

Fact Sheet – Predatory Marriage

What is predatory marriage?

Predatory marriage is the practice of intentionally targeting and marrying a person in order to gain access to their estate and assets upon their death.

The identified source of risk may groom or coerce the adult to marry them in order for financial or material gain. The source of risk may take advantage of the knowledge that entering into marriage will revoke any will that has previously been in place.

To learn more about predatory marriage watch the video below. This relates to Jean Blass, a 91 year old woman with dementia and terminal cancer, who was targeted by a younger male and covertly married in 2015. The marriage only came to light after Jean's death in March 2016.

[A Conversation with ... Daphne Franks \(youtube.com\)](#)

Predatory marriage is a form of forced marriage – refer to the separate fact sheet.

The legal framework

In UK law, marriage and civil partnerships rely on consent. The Marriage Act 1989 requires that two adult parties agree to a marriage, it is implicit that they understand and agree to marry by giving informed consent which is dependent on capacity to make decisions as determined by the Mental Capacity Act 2005.

The Anti-Social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014 created the criminal offence of forced marriage. It is a criminal offence to marry a person who lacks the mental capacity to consent to the marriage, regardless of any pressure. It is also a crime to pressure someone to marry by any means.

Under current law, marriage will revoke a will. Therefore, unless the adult makes a further will, the laws of intestacy will determine how the adults assets will be distributed. The source of risk will also be able to control administration of the adult's funeral.

What to do if you are worried about the risk of predatory marriage?

- Alert the marriage registrar
 - Registrars are trained to notice signs of forced and sham marriages – however, they are not trained to formally assess capacity to consent to marriage.
- Report concerns to the relevant local authority
- Consider a Forced Marriage Protection order – The Court has the power to halt any marriage plans if it is found that the adult does not have capacity to marry.
- Apply to the Court of Protection for a [statutory will](#)
 - This is a will made by the Court of Protection on behalf of someone who is unable to do so due to a lack of capacity.
 - Always seek legal advice before determining whether a statutory will is necessary.

Additional Information

[Predatory Marriage UK](#) – Aim to reform marriage laws and procedures to protect people with dementia