

Dealing with Cases of Forced Marriage

Guidance for Education Professionals

1st Edition 2005

Forced Marriage

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Forced marriage is an abuse of human rights.

“Marriage shall be entered into only with the free and full consent of the intending spouses.”

(Universal Declaration of Human Rights, Article 16 (2))

“A woman’s right to choose a spouse and enter freely into marriage is central to her life and her dignity and equality as a human being.”

(General Recommendation No. 21, UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women)

“State parties shall take all appropriate legislative, administrative, social and educational measures to protect the child from all forms of physical or mental violence, injury or abuse, neglect or negligent treatment, maltreatment or exploitation, including sexual abuse, while in the care of parent(s), legal guardian(s) or any other person who has the care of the child.”

(UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, Article 19)

“In all actions concerning children, whether undertaken by public or private social welfare institutions, courts of law, administrative authorities, or legislative bodies, the best interests of the child shall be a primary consideration.”

(UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, Article 3)

“States parties shall take all appropriate measures to prevent the abduction of, the sale of or traffic in children for any purpose or in any form.”

(UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, Article 35)

This document is intended to provide guidance for:

Local Education Authorities	Principals of schools and colleges
Principals of private schools and colleges	University tutors
Governors	School teachers
Education welfare officers	Pastoral tutors
Learning mentors	Adult basic education
Teachers of English as an additional language (EAL)	School nurses
Connexions personal advisors	Sure Start
Youth offending teams	Youth workers

It should be read in conjunction with current legislation and other government guidance including:

Safeguarding Children in Education, 2004. This document provides guidance to Local Education Authorities (LEAs) and education establishments about safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children. It also sets out the roles and responsibilities of LEAs, Governing Bodies, Proprietors of Independent Schools, Head Teachers, and people with designated responsibility for child protection in making arrangements to enable people in the education service to play their full part in safeguarding children from abuse and neglect.

What to do if you are worried about a child being abused, 2003. Provides guidance about what action an individual should take to safeguard a child about whom there are concerns.

Working Together to Safeguard Children, 1999. A guide to arrangements for inter-agency co-operation for the protection of children from being abused.

Every Child Matters, 2004. This document sets a framework for improving outcomes for all children and their families, to protect them, to promote their wellbeing and to support all children to develop their full potential.

Practice Guidance for Social Workers: Young people & vulnerable adults facing forced marriage (Foreign & Commonwealth Office et al., 2004). This document sets out the responsibilities of social workers dealing with forced marriage.

Guidelines for Police: Dealing with cases of forced marriage (Foreign & Commonwealth Office et al., 2002). This document sets out the responsibilities of police dealing with cases of forced marriage.

Race Relations Amendment Act, 2000.

The Education Act, 2002. Chapter 32, part II, miscellaneous and general section 175. This Act sets out the duties of LEAs and governing bodies in relation to the welfare of children.

The Forced Marriage Unit (FMU) is the Government's central unit dealing with forced marriage casework, policy and projects.

What does the Unit do?

The Unit carries out three main strands of work designed to tackle forced marriage:

Casework – The FMU provides confidential information and assistance to potential victims and concerned professionals. It works with partners both in the UK and overseas to ensure that all appropriate action is taken to prevent a forced marriage taking place. The FMU also provides advice and information to individuals who have already been forced to marry. All caseworkers in the FMU have wide experience of the cultural, social and emotional issues surrounding forced marriage.

The staff can offer advice and assistance to individuals who:

- Fear that they are going to be forced into a marriage (in the UK or overseas).
- Fear for a friend or relative who may be forced into a marriage (in the UK or overseas).
- Have been forced into a marriage and do not want to support their spouse's visa application.

The staff can assist education professionals by:

- Providing information about existing networks within the UK, including social services, police and non-governmental organisations.
- Providing advice about legal remedies in the UK and overseas.

Policy – The FMU develops future government policy for tackling forced marriage. In order to do this, the FMU works with a wide range of partners including non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and women's groups, the police, social services and education professionals. The FMU aims to develop policies that bring together key elements of government e.g. the education, welfare and legal systems, to combat forced marriage.

Projects – The FMU manages and co-ordinates governmental projects on forced marriage. These projects are designed to:

- Increase awareness amongst potential victims of the help available.
- Raise understanding amongst key professionals (police officers, social workers, teachers etc.) of forced marriage and how to tackle it.
- Work together with community and voluntary groups to create effective local partnerships against the abuse.

How to contact the Forced Marriage Unit:

(Monday – Friday 09.00 – 17.00)

The Forced Marriage Unit

Room G/55

Old Admiralty Building

Whitehall SW1A 2PA

Telephone: 020 7008 0135/0230/8706

Email: fmu@fco.gov.uk

For out of hours emergencies telephone 020 7008 1500 and ask to speak to the Foreign & Commonwealth Office Response Centre.

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The difference between arranged and forced marriage

The tradition of arranged marriages has operated successfully within many communities and many countries for a very long time. A clear distinction must be made between a forced and an arranged marriage. In **arranged marriages**, the families of both spouses take a leading role in choosing the marriage partner but the choice whether or not to accept the arrangement remains with the young people. In **forced marriage**, one or both spouses **do not** consent to the marriage or consent is extracted under duress. Duress includes both physical and emotional pressure.

Forced marriage is primarily, but not exclusively, an issue of violence against women. Most cases involve young women and girls aged between 13 and 30, although there is evidence to suggest that as many as 15 per cent of victims are male. Some children as young as 8 years old may know that they will be expected to marry by the time they are 16 years old. In some cases, this may concern the young person and have a detrimental effect on their education.

Incidence of forced marriage

