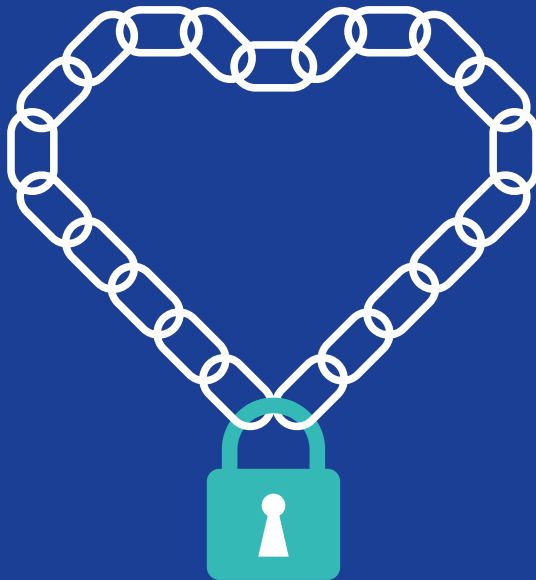


# Practice guide



Forced marriage...  
what should I do?

# Practice Guide

## Forced marriage... what should I do?

### What is a forced marriage?

Everyone has the right to choose who they marry, when they marry or if they marry at all.

A Forced Marriage is when one or both prospective spouses is coerced or faces physical pressure to marry (e.g. threats, physical violence or sexual violence) or emotional and psychological pressure (e.g. if they are made to feel they are bringing shame on their family).

### How can I be sure this isn't an arranged marriage?

A Forced marriage is different from an Arranged marriage. An Arranged marriage is where the family of both prospective spouses take on the role of arranging the marriage with the informed consent of both spouses agreeing to be married. The 'choice' to marry remains with the prospective spouses.

A Forced marriage is considered a crime – it is a form of child/ adult/ domestic abuse and needs to be treated as such; ignoring the needs of victims should never be an option. Forced marriage affects people from many communities and cultures, so cases should always be addressed.

### Who is most at risk of a forced marriage?

Forced marriage affects both men and women. However, many reported cases involve young girls and women aged between 16-25 years. It can involve those who lack capacity or who have a disability and those who do not. It is practiced in a number of countries including South Asia, the Middle East, Europe, North America and the UK.

Forced marriage has strong links to 'Honour based violence and other safeguarding risks such as Female Genital Mutilation (FGM); and often

you or your church may only have one chance to speak to a potential victim, and only one chance to save a life.

"The terms "honour crime" or "honour-based violence" or "izzat" embrace a variety of crimes of violence (mainly but not exclusively against women), including assault, imprisonment and murder where the person is being punished by their family or their community for not accepting the marriage arrangements which have been forced upon them. They are being punished for actually, or allegedly, undermining what the family or community believes to be the correct code of behaviour.

### Why is forced marriage practiced in some families?

Many young people will be living through their entire childhood with the expectation that they will marry someone of their parents' or other family members' choosing. Many perpetrators of a Forced marriage believe that they are upholding the cultural traditions of their home country, or justify their behaviour as protecting their children, building stronger families and preserving 'so-called' religious beliefs. Some of the key motives for a Forced marriage have been identified as:

- Controlling undesirable behaviour, for example, alcohol and drug use, wearing make-up, or behaving in a "westernised manner".
- Preventing "unsuitable" relationships, e.g. outside the ethnic, cultural, religious or caste group.
- Protecting "family honour" or "izzat".
- Responding to peer-group or family pressure.
- Attempting to strengthen family links.
- Achieving financial gain by ensuring land, property and wealth remains within the family.
- Ensuring care for a child or adult with special needs when parents or existing carers are unable to fulfil that role.
- Assisting claims for UK residence and citizenship.

## What can I do to help someone who may be at risk of a forced marriage?

- **Being aware** of the signs and indicators of a potential Forced marriage and understanding your church or faith group's safeguarding policy procedures are the first steps to responding well to this type of abuse. Some of the signs to look out for include:

### Education

- Withdrawn from school
- Absence from school
- Low motivation at school
- Poor exam results

### Health

- Isolation
- Self-harm
- Eating disorders
- Attempted suicide
- Depression

## Forced Marriage

### Social Factors

- Isolation
- Choice of friends
- Withdrawn from social activities

### Family History

- Siblings forced to marry
- Family disputes
- Domestic violence & abuse
- Running away from home
- Unreasonable restrictions e.g. house arrest

Source: [www.safeguardingpeterborough.org.uk/children-board/professionals/procedures/forced-marriages-practice-guidance](http://www.safeguardingpeterborough.org.uk/children-board/professionals/procedures/forced-marriages-practice-guidance)

