who you are talking to.

There was a point where we could not leave the house, and that just is a very, very scary thought to have known that so many people were actually stuck at home with their perpetrators. I think one other thing that really was a big flag for me was the fact that a lot of victims would have not been able to contact services for various reasons. Multiple layers of, I guess, barriers.

Whether it was language accessibility or how would they see adverts, if, for example, someone is tracking their phone devices or their internet usage. How would they actually go on to look out for who to contact and where to seek support.

Then, of course, with social distancing, there was a lot of issues with refugees because obviously there is a limited number of people that can go there, so all these things added so many more restrictions to those who were going through honour-based abuse. Then you have, on the other hand, usually, you can see people face to face, and you can actually, maybe in a much more rapid way, get support.

But of course, you cannot do that if you are stuck at home, and I am very concerned when I think about once lockdown is eased and we really get to see those official statistics; I think they are going to be very alarming. I mean, we know that obviously, calls to helplines skyrocketed, but it will be very, very interesting to see the statistics of those who experienced honour-based abuse. The reports will sort of almost be lagging because people would not have been able to report them when they were going through them. I am sure we are all going to be quite shocked at the rate that people went through honour-based abuse.

Kate: Sobia, what is your take on this in terms of the pandemic?

Sobia: Yeah, I totally agree, and I think at the beginning the message about '*stay home, stay safe*' for a lot of women and some men; it was not a safe place. So, I think the messaging was completely wrong, and that should have been thought out right at the beginning, and we have seen stats, as Payzee said, of helplines rocketing. The true figures will come out later.

Actually, maybe, we know in South Asian women, self-harm and suicide rates are very high, so those stats will come out later. It has had a really bad effect on people who are suffering at home where they have nowhere to go, and I think really that should have been thought about earlier.

Kate: What do you feel about this, Rubie?

Rubie: I definitely agree. I do think that statistics are going to be absolutely high, blowing like a volcano when lockdown eases.

I think about the time when I was younger, and I was more or less barricaded in my own home, and I did not have a phone. I am trying to compare both like now I am safe, but then I was not that. At home, they, at least without a lockdown, they had that lifeline of maybe making an excuse to go to the doctors, where they were allowed to actually leave the house or not. I feel the majority of people that are going through honour-based abuse are hardly allowed to go out anyway.

I am just comparing it to my experiences of when I was younger, but I definitely feel that there is going to be a lot more flights going out to different countries when summer starts, and I think there is going to be a lot more people getting forced into marriages and taken abroad at that time.

We have not been able to travel anywhere either for the past year, so I definitely feel that a lot of people are going to come flooding out of the gates and reporting a lot more when we have the permission to do so, and it is scary.

It is very alarming. It is very scary, and it is very concerning. I definitely think that a lot of charities are going to be flooded with phone calls once when everybody gets the chance to actually do so.

Kate: Thanks all for your responses to that. I think we are looking at quite a bleak picture in terms of the impact that the pandemics had on honour-based abuse and what outcomes there are going to be. Does anybody have any thoughts on, potentially, any good that might have come out of what has happened during the pandemic? Or have there been any resources or ways that women can be helped that you think have shone through during the time that we have had in lockdown?

Payzee: I would say one thing that I have noticed is NGOs who have really utilised the internet space for those who can access the internet and who are able to attend focus groups or discussion groups where they would have usually been doing in person. So, I have seen some really clever, I would say, social media strategies in speaking to women from communities and actually not leaving people out.

I think that is one thing that I felt was very disappointing with the government campaign was the fact that it was only offered in English and meaning that a lot of people were not able to access that support or even understand it. I have seen, I would say, at the NGO's who have been using, even you know this sort of conversation, for example.

I have been using zoom and webinars spaces too be able to engage with audiences and really try and get the word out, especially around awareness. I have seen quite a few NGOs holding webinars to raise awareness and talk to audiences that might not necessarily have been aware of these issues.

Sobia: Can I say something, Kate there?

Kate: Yes, of course.

