

FORCED MARRIAGE

1 BACKGROUND

Forcing someone to marry is a criminal offence (under the Crime and Policing Act 2014) and something that can lead to lifelong suffering for the victim from physical abuse, sexual abuse and servitude.

An “arranged” marriage is one which has the consent of both parties and is perfectly legal and acceptable. Forced marriage (FM) is where one or both parties do not agree to the marriage and where fear/coercion/ duress or force is a factor.

This is not something that just happens to teenagers or young people, it affects people of all ages, genders and many different nationalities.

2 WHY IT MATTERS

In the worst cases, where the victim of FM either resists the marriage or leaves the marriage later, it can end with kidnap, assault and even murder for the victim. Affected communities often do not readily ask for help as they distrust authority or fear dishonouring their family/community and being disowned’. Forcing children to marry is child abuse and puts children and young people at risk of physical, emotional and sexual abuse.

3 INFORMATION

The factors below, collectively or individually may be an indication that a person fears they may be forced to marry, or that a forced marriage has already taken place: Questions and puts children and young people at risk of physical, emotional and sexual abuse.

- **Education** - truancy from lessons, low motivation in school, poor exam results, extended periods of ‘authorised absence’ for sickness or oversees family commitments, unofficial withdrawal from school/ college/ university, history of other siblings missing education and marrying early;

- **Health** - self-harm, attempted suicide, eating disorders, depression, isolation;
- **Employment** - poor performance or attendance, limited career choices, not allowed to work, unreasonable financial control e.g. confiscation of wages/income;
- **Family history** - siblings forced to marry, family disputes, domestic violence and abuse, running away from home, unreasonable restrictions e.g. house arrest
- Risky behaviours such as missing from home or CSE

4 WHAT TO DO

1. Listen carefully and look carefully at the environment that they are in!
2. Always remember, the ‘one chance rule’! Exercise
3. In urgent cases ring the police on 999, otherwise refer to Children’s Social care
4. Contact local experts (IDVA’s, refuges, Police PPU’s) or The National Forced Marriage Unit for help and advice (020 7008 0230)
5. DO NOT try to mediate or involve the family and community members or discuss concerns about FM with them
6. Exercise extreme caution

5 QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

Have we completed the Home office ‘Forced Marriage’ e-learning?
Are we clear about our responsibilities with regards to forced marriage?
Are we ready to pick up subtle clues about this issue?
Will you be brave, step in and possibly save a life?