- **Respond with care.** Individuals who are facing a Forced Marriage may be concerned that if confidentiality is breached and their family finds out that they have sought help they will be in serious danger. However, those facing forced marriage are often already facing serious danger because of domestic abuse, "honour-based" violence, rape, imprisonment and sometimes poisoning. Consequently, confidentiality and information sharing are extremely important for anyone threatened with, or already in, a Forced marriage. It is important to discuss this with the safeguarding coordinator for your church or faith group. Circumstances sometimes arise where a child, or more probably a young person, explicitly asks you not to give information to their parents/guardians or others with some authority over them. Those who are 16 and above are assumed to have capacity to make decisions and their decisions should be respected. However, those under 16 may also have capacity and it is important to try, where possible, to respect the requests they make. Where a decision is made to share the information with another person, you should seek the consent of

the person, before the disclosure. Most people will consent to the disclosure if they receive a careful explanation of why the disclosure is to be made and are assured about their safety (e.g. information will not be passed to their family) and what will happen following such a disclosure. Whether or not the person agrees to the disclosure, they should be told if there is to be a disclosure of confidential information. This will usually be to a professional.

In cases of forced marriage, involving the family and the community may increase the risk of significant harm to the child or young person. The family may deny that the child or young person is being forced to marry and they may expedite any travel arrangements and bring forward the marriage. Young people and adults with support needs are particularly vulnerable to forced marriage because they are often reliant on their families for care, they may have communication difficulties and they may have fewer opportunities to tell anyone outside the family about what is happening to them. It is therefore important that relatives, friends, community leaders and neighbours should not be used as interpreters or advocates – despite any reassurances from this known person. If it is appropriate to use an advocate then

an independent advocate should be sought.

**Report your concerns** if you remain concerned. Discuss these with your organisation's safeguarding coordinator and agree what action will be taken.

However, where immediate action is necessary to protect a child or young person from being forced to marry or abducted e.g. Police Protection or Emergency Protection Orders; call 999 in an emergency.

A trained professional will give you free advice on what to do next.

They can also help:

- someone find a safe place to stay
- Stop a UK visa if you've been forced to sponsor someone.

## Useful resources

In addition to the resources available from the organisations listed below, CCPAS can offer advice on support for those affected by abuse. We have a 24 hour helpline – 0845 120 4550/01322 517817. We also have relevant material, articles from past editions of Caring and downloadable versions of other 'Help' leaflets which might be relevant. [www.ccpas.co.uk](http://www.ccpas.co.uk)

## Further Advice

You may also contact the Forced Marriage Unit (FMU) if you're trying to stop a forced marriage or you know someone who needs help leaving a marriage they've been forced into.

### **Forced Marriage Unit**

[fmfu@fco.gov.uk](mailto:fmfu@fco.gov.uk)

Telephone: 020 7008 0151

From overseas: +44 (0)20 7008 0151

Monday to Friday, 9am to 5pm

Out of hours: 020 7008 1500 (ask for the Global Response Centre)

## Forced marriage offences

Forced Marriage is illegal in England and Wales under the Forced Marriage (Civil Protection) Act 2007.

This includes:

- taking someone overseas to force them to marry (whether or not the forced marriage takes place) marrying someone who lacks the mental capacity to consent to the marriage (whether they're pressured to or not)

**Forcing someone to marry can result in a sentence of up to 7 years in prison.**

## Forced marriage protection orders

Anyone at risk from a Forced marriage can ask a court for a Forced Marriage Protection Order.

Each order is unique, and is designed to protect someone according to their individual circumstances. For example, the court may order someone to handover a person's passport or reveal where they are.

In an emergency, an order can be made to protect someone from a Forced marriage with immediate effect.

**Disobeying a forced marriage protection order can result in a sentence of up to 5 years in prison.**

## Forced marriage abroad

Contact the FMU if you think someone is about to be taken abroad to get married against their will.

Contact the nearest British embassy if they are already abroad.

## If someone you know is at risk

Contact the FMU if you know someone who's been taken abroad to be forced into marriage.

Give as many details as you can, for example:

- where the person has gone
- when they were due back
- when you last heard from them

The FMU will contact the relevant embassy.

If they're a British national, the embassy will try to contact the person and help them get back to the UK if that's what they want.

## Support for victims

Read "The Forced Marriage - a survivor's handbook" which is about being a survivor of forced marriage. It has details of organisations that can give you help and advice.

This is one of a series of **Practice Guides** published by CCPAS. For our full range of resources and for more information visit our website **[www.ccpas.co.uk](http://www.ccpas.co.uk)**



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