

# WAKEFIELD & DISTRICT safeguarding adults board

Safeguarding rapid  
read number 6

## September 2022: Virginity Testing and Hymenoplasty



### 7. For further information

All practitioners should read the relevant [Government Guidance](#) for further information. Karma Nirvana have also produced a [video](#).

### 6. Response

If speaking with a woman or girl who has undergone or is at risk of virginity testing or hymenoplasty, you may need to ensure she is in a safe place, away from the perpetrator. An adult or child safeguarding referral to the Local Authority may be required. You should follow your organisation's safeguarding procedures and seek advice from your safeguarding lead. **In an emergency, contact the police without delay.**

Intelligence around settings or individuals performing these practices should be shared either with police, or anonymously through Crimestoppers.

### 5. Potential Indicators

- the woman or girl requests procedure or asks for help
- family members ask for the procedures or disclose that the woman or girl or a female relative has already undergone the practices
- concern from family members that a woman or girl has a boyfriend, or plans for the woman or girl to be married
- the woman or girl has already experienced or is at risk of other forms of so called 'honour-based' abuse and/or the woman or girl is already known to social services in relation to other safeguarding issues
- the woman or girl may disclose other concerns that could be an indication of abuse such as controlling behaviours or appearing fearful of family members.
- changes in behaviour – becoming withdrawn, anxious, or depressed; a deterioration in schoolwork, attendance, or attainment

### 1. Legislation

The UK Government has made it illegal to carry out, offer or aid and abet virginity testing or hymenoplasty in any part of the UK, as part of the Health and Care Act 2022. It is also illegal for UK nationals and residents to carry out these acts outside the UK.

### 2. Virginity Testing

For the purposes of the Health and Care Act 2022, virginity testing is any examination (with or without contact) of the female genitalia intended to establish if vaginal intercourse has taken place. This is irrespective of whether consent has been given. The position of the World Health Organization and the Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists is that there is no known examination that can prove whether a woman has had vaginal intercourse.

### 3. Hymenoplasty

Hymenoplasty is a procedure undertaken to reconstruct a hymen (a thin membrane that partially covers the entrance to the vagina). There are a number of different techniques to achieve but it generally involves stitching hymenal remnants together at the vaginal opening, or surgically reconstructing a hymen using vaginal tissue. The aim of the procedure is to ensure that a woman bleeds the next time she has intercourse to give the impression that she has no history of vaginal intercourse. There is no guarantee that this will fully reform the hymen or cause bleeding when penetration is attempted. Hymenoplasty is not the same as other procedures that could be performed on the hymen for clinical reasons.

### 4. The link to Honour-Based Abuse

Virginity testing and hymenoplasty are forms of violence against women and girls and are part of the cycle of so called 'honour-based' abuse. Women and girls are coerced, forced and shamed into undergoing these procedures, often pressurised by family members or their intended husbands' family in the name of supposedly upholding honour and to fulfil the requirement that a woman remains 'pure' before marriage.

Both virginity testing and hymenoplasty can be precursors to child or forced marriage and other forms of family and/or community coercive behaviours, including physical and emotional control. Women who 'fail' a virginity test, are found to have undergone a hymen reconstruction, or do not bleed on their wedding night are likely to experience further so called 'honour-based' abuse including emotional and physical abuse, family or community disownment and even honour killings.