

FORCED MARRIAGE FACT SHEET

Definition

- A forced marriage is one that is carried out without the consent of both people. This is very different to an arranged marriage, which both people will have agreed to. Those facing forced marriage can be subject to pressure of a physical, financial, sexual or emotional nature.
- Forced Marriage became a specific offence from 16th June 2014, under the Anti-Social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014. Prior to the introduction of the new offence, prosecutors would have dealt with these cases using existing legislation, such as false imprisonment, kidnapping and offences of violence.
- Forced Marriage can happen in this country or abroad. When the marriage occurs abroad, the victim can be kept there or brought back to this country.
- The UN Resolution on Child, Early and Forced Marriage was adopted on 21 November 2014 with the broad-based, cross-regional co-sponsorship of 116 countries. The resolution recognises that child, early and forced marriage is:
 - A practice that severely impairs girls and women's human rights and is a threat to their health, education, economic and social status.
 - Inherently linked to deep-rooted gender inequalities, norms and stereotypes.
 - Itself a barrier to development and helps to perpetuate the cycle of poverty.

Key Drivers and Risk Factors

- Females are mostly affected, but about 15% of the cases are male victims. The most prevalent ages are between 15 and 24, but victims can be as young as 10. In the majority of cases reported, the victim's family have been of South Asian origin, but this is possibly due to the demographics of this country.
- The perpetrators can be one or many, including parents, siblings, grandparents, members of the victim's wider family and community members.
- Some of the key motives that have been identified are:
 - Controlling sexuality that is unwanted by the family (including perceived promiscuity, or being lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender) - particularly of women.
 - Controlling unwanted behaviour, for example, alcohol and drug use, wearing make-up or behaving in what is perceived to be, a "westernised manner".
 - Preventing "unsuitable" relationships, e.g. outside the ethnic, cultural, religious or caste group.
 - Protecting 'family honour'.
 - Responding to peer group or family pressure.
 - Attempting to strengthen family links.
 - Achieving financial gain, ensuring land, property and wealth remain within the family.
 - Protecting perceived cultural/religious ideals.
 - Ensuring care for a child or adult with special needs when parents or existing carers are unable to fulfil that role.
 - Assisting claims for UK residence and citizenship.
 - Long-standing family commitments.
- Potential warning signs or indicators that a person may be about to be forced into marriage, or is already in a forced marriage, can be:
 - Education:
 - Absence and persistent absence.
 - Request for extended leave of absence and failure to return from visits to country of origin.

- Fear about forthcoming school holidays.
- Surveillance by siblings or cousins at school; decline in behaviour, engagement, performance or punctuality.
- Unexpected poor exam results.
- Being withdrawn from school by those with parental responsibility.
- Removal from a day centre of a person with a physical or learning disability.
- Not being allowed to attend extra-curricular activities.
- Sudden announcement of engagement to a stranger.
- Prevented from going on to further/higher education.
- Employment:
 - Poor performance or attendance.
 - Limited in career choices or not allowed to work.
 - Unable to attend business trips or functions.
 - Subject to financial control e.g. confiscation of wages/income.
 - Leaving work accompanied.
 - Unable to be flexible in their working arrangements.
- Family History:
 - Siblings forced to marry or married young.
 - Self-harm or suicide of siblings.
 - Death of a parent.
 - Family disputes.
 - Running away from home.
 - Unreasonable restrictions e.g. kept at home by parents.
- Health:
 - Accompanied to doctors or clinics.
 - Self-harm/attempted suicide.
 - Eating disorders.
 - Depression/ Isolation.
 - Substance misuse.
 - Unwanted pregnancy.
 - Female Genital Mutilation.