Sobia: I totally agree with Payzee that there has been imaginative, creative ways of helping people. I would also say that because of the policy, I think of the government not acting very well on this. Is that it is actually highlighted domestic abuse and some honour-based abuse, not as much as I would like, but I think it has highlighted because of the phone calls. Going from exceeding expectations of people calling, and that has been coming in the media and in the press.

I think that it's highlighted that this is a huge problem. I think domestic abuse, in particular, is highlighted more than honour-based.

Kate: Does anybody else have any thoughts on that?

Rubie: I agree with that. I definitely think honour-based abuse has been put on the back shelf. Domestic violence has definitely been on the horizon. Even child abuse as well, because the whole thing about children not going to schools and the whole news out there on poor families not being able to feed their children etc.

We know that statistics on suicide is high. We know that domestic violence is high and for child abuse as well, but I feel like honour-based abuse is just not looked at more thoroughly, and I think that is due to lack of education as well as people's understanding on what honour-based abuse is.

Sunny: I think we need to have more positivity. I have seen some adverts and campaigns like Network Rail at the train stations, like if you are in a domestic violence incident or something, you can get a free train fare out of it, you can get help. Even going to Sainsbury's, there was something like if you are going through domestic violence, you can ring this Women's Aid number. You can ring for the refuge. I have seen these boards put up in different places; that is only if you are out.

So, we need some more adverts on TV so when you are actually in the house. An easy number that someone can memorise or how else to get help, we need to give some more positivity to someone that is actually being victimised.

Monica: I completely agree. I have seen an article about I think it was a pizza outlet in Spain, but instead of having their contact number at the bottom, they had a contact line for women - if they were going through domestic abuse. If you think about it in the home environment, they are picking up the letters or whatever, it was an access point that was not thought about before, but it is an easy access point. Obviously, there are emotions and triggers that come behind somebody who wants to come out and tell their story. But actually, like you have just said, Sunny, we need to make it easier. We need to exercise all the opportunities possible.

There should not be any excuse. We need to be really forefront with our communication and no shying away from it. The issue that is happening is terrible, it is violence against women and girls, and we just need to take control on that.

Sunny: We all know it is happening. We need to do more to say; "here is a helping hand to get you out of it"; what can we do to reach in and help them out. Rather than putting stats out of like there is more child abuse, more suicide, there's more domestic violence, and there is more honour-abuse. As a victim, they are just going to say, well, everybody else is going through it, so why should they help me? There is 100 more than me on the list, so why am I going to get help? Whereas if you saw something like free train fare, I do not have money, but I can get on that train, and I can get out of here. You know that gives you hope. Hope is more than fear. We need to give people more hope to actually get them moving.

Change the mindset. Like you say, a Pizza flyer - do you need help, call us, and ask for a pizza with extra hot chilli or something, extra hot emergency. Just something, we need to do something else to just get information. Get a helping hand in to get them out rather than keep putting more pressure on them to say, well, you might think you are on your own, but there is another 500 people like you waiting to be helped. It is not good.

Monica: I think we just to find a solution to the problems or the obstacles that are in place and build that in, and this is with me talking with my marketing head-on. If we know like how you said the access to finance or equipment or having someone there for support, a listening ear; all those barriers need to be addressed in the type of comms to spell out, look, we are here. We are here to listen, we can help you with your financial support.

Sobia: Can I just add something, Monica? The fact that you know there is so many barriers, but also, we know what the barriers are. Today we are talking; we have got survivors here, people from the community. We know what the barriers are, but people higher up need to listen.

Language is a barrier, finance is a barrier, people who are coming, women, particularly coming from other countries whose English is not their first language. They do not have family here. We know what the barriers are, and they are multi-layered. There are so many, and it is complex, but we know what they are, but we need to get policy people to actually listen more, and the focus has been domestic violence and honour-based violence; those words should be used more.

Kate: Thanks Sobia. I was actually just going to hand back to Monica because everything that you have all been saying about things that we can do, things that could be done to improve the situation - that sort of leads into our final question.

