



Student Wellbeing Resource

Forced Marriage

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Forced Marriage

Overview

As part of UK law everyone has the right to choose who they want to marry and when you want to marry. You don't even have to get married at all! Therefore, forced marriage is when someone experiences physical threats (physical and sexual violence) or they feel emotional/psychological pressure to marry someone they do not want to (e.g. if they are made to feel like they will bring shame to the family if they do not marry the person chosen for them). It is illegal in the UK to take someone abroad to force them to marry someone (even if the marriage doesn't happen they've still broken the law) and it's illegal to marry someone who does not have the mental capacity to consent (children and disabled people) even if they say they want to.

It is important to remember that there is a clear distinction between a forced marriage and an 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.

In the UK it's often the case that young people and children are forced into marriage as this is felt it will protect 'family honour'. Other reasons may be to control unwanted behavior in the young person or to maintain cultural beliefs that are often misguided or out of date. It should be noted that another potential reason for a forced marriage is that the child may want to identify as Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual or Transgender and their parents do not agree with them having a same sex relationship.

There are many negative consequences of forced marriage. The most prominent issue is the domestic and sexual abuse that the young person forced into marriage will face – if a young person is forced to consummate a marriage then they have been subject to

rape. The abuse that is endured and the psychological damage of being forced into marriage can lead to serious mental health and wellbeing issues, and in the most extreme cases can even lead to suicide. Young people, especially young women who are forced to marry are much more likely to be made to drop out of school which will affect their development and isolate them from peers.

Key Facts

- 27% of forced marriage cases reported to the Forced Marriage Unit in 2015 involved victims under the age of 18.
- Around 80% of cases involve female victims.
- In 2015 14% of forced marriage cases happened in the UK with no overseas element¹.
- Forced Marriage Protection Orders can be applied for by the person who is to be protected by the order, a relevant third party or any other person with the permission of the court².

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Best Practice

Report any concerns to the Sheffield Safeguarding Hub as soon as possible.

When there is a risk of Forced Marriage it is important to act swiftly –there may only be one chance to intervene. This is known as the ‘one chance rule’. That is, professionals may only have one opportunity to speak to a victims or potential victim and may possibly only have one chance to save a life. As a result, all professionals working within statutory agencies need to be aware of their responsibilities and obligations when they are faced with forced marriage cases. If the victim is allowed to leave without the appropriate support and advice being offered, that one chance might be wasted.

Local Offers and Providers

Provider	What they offer	Cost	Contact details
Ashiana	Awareness raising and support around harmful practices most prevalent in BME communities (Domestic Abuse, FGM, Forced Marriage, ‘honour’ based violence, CSE, grooming).	Free	info@ashianasheffield.org 0114 2555740
IDAS	Systems of Abuse training for staff (covering HBV, forced marriage and FGM).	Free	Website https://www.idas.org.uk/ Includes online referral form Training website https://courses.idas.org.uk/ 0114 249 3920 info@idas.org.uk

Resources

Sheffield Safeguarding Children Board procedures re. Forced Marriage
http://sheffieldscb.proceduresonline.com/chapters/p_forced.html?zoom_highlight=forced+marriage

Government Forced Marriage Unit resources and information
<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/forced-marriage>

Right to choose campaign short 2 minute clips showing different scenarios to do with forced marriage.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nF2_4uRtHJs
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pSPxOa9tCOI>
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kJbND8seYhE>
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dUdiT5cAVgg>

References

¹ <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/forced-marriage-unit-statistics-2016>

² <https://www.gov.uk/apply-forced-marriage-protection-order>

³ Multi-agency practice guidelines: Handling cases of Forced Marriage, HM Government