

Fact Sheet – Forced Marriage

What is forced marriage?

Forced marriage is when a person faces physical pressure to marry (such as threats, physical violence or sexual violence) or emotional and psychological pressure (for example, being made to feel they are bringing shame on their family).

Adults who lack capacity to consent to marriage do not need to have been pressured or abused for the marriage to be forced.

It is also a forced marriage when it is arranged for a child to get married before they are 18 even if they are not forced or coerced into doing so. Any concerns relating to the marriage of a child should be reported to Children's Safeguarding Services.

Forced Marriage became a specific offence in 2014 under the Anti-Social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act.

Forced marriage is illegal in England and Wales. This includes

- Taking someone overseas to force them to marry (whether or not the forced marriage takes place).
- Arranging a marriage for someone who lacks capacity (whether they're pressured to or not)
- Arranging a marriage for someone before they turn 18.

Remember: A forced marriage is very different to an arranged marriage. This is where the marriage is planned and arranged by the families of the couple concerned, but the couple are free to decide whether they want the marriage to go ahead.

Potential warning signs or indicators relating to forced marriage

Education – absence or increased truancy, request for extended leave, failure to return from a visit to a country of origin, surveillance by family, deterioration in behaviours, achievement or punctuality, removal from the educational setting for home educating.

Health – self-harm, suicide attempts, eating disorders, depression, pregnancy, being accompanied to health appointments unnecessarily.

Police – Other siblings reported missing, domestic abuse, threats or attempts to kill or harm.

Family History – siblings forced to marry or married young, self-harm or suicide of siblings, death of a parent, missing or running away from home, unreasonable physical or financial restrictions.

Employment – poor performance or attendance, inflexible working arrangements, someone not being allowed to work, or accompanied to and from work.

Home environment – regular confiscation of mobile phones or laptops, no access to money, fear of going home.

Marriage and Capacity

There are certain decisions which can **never** be made on behalf of someone else, and these include the decision to marry or have sexual relationships.

If a person does not consent or lack capacity to consent, regardless of the reason for the marriage, it is a forced marriage.

Support Services

Contact the Forced Marriage Unit (FMU) if you're trying to stop a forced marriage or the adult need help leaving a marriage they've been forced into.

fmu@fcdo.gov.uk

Telephone: 020 7008 0151

From overseas: +44 (0)20 7008 0151

Monday to Friday, 9am to 5pm

Out of hours: 020 7008 5000

A trained professional will be able to offer free advice on what to do next.

They can also help the person:

- Find a safe place to stay
- Stop a UK visa if the person has been forced to sponsor someone.

In an emergency, call 999.

If the adult has care and support needs, the concerns should also be reported to the Local Authority in which the abuse is occurring.

Forced Marriage Protection Orders

Please follow the link below for information on obtaining a Forced Marriage Protection Order.

<https://www.gov.uk/apply-forced-marriage-protection-order>

A Forced Marriage Protection Order must be sought in the Family Court, rather than the Court of Protection. Practitioners should seek advice from their line manager regarding access to legal advice/support.

Voluntary Organisations

Karma Nirvana – Support individuals who have experienced forced marriage and honor-based abuse.

Tel: 0800 5999 247

karmanirvana.org.uk

Halo Project – Provides advice and support to victims of forced marriage, honor-based violence and female genital mutilation through a helpline and live chat. The Project can also offer advice to concerned relatives or friends.

Tel: 0164 268 3045 or 0808 178 8424 (freephone)

haloproject.org.uk

Guidance

- Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office (2013, Updated 2020). Forced Marriage: A Survivors Handbook.
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/survivors-handbook>
- Home Office (2002, Updated 2023) Multi-agency statutory guidance for dealing with forced marriage and multi-agency practice guidelines: Handling Cases of forced marriage. [Click here](#)

- Home Office (2023) Forced Marriage Resource Pack – examples of best practice to ensure that effective support is available to victims of forced marriage. <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/forced-marriage-resource-pack>
- HM Government. Forced Marriage and Learning Disabilities: Multi-agency Practice Guidelines [https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/141824/Forced Marriage and learning disabilities guidelines FINAL.PDF](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/141824/Forced_Marriage_and_learning_disabilities_guidelines_FINAL.PDF)

Resources

The Forced Marriage Unit of the Foreign Office have developed a free online course which aims to raise awareness, challenge perception and inform learners of the correct actions to take should there be suspicions that someone is at risk.

<https://www.virtual-college.co.uk/resources/free-courses/awareness-of-forced-marriage>

The Foreign and Commonwealth Office have produced a series of [YouTube videos](#) which looks at recognising the signs of a forced marriage.

Trust for London and Respond (2019) Forced Marriage: A guide for people with learning disabilities (Easy Read)

<https://respond.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/06/Forced-Marriage-WEB-ACCESSIBLE-24.01.19.pdf>

Get Help- Support services | FORWARD

My Marriage My Choice – A website providing information and advice to adults with learning disabilities, their friends and cares and professionals. This includes a Practice guidance toolkit for assessing capacity to consent to marriage.

<https://mymarriagemychoice.co.uk/resources/>

Respond Understanding mental capacity and marriage: A booklet for parents of someone with a learning disability. https://respond.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/06/7-Respond-Mental-Capacity-Booklet-A5-28pp_LR.pdf