

# FORCED MARRIAGE FACTSHEET & GUIDANCE

## FOR MPs & CONSTITUENCY OFFICES



A **forced marriage** is where one or both people do not (or in cases of people with learning disabilities, cannot) consent to the marriage and pressure or abuse is used. A forced marriage is **not** the same as an arranged marriage. In an arranged marriage the families take a leading role in choosing the marriage partner, but the marriage is entered into freely by both parties.

**Forced marriage is illegal in England and Wales.** It is an **abuse of human rights** and a form of domestic violence. Forced marriage cannot be justified on either religious or cultural grounds.

The **Forced Marriage Unit (FMU)** is the Government's main delivery arm for dealing with forced marriage casework and policy. The FMU provide advice or support in around 1300 possible cases of forced marriage each year with many more going unreported. In the majority of cases of forced marriage, the marriage takes place abroad. Forced Marriage is a global issue that affects many different cultures and nationalities – the FMU handle cases in over 74 different countries.

**An individual who has already been forced into marriage has very limited choices, so every step must be taken to prevent the forced marriage from taking place. This fact sheet will provide you with information about forced marriages and how to deal with concerns raised by constituents.**

### Motives prompting Forced Marriage

Parents who force their children to marry often justify their behaviour as protecting their children, building strong families and preserving cultural or religious traditions. They often do not see anything wrong in their actions. **Forced marriage cannot be justified on religious grounds;** every major faith condemns it and freely given consent is a prerequisite of marriage for every religion.

While it is important to understand these motives, they should not be accepted as justification for denying them the right to choose a marriage partner. Forced marriage should be recognised as a criminal offence, **a form of domestic violence, a human rights abuse** and for those under 18, **child abuse**.

### About the Forced Marriage Unit

The FMU provides confidential information assistance to potential victims and concerned professionals. It works with partners both in the UK and overseas to ensure that all appropriate action is taken to prevent a forced marriage from taking place – some instances this involves rescue and repatriation. The FMU also provides support and information to individuals who have already been forced to marry. The FMU can offer advice to anyone in the UK regardless of nationality. However, overseas British Embassies and High Commissions can only provide consular assistance to British nationals, and in certain circumstances to EU or Commonwealth nationals (but not in the country of their own nationality).

### What to do if a victim seeks your help.....

- ✓ See the victim immediately in a secure and private place
- ✓ Insist on seeing the victim on their own – even if they attend with others
- ✓ Contact the FMU as soon as possible and give the victim the Unit's details
- ✓ If an adult approaches you, do everything you can to persuade them to engage with the police. Engaging with the police will provide an opportunity for appropriate safety measures to be put in place to minimise risks.
- ✓ Do reassure confidentiality. Respect and recognise the individual's wishes
- ✓ If a minor (under 18) you should refer to local Children's Social Services and refer to local police Child Protection Unit if there is any suspicion that a crime has been or may be committed against a child.
- ✓ If the victim is a British National and is travelling overseas, give them the details of the nearest British High Commission or Embassy.
- ✗ **DON'T** speak to the individual's family if you have concerns, this may put the individual at significant risk of harm
- ✗ **DON'T** rely on family or community members to act as an interpreter for you
- ✗ **DON'T** allow the individual to leave the premises with members of their family and community if you believe they may be in danger
- ✗ **DON'T** attempt to mediate between an individual and their family. Mediation can be extremely dangerous and can put the individual in grave danger.

## What to do if approached by a family member?

- Some family members may be genuinely concerned about an individual but in some cases perpetrators have approached MPs in an effort to source information about the location of a victim.
- A family may ask you to lobby on their behalf about a spousal visa application or Indefinite Leave to Remain application again the family may be acting against the wishes of the sponsor as they may be forcing them to sponsor a visa for the husband or wife they were forced to marry.

Carefully consider all approaches from family member and whether it is right to act on their behalf. You may unknowingly be supporting a forced marriage.

<b>Do</b>	<b>Don't</b>
✓ Take all the information & keep an open mind	✗ Share information about an individual to the family
✓ Contact the FMU if you have any concerns	✗ Ask the sponsor about visa application in front of their family
✓ Speak to the victim or sponsor alone	✗ Attempt to mediate. It can be extremely dangerous and put the individual in grave danger
✓ Handle all confidential information in a sensitive manner	

## National Support Agencies

National Domestic Violence Helpline	0808 200 247
NSPCC Child Protection Helpline	0808 800 5000
Southall Black Sisters	0208 571 9595
Newham Asian Women's Projec	0208 472 0528
Ashiana Project (London)	0208 539 0427
Ashiana Sheffield	0114 255 5740
Karma Nirvana	0800 5999 247
Henna Foundation (Cardiff)	029 2049 6920
Iranian and Kurdish Women's Rights Organisation (IKWRO)	0207 920 6460
Respond (learning disabilities)	0207 383 0700
Forward (specifically for African women)	0208 960 4000
Shakti Women's Aid (Edinburgh)	0131 475 2399
Men's Advice Line	0808 801 0327



## British Embassies & High Commissions

<b>Bangladesh</b>	Dhaka	(00) (880) (2) 8822705-9
	Sylhet	(00) (880) (821) 724694
<b>Ethiopia</b>	Addis Ababa	(00) (251) (11) 6610588
<b>India</b>	Mumbai	(00) (91) (22) 6650 2222
	New Delhi	(00) (91) (11) 2687 2161
<b>Pakistan</b>	Islamabad	(00) (92) (51) 201 2000 Cons.islamabad@fco.gov.uk
	Karachi	(00) (92) (21) 582 7000
<b>Turkey</b>	Istanbul	(00) (90) (212) 334 6400
<b>Yemen</b>	Sana'a	(00) (967) 1308 100

**The Forced Marriage Unit is open:**  
**Monday – Friday**  
**9.00am – 5.00pm**  
**Call us on: 020 7008 0151 or email:**  
**fmu@fco.gov.uk**  
**Out of hours contact: 020 7008 1500**  
**<http://www.gov.uk/forced-marriage>**

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