Local and National Picture

National

- The Home Office Forced Marriage Unit recorded 1,485 cases of forced marriage across the UK in 2012; of these, 21% were identified in London.
- In 2012/13 there were 50 forced marriages reported to the MPS.
- An estimated 1,000 British Asian girls/young women are forced into marriage each year.
- The majority of cases reported to the Forced Marriage Unit come from Pakistan, Bangladesh, and India. However, cases have also been reported from Cyprus, Jordan, Mauritius, Sri Lanka, Somalia, Mali, Norway, Bosnia, and Hong Kong. There have also been incidents from the travelling community and Ireland.

Local

- Over the four year period 1st October 2010 to 30th September 2014, there were twelve police recorded offences of Forced Marriage. These offences were linked to seven individual victims. There were five suspects identified in the police reports.
- All seven victims were female (100%). Three of the known suspects were male (60%) and two were female (40%). Six of the victims were over 18, one was 17. Four of the suspects were over 18, no age was recorded for one. According to police categorisations, one victim was IC1 (White European), two victims were IC2 (Dark European), one victim

was IC3 (Afro-Caribbean) and three victims were IC4 (Asian). Five victims lived in the SE18 area, one in the SE2 area and one in the SE7 area.

- In one case the suspect was the brother of the victim, in one the aunt, in one the mother and in two the ex-boyfriend.
- The seven cases involved:
 - The Foreign Office alerting the police to a victim being forced into a marriage in Bangladesh by her family.
 - A victim receiving threatening phone calls, threatening violence if she does not return to Iran to get married.
 - Victims stating that her parents were forcing her into a marriage in Pakistan (two cases).
 - A victim stating that her family are unhappy that she is a lesbian and are arranging a marriage for her.
 - Allegations of violence but no details noted of the forced marriage allegations in the police reports (two cases).

Resources for Professionals

- Forced Marriage Fact Sheet and Guidance for Registrars. Available [here](#).
- Forced Marriage and Learning Disabilities: Multi-Agency Practice Guidelines. Available [here](#).
- Home Office forced marriage e-learning tool. Available [here](#).
- JAN Trust: develops projects and initiatives to empower local communities. www.jantrust.org
- The Right to Choose: Multi-agency statutory guidance for dealing with forced marriage. Available [here](#).
- What is Forced Marriage?: Home Office awareness leaflet. Available [here](#).
- National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children (NSPCC) Helpline: 24 hour helpline offering advice and support for anybody with concerns about a child. 0800 5000 or www.nspcc.org.uk

Services for Victims

- Forced Marriage: A Survivor's Handbook: Provides practical information for survivors, including support agencies. Available [here](#).
- The Forced Marriage Unit: A joint Foreign and Commonwealth Office and Home Office unit, which operates a public helpline to provide advice and support to victims of forced marriage, as well as to professionals dealing with cases. 020 7008 0151 or fm@fco.gov.uk
- Iranian and Kurdish Women's Rights Organisation: Provides direct services for women and girls, including advocacy, training and counselling. www.ikwro.org.uk
- Karma Nirvana: National support helpline for victims of honour crimes and forced marriages. www.karmanirvana.org.uk
- Southall Black Sisters: Provides general and specialist advice on gender-related issues, including a helpline. www.southallblacksisters.org.uk
- Childline (National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children): 24 hour helpline for young people. 0800 1111 or www.childline.org.uk

- Greenwich Domestic Violence and Abuse Services: Provides a specialist Information Line, outreach and accommodation services for women and children experiencing domestic abuse. www.gdva.org.uk
- Her Centre: Provides support and advocacy for victims residing in Royal Greenwich. 0203 260 7772 or www.hercentre.org
- Metropolitan Police Service Community Safety Unit: Every London borough has a team of specially trained officers whose task is to investigate crimes of domestic abuse. Available [here](#).
- Victim Support: Provides emotional support and practical information for all victims of crime. 0808 1689 111 or www.victimsupport.org.uk

Further Information

This information has been taken from the Violence Against Women and Girls Strategy 2015-18. For more information contact the Safer Communities Team on 020 8921 8396 or community-safety@royalgreenwich.gov.uk