Monica: So, this question is for Sunny and Payzee. I know you have told us a bit about your campaigning journey, but in your journey to date and the work that you plan on doing in the future, how can we as individuals, and how can organisations support you in tackling honour-based abuse? Payzee?

Payzee: I think first things first, how people can support, there is literally so many things that can be done from the comfort of your own home which take no more than five minutes. One of the most important things is actually sharing the information that I, or you know, the charities I work with that share. For example, if we put out some sort of research about what we found during COVID or we put out a survivor testimony. You just sharing that with a click of a button is actually reaching wider audiences, so you can start with things like that. Just sharing the work that we do and actually helping us get our message out there.

Then, depending on your capacity, you can always volunteer to the causes that we work on. I think especially right now where we are all at home, and if we can spare an hour or two hours, whatever it might be, whatever you might have capacity for, whether it is social media or you just want to help one fundraising and you want to help us get our work out there, that is something else that you can do.

Again, given capacity you can donate to the cause is that we work hard on, and I think for me, I always say that just having people almost like an army of people who support what you do, who believe you and see you. It helps you reach far and beyond. I know for me, in my campaigning journey, having the support of people like yourselves. Everyone in this conversation who would just share the work I am doing or support me through sending me words of encouragement, those kinds of things really, really help. Not just on a personal level but also to give you that energy that you need for campaigning because it is something that takes a lot of your mental and emotional energy.

So, you constantly need to recharge, and that is something that I have found, actually a positive. I remember Sunny said we need to focus on some positives, but that is something I found in the sector, which has been absolutely incredible. The people that do work within this sector and fight so hard for these issues, they are so supportive, and there is such a genuine level of support, and I think we should just continue that. We should give space to people who have lived experiences.

I know it was mentioned in this conversation, but I think people who are experts of these experiences need to be involved in the wider conversations and need to be involved when discussions about legislation is happening, discussions about funding or happening.

If you cannot listen to the people who are experts by experience, you are not going to be understanding the depth of these issues from somebody who has studied it from a book, for example. I think the voices of those who have experienced these issues are so crucial to the work that we do, and without those voices cannot change things; we cannot set good practice in place.

For me, we need to make room for people who have experiences and who have this to share and to make changes and to give hope and empowerment to others who are experiencing it.

That is very, very important for people who are still within the abuse; they need to see those empowering messages from people who have gone through and who are getting support and who have come out the other side; we need to show that and to communicate that to people who are suffering.

Monica: Thank you, Payzee, Sunny?

Sunny: That's amazing, Payzee. I am so proud of you. For me, mine is pretty basic actually, I think. I mean, writing a book took me four years, and people have literally been reading it in two days. So, to support me really is to either buy the book or just a gift. It is called 'Wings' and by Sunny Angel, available on Amazon. In regard to campaigning, I help a lot of charities.

Monica: Thank you so much, Sunny and Payzee. Again, just to reiterate, it has been an absolute honour to speak to you both, to hear about your experiences and how empowering you are as women, as individuals trying to drive this conversation forward. It is without you guys, it would be such a huge struggle to try and echo these messages, so heartfelt thank you from me.

Monica: Kate, did you have anything else to add?

Kate: I just really wanted to say just thank you to everybody on this podcast actually, that shared expertise and aired your experiences so bravely. What I really hope for is that people start to listen in the way that Sobia has described. As some of you have described as well that people that have the stories, the lived experience, or the understanding of the community, really that those voices are listened to, and the people who make the policies start to sit up and listen. So, thank you, everybody.

Monica: Yep, thank you, Sobia and Ruby, for joining us as well today.

Sunny: Thanks, everyone.

Rubie: Thank you

Payzee: Thank you so much. It has been an honour to speak with you all and hear your views on this conversation. Thank you, Monica.

Monica: Thanks for listening! All the resources discussed in this podcast will be listed in the description.

Kate: If you enjoyed this episode, please share it with others and post about it on social media. Keep an ear out for our other podcasts. Until then stay safe, join the conversation and help us protect women and girls