



Rape and sexual abuse have never been easy crimes to solve or investigate and neither have they ever been easy crimes to report.

The onus falls so heavily on the victim to prove a crime has been committed. Why is this still how victims feel? Could it be because a proportion of society still views these crimes as preventable on the victim's part, making it an unseen burden on those considering coming forward to seek justice for crimes against them?

Culture and tradition play a heavy role in determining the likelihood of those from ethnic backgrounds in the UK from breaking the silence. There is a lot to consider when you take into account how close knit some of these communities are and the cost of going against tradition.

When a woman or child is violated by a relative for example, there are so many barriers to get through and hurdles to jump both emotionally and mentally before enough courage is mustered to go out and seek justice. It is a frightening prospect to consider being ostracised by your family, especially if you are a young person. The pressure to keep silent and be blamed and stigmatised for something that was not their fault seems too high a price to pay, so victims suffer in silence.

Without real tangible support and the raising of awareness around rape and sexual abuse, these crimes will continue to go unpunished, leaving victims with the responsibility of navigating an emotional minefield to heal themselves. Perpetrators are then free to violate children indiscriminately – because they can rely on the silence of their families and communities to be more concerned about not bringing shame onto the family, than focusing on the most important person being the one who has been robbed of their innocence and dignity.

Somehow we must find a way to shift the burden of shame from victim to abuser, from victim to violator; only then should we be proud to belong to certain communities who put the needs and welfare of the vulnerable at the heart of their loyalties.