

What is Forced Marriage?



Easy read version

What is forced marriage?



Forced marriage is where one or both people do not agree or cannot consent to the marriage and pressure or abuse is used to force them to marry.



Forced marriage is illegal in the UK. It is a type of domestic abuse and abuse of human rights.



It is also a forced marriage when anyone arranges for someone to get married before they are 18, even without forcing them. It is against the law!



Anyone may be forced into marriage – it happens to people of all ages, genders, ethnicities and religions.

People can be forced into getting married in lots of different ways:

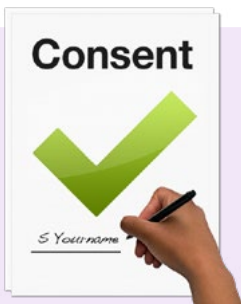


- Physical pressure such as threats of violence, violence or sexual violence.
- Emotional pressure such as making someone feel they have brought shame on the family. Or saying someone in the family could get ill if they don't marry. Or telling them they can't have money or freedom if they don't get married.



- Sometimes people are taken to another country without them knowing they will get married. When they arrive in that country they may have their passport and travel documents taken off them, so they can't return to the UK.

What is consent?



Consent means to understand and agree and give permission.



Both people getting married must consent. It must be their choice to get married.



The law says that people with a severe learning disability or mental health condition cannot get married, even if they want to. This is because they can't fully understand what marriage involves.



If you consent (agree) to marry and later change your mind but feel you can't back out, this would also be a forced marriage.

What is an arranged marriage?



For adults who are getting married, arranged marriages and forced marriages are different. Arranged marriage is when the family choose the marriage partner. But the people can choose if they want to marry.

Marriage under 18



Any marriage involving under 18-year-olds is a forced marriage. The person who arranges it is committing a crime.

What can I do?



If you are in danger call the police on 999



If you or someone you know is being forced into marriage in the UK or in another country then you can contact the **Forced Marriage Unit**.



The **Forced Marriage Unit** is part of the government. It gives support and advice to victims, those at risk and professionals.



It can help before and after you report forced marriage to the police.
Or if you decide not to report it to the police.



The **Forced Marriage Unit** can help victims who are abroad get back home to the UK.



The staff working in the **Forced Marriage Unit** understand the cultural and emotional issues around forced marriage.

Forced Marriage Unit contact details on page 10

You are not alone



You may feel alone and with no support if you or someone you know is being forced into marriage.



The **Forced Marriage Unit** helps hundreds of people every year. They help women and men of all ages, ethnicities and religions. And from the LGBTQ+ community. Anyone can call.



This is Syed's story

When I was 25 I was taken to Pakistan for a family wedding. I thought it was for my relative, but when I got there I found out it was my wedding! I didn't want to marry but my family said I must and my mother was getting ill and it was my fault. So in the end I said yes.

I came home on my own and got on with life. But then my new wife's family started to pressure me to put in a visa application so she could come over to the UK and live with me. They threatened me. So I called the **Forced Marriage Unit**.

They said as I was a 'reluctant sponsor' they could help me.



This is Mandeep's story

My brother has a severe learning disability. I heard my parents planning to take my brother to India in the summer so he could be married. My parents said they were getting too old to look after him and so they thought he should marry a wife who could look after him.

I knew my brother wouldn't understand this and that it was wrong.

So I called the **Forced Marriage Unit** and told them. They got in touch with our local social services and they did an assessment of Mandeep's understanding. They said he didn't have the capacity to consent to a marriage. So a safeguarding plan was put in place and a Forced Marriage Protection Order.

The local learning disability team then worked with our family to find other ways for Mandeep to get the support and care he needed in the future.

What happens when I call the Forced Marriage Unit?



You will speak to an experienced worker. They will listen to you and give you the help and support you need. They will tell you what services can help you. They will explain what your rights are. They will not contact your family.

If I phone the Forced Marriage Unit, do I have to say who I am?



You do not have to say your name or other details. But if you choose not to, then you won't be able to have all the help that you could have. If you can, tell them your name, where you live and your nationality. This information won't be shared with anyone unless you are under 18 or you are at risk of harm.

Will the Forced Marriage Unit keep me safe?



The **Forced Marriage Unit** will tell you the organisations who can support you and keep you safe. But if you are in danger call **999**.

What if I want to leave home?



There may be a safe place to stay at a local refuge. The staff at the refuge can also help you to rebuild your life.

What if I am abroad with no money and I want to fly home?



If you can, leave with some local money, your passport, any travel papers and a mobile phone. Phone the **Forced Marriage Unit** and they can talk to you about ways you could get home, such as a Forced Marriage Protection Order. But if you have to stay abroad for a long time, they will try to help you find a safe place to stay while you wait to come home.

What if I am abroad but without my passport?



If you are a British national you can be given an Emergency Travel Document. If you are not a British national then you will have help to contact your national Embassy.

I got married abroad, is my marriage legal in the UK?



If your marriage was legal in the country where you married then it is usually also legal in the UK. It could be a religious or a civil marriage. A solicitor will be able to tell you. Religious divorce is not legal in the UK.

I am under 16 – can you help me?



Yes – please phone the helpline.



Weekdays 9am-5pm

Or



Out of hours

I am not a British national – can you still help me?



The **Forced Marriage Unit** can help anyone in the UK at risk of having a forced marriage. It can only help someone abroad if they are a British national (including people who are nationals of Britain and of another country).

Can the law protect me and stop the marriage?



Yes as forced marriage is a criminal offence in the UK. The Forced Marriage Unit can help you decide whether to go to court for a Forced Marriage Protection Order or go to the police who will deal with it as a crime and through the criminal courts – or do both.

What is a Forced Marriage Protection Order?



They are used to protect someone from getting married against their will. A person can be arrested if they still try and force someone to marry. You can find out more here – <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/forced-marriage-protection-orders-f1701>

Forced Marriage Unit - Call:

(+44) (0) 207 008 0151 Monday to Friday 9am to 5pm

(+44) (0) 207 008 1500 Global Response Centre (out of hours)

Email: FMU@fco.gov.uk

Police in an emergency	999
Police in a non-emergency	101
Ashiana Network (London) – specialist refuge, advice, support and counselling services for black and minority ethnic women and girls aged 14+	0208 539 0427
Childline	0800 1111
Imkaan – Black feminist organisation addressing violence against Black and minoritised women and girls	020 7842 8525
IKWRO – Women’s Rights Organisation (East London) – helps Middle Eastern and Afghan women and girls living in the UK	0207 920 6460
Forward (North London) – African women-led organisation working to end violence against women and girls	0208 960 4000
Freedom Charity	0845 607 0133
Karma Nirvana ‘honour’-based abuse/forced marriage helpline	0800 5999 247
London Black Women’s Project	0208 472 0528

Men's Advice Line	0808 801 0327
National Domestic Abuse Helpline	0808 2000 247
Respond – for victims with learning disabilities	0207 383 0700
Samaritans	116123
Shakti Women's Aid (Edinburgh)	0131 475 2399
Sharan Project – charity providing support and advice to vulnerable women, particularly of South Asian origin, who have been or are at risk of being disowned due to abuse or persecution	0844 504 3231
Shelter – housing advice	0808 800 4444
Southall Black Sisters – an all-Asian organisation offering advice, counselling and other support	0208 571 9595
Stonewall Housing – LGBT housing advice	0207 359 5767
Switchboard LGBT+ helpline	0300 330 0630
Throughcare Housing and Support (Birmingham)	0121 554 3920
True Honour	07480 621711