

Forced Marriage



Forced marriage is when a person is pressured to marry, through the use of threats, physical violence or sexual violence or emotional and psychological pressure (e.g. if you're made to feel like you're bringing shame on your family).

Forced marriage is illegal in England and Wales and includes:

- 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).

Why does forced marriage happen?



- Controlling unwanted behaviour (from those being forced to marry) such as, alcohol and drug use, wearing make-up or behaving in, what is perceived to be, a westernised manner; unwanted sexuality (including perceived promiscuity, or being lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender) - particularly the behaviour and sexuality of women.
- Preventing 'unsuitable' relationships, e.g. outside the ethnic, cultural, religious or 'caste' group.
- Protecting perceived cultural ideals. Protecting perceived religious ideals which are misguided. Protecting 'family honour' or 'izzat'.
- Responding to peer group or family pressure, attempting to strengthen family links. Long-standing family commitments.
- Achieving financial gain, ensuring land, property and wealth remain within the family. Assisting claims for UK residence and citizenship.
- Ensuring care for a child or adult with special needs when parents or existing carers are unable to fulfil that role.

Indicators of Forced Marriage

<i>Education</i>	<i>Employment</i>	<i>Health</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Absence • Extended leave request. • Failure to return from visiting country of origin. • Fear of school holidays. • Surveillance by siblings, cousins or other family members and friends. • Change in behaviour, performance or punctuality. • Being withdrawn from school by parents/ carers. • Not allowed to engage in extracurricular activities. • Sudden announcement of engagements. • Prevented from going onto to higher education. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Absent • Poor performance or attendance. • Limited career choices. • Unable to attend trips. • Subject to financial control. • Wages paid into someone else's account. • Leaving work accompanied. • Unable to be flexible in their working arrangements. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Accompanied to appointments. • Self-harm or suicide attempts. • Eating disorders. • Depression. • Substance misuse. • Unwanted pregnancy. • Female Genital Mutilation (FGM).

Responding to concerns

- See them immediately in a secure and private place on their own.

- Explain all the options to them but also recognise and respect their wishes
- Perform a risk assessment and where appropriate consider the need to immediate protection.
- Establish and agree an effective method of contacting the victim discreetly in the future, possibly using a code word to confirm identity.
- A person must be assumed to have capacity unless it is established that they lack capacity- carry out an MCA to establish.
- A persons capacity to consent can change over time, with the right support and education.

Practitioners should not:

- Send the victim away or dismiss the allegation of forced marriage; inform the victim's family, friends or members of the community that they have sought help.
- Attempt to initiate, encourage or facilitate family counselling, mediation or reconciliation.
- Persuade or send the victim back to their family where the victim has expressly said she /he cannot return.
- Assume there is someone in the family who will protect the victim, even if the victim has indicated there is such a person.
- Assume that it is a 'cultural issue'.

Who to get involved

Consider what is the current situation, what do I need to know and where can I get this information from? Adopting a partnership approach is key when dealing with issues of forced marriage. Consider support from the following:

- The Forced Marriage Unit
- Social Care
- Police
- Immigration
- Relevant health professionals
- Agencies from where the person may have lived.

Other things to consider

- A person may be victim of rape, domestic abuse, forced to undertake household chores, no freedom.
- Abandonment-The non disabled spouse may not want to provide care and support and may reject the person with learning disabilities.
- The non disabled spouse may not realise that they are committing a criminal offence by having a sexual relationship with a person without capacity to consent to sex.
- The non disabled spouse may be subject to violence from their in-laws family should they seek to leave the marriage.
- A forced marriage prevention order

Learning from Adult Safeguarding Reviews- A key finding from Safeguarding Adult Reviews which have undertaken by WSAB has highlighted the need for professional curiosity. This is key in identifying different types of abuse and not taking things at face value, you can find further information [here](#).

Who to contact

Wigan Council Duty Team 01942 828777

Support and advice can be accessed from [Karma Nirvana](#) on tel: 0800 5999 247

Information is available from the government website on Forced Marriage and practitioners can contact the [Forced Marriage Unit](#) tel: 020 7008 0151

Useful Links

[Guardian Article Shafiea Ahmed](#)