

A forced marriage is a marriage in which one or both spouses 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.' (HM Government, 2009). **There is a clear distinction between an arranged and forced marriage.** An arranged marriage is entered freely by both parties, although their families take a leading role in the choice of the partner. It becomes a forced marriage when there is any form of duress applied to one or both partners.

Why is it important?

Forced marriage is an abuse of human rights and is contrary to UK law. Where forced marriage involves a child it is a breach of children's rights. A child who is forced to marry is at risk of significant harm through physical, sexual and emotional abuse.

Parents who force their children to marry may seek to justify their behaviour, believing that it protects their children, preserves cultural and /or religious traditions and caters to stronger family relationships. Some other key reasons may include controlling unwanted sexuality, preventing perceived unsuitable relationships, protecting 'family honour', achieving financial gain, ensuring care for a child or adult with additional needs, and assisting claims for residence and citizenship.

Warning signs to consider:

- History of forced marriage in the family
- Not being allowed to leave the house
- Attempts to run away from home or history of sibling(s) running away from home
- Constant monitoring by the family
- Request for extended leave of absence at school and/or failure to return from the country of origin after holidays
- Surveillance by siblings or family members who are in the same school
- Fear about forthcoming school holidays
- Being withdrawn from school i.e. home education or prevented from continuing with higher education
- Not engaging in school activities
- More frequent absence from school for longer periods of time
- Hyper-vigilance by the young person
- Attempted suicide or suicidal tendencies

How do we do it?

- All practitioners should make themselves aware of the warning signs - the above is not an exhaustive list and you should consider changes in behaviour and circumstances for the person you are working with.
- Relatives, friends, community leaders and neighbours or local community members should not be used as interpreters when speaking to the child or adult at risk. It is important that practitioners understand the complex and sensitive issues the child/adult may face in challenging a forced marriage and the risks they, their siblings and other family members may encounter.
- Practitioners should also be aware that children/adults who are at risk of serious harm through child sexual exploitation, trafficking, forced marriage, honour based violence and female genital mutilation are often 'hidden' and may be also missing from education, and /or care or home.
- Where information suggests that a child or young person, under the age of 18 is at risk of being forced to marry, practitioners must contact Children's Services Duty and Advice Team, who may, in partnership with the Police, undertake Section 47 (safeguarding) enquiries.



One Minute Guide Forced Marriage



What to do if you are concerned:

If you are concerned that a child you know is at risk of forced marriage you can:

- In an emergency contact the Police
- Or contact MASH on 0845 671 0271 / 02392 688793

For more information:

Forced Marriage Unit: **020 7008 0151**

Forced Marriage Guidance can be accessed at <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/forced-marriage>

HIPS Force Marriage and Honour Based Violence Procedure - <https://hipsprocedures.org.uk/zkyysq/harmful-practices-linked-to-faith-or-culture/forced-marriage-and-honour-based-violence>