

# WHAT IS FORCED MARRIAGE?

Forced marriage is a marriage in which one or both parties do not (or, in the case of some adults with learning or physical disabilities, cannot) consent to the marriage and duress is involved. Duress can include physical, psychological, financial, sexual and emotional pressure.

### Key Facts

- Forced marriage is illegal in the UK
- Forced marriage should not be confused with arranged marriages where both parties and their families consent to the marriage without the pressures associated with a forced marriage
- Forced marriage affects all genders
- A Forced Marriage Protection Order is a legal document that can protect individuals from a forced marriage in the UK or from being taken abroad to be married. The order will also help to bring them back to the UK if they are taken out of the country
- Forced marriages are not just confined to certain religious groups and cultures
- The practice of forced marriage can happen regardless of ethnicity, culture, religion, disability, age, gender and sexuality

## Signs and Indicators

### Education

- Truancy or extended absence
- Removed from school
- Surveillance by siblings
- Prevented from going on to higher education
- Announcement of engagement to a stranger
- Decline in behaviour

### Health

- Self-harm or attempted suicide
- Eating disorders
- Depression
- Isolation
- Chaperoned to doctor's or any other appointments

### Police Involvement

- Reported missing by family
- Reports of domestic abuse
- Threats to kill
- Reported for offences (e.g. shoplifting or substance misuse)

### Family History

- Siblings forced to marry
- Early marriage of a sibling
- Self-harm or suicide of sibling
- Death of a parent
- Family disputes
- Running away from home
- Kept at home by parents
- Financial restrictions

### Employment

- Not allowed to work
- Confiscation of wages or income
- Accompanied to and from work
- Poor performance or attendance
- Limited career choices
- Unable to be flexible in their working hours

## Further information is available via the Forced Marriage Unit:

[www.gov.uk/guidance/forced-marriage](http://www.gov.uk/guidance/forced-marriage)

## Forced Marriage & the Law

Forced Marriage is a crime within the British law with a maximum sentence of seven years indictment for those who forced someone into a marriage without their consent. A Forced Marriage protection order (civil protection) is used to protect someone from being forced into a marriage. The order can also be made to protect someone who has already been forced into marriage.

The Marriage and Civil Partnership (Minimum Age) Act 2022 came into effect on 27th February 2023, to protect children from forced marriage. The Act raised the age of marriage and civil partnership to 18 in England and Wales, so that no-one under the age of 18 can marry or enter a civil partnership. This means that 16 to 17-year-olds are no longer able to marry or enter a civil partnership under any circumstances, including with parental or judicial consent.

The Act also expands the criminal offence of forced marriage in England and Wales to make it an offence in all circumstances to do anything intended to cause a child to marry before they turn 18. It will therefore now be an offence to cause a child under the age of 18 to enter a marriage in any circumstances, without the need to prove that a form of coercion was used. The forced marriage offence will continue to include ceremonies of marriage which are not legally binding, for example in community or traditional settings.

For full information visit [www.legislation.gov.uk](http://www.legislation.gov.uk) and search 'Marriage And Civil Partnership (Minimum Age) Act 2022'

## Responding to Risk of Forced Marriage

Where someone discloses fear of forced marriage, professionals in all agencies should:

- Take the disclosure seriously and act on it
- Refer to Adult or Children's Social Care and the Police promptly
- Always follow your organisational policy and other relevant local/national policies and procedures
- Follow the ONE CHANCE RULE at all times. We believe that there might be only one chance to speak to someone who may be at risk or under threat a potential victim, and, therefore, just one chance to prevent a forced marriage
- Hold an emergency strategy/professional meeting with relevant agencies, (this should be immediately or within no less than 24 hours)

## UNDER NO CIRCUMSTANCES

- Let the family, community or social network know about the disclosure
- Speak to the person at risk in front of family members or within the family home
- Approach the family or community leaders or attempt mediation
- Use members of the community to interpret
- Accidentally give out information which might jeopardise the person's safety

Caution is required about how information is shared, recorded, and safeguarded within the organisation. Information should only be shared on a need-to-know basis.

## We will end 'honour'-based abuse and harmful practices

Helpline: **0800 107 0726**

10am - 4pm, Monday to Friday



To make a professional referral to Saveru UK, complete our online form:  
[saverauk.co.uk/get-help/referrals-for-professionals/](https://saverauk.co.uk/get-help/referrals-for-professionals/)

If you are an individual who needs help or advice, complete this form:  
[saverauk.co.uk/savera-uk-individual-referral-form/](https://saverauk.co.uk/savera-uk-individual-referral-form/)

**In an emergency, please call 999.**