

Forced Marriage Briefing

Definitions

Forced Marriage:

“In forced marriage one or both spouses do not consent to the marriage but are coerced into it” (HM Government, 2014:6).

Arranged Marriage:

“In arranged marriages, the families of both spouses take a leading role in arranging the marriage, but the choice of whether or not to accept the arrangement still remains with the prospective spouses” (HM Government, 2014:6).

Information: It is estimated that approximately 8,000 to 10,000 forced marriages of British citizens take place every year often resulting in devastating long term consequences for the victims.

- In 2014, the Government made forced marriage a criminal offence (The Anti-social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014); forcing someone to marry can result in a sentence of up to 7 years in prison (Gov.uk, 2016). The act also covers: 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)
- Forced marriage is not a problem specific to one country or culture: since it was established in 2005, the Forced Marriage Unit (FMU) has handled cases relating to over 90 countries across Asia, the Middle East, Africa, Europe and North America.
- Many people believe that forced marriage primarily involves women, however, there is no typical victim of forced marriage and both men and women can be affected by it. In 2015, the majority of the 980 cases reported to FMU (80%) involved female victims, and 240 cases (20%) involved male victims.
- There has been an increase in forced marriage cases being reported to the FMU, although it is acknowledged that under reporting is significant.

Adults with a Learning Disability and Forced Marriage

- The forced marriage of learning disabled people has previously been described as a ‘hidden scandal’ (Samuel, 2011).
- Adults with learning disabilities, may be forced into marriage for the same reasons that anyone is forced into marriage, but there may be additional factors to consider:
 - A belief that this may ensure care for an adult with learning disabilities when parents or existing carers are unable to fulfil that role.
 - Marriage may be seen as a means of improving the chances of getting a visa to the UK. A person with learning disabilities may not recognise forced marriage or related visa issues (HM Government, 2014).
- Cases of forced marriage involving adults with learning disability include issues around capacity to consent to marriage and additionally consent in relation to sexual relations.
- In 2015, 12% (141 cases) of all cases reported to FMU involved victims who had either a physical or learning disability (Home Office, Foreign and Commonwealth Office, 2016).
 - For adults with a learning disability the figures show that 62% of reported cases involved males being forced to marry (Home Office, Foreign and Commonwealth Office (2016:10).
- The need to raise awareness of this issue has been highlighted by Clawson’s 2016 study which identified an inconsistency of approaches to forced marriage across Safeguarding Boards including:
 - Not recognising the specific needs of adults with learning disability in relation to forced marriage in policy, planning and training.
 - A lack of understanding from front line services around forced marriage.
 - Difficulties identifying the difference between forced and arranged marriages.

Resources:

Leaflets, cards, posters and 'Right to choose' films are available [here](#)

Ann Craft Trust [click here](#)

HM Government Awareness of Forced Marriage **eLearning** can be accessed [here](#)

HM Government (2014) *The Right to Choose: Multi-agency statutory guidance for dealing with forced marriage*. London: HM Government [click here](#)

HM Government (2014) *Multi-agency practice guidelines: Handling cases of Forced Marriage*. London: HM Government. [click here](#)

Foreign and Commonwealth Office, Home Office and Simmonds, M. (2013) *Forced Marriage: a survivors handbook*. London: Foreign and Commonwealth Office, Home Office. [click here](#)

PowerPoint – Clawson, R. and Fyson, R. Forced marriage of children and adults with learning disabilities [click here](#)

Safelives (2014) *Practice briefing Identifying and engaging with young people at risk of forced marriage*. London: Safelives. [click here](#) - includes a list of warning signs, some of which are applicable to adults

The Anti-social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014 [click here](#)

University of Nottingham - My Marriage My Choice [click here](#)

Document References:

Clawson, R. (2016) *Safeguarding people with learning disabilities from forced marriage: the role of Safeguarding Adults Boards*. The Journal of Adult Protection, Volume 18, Number 5. pp. 277-287.

Gov.uk (2016) *Forced Marriage*. <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/forced-marriage>

HM Government (2014) *Multi-agency practice guidelines: Handling cases of Forced Marriage*. London: HM Government.

https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/322307/HMG_MULTI_AGENCY_PRACTICE_GUIDELINES_v1_180614_FINAL.pdf

Home Office, Foreign and Commonwealth Office (2016) *Forced Marriage Unit Statistics 2015*. 8 March 2016. <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/forced-marriage-unit-statistics-2015>

Samuel, M. (2011) *Protecting learning disabled victims of forced marriage*. Community Care, February 24, 2011. <http://www.communitycare.co.uk/2011/02/24/protecting-learning-disabled-victims-of-forced-marriage/>

Reporting Forced Marriage:

Police - Call 999 in an emergency or 101 non-emergency

Adult Safeguarding - if an adult with care and support needs is experiencing or at risk of abuse or neglect (First Point of Contact 0345 6789044)

Forced Marriage Unit (FMU) Contact the FMU if you're trying to stop a forced marriage or you need help leaving a marriage you've been forced into <https://www.gov.uk/stop-forced-marriage>

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)

Briefing by Karen Littleford, Safeguarding Adults Lead, Shropshire Partners in Care and Paul Cooper, Head of Safeguarding Adults, Shropshire Clinical Commissioning Group on behalf of the KASiSB Learning and Development Subgroup January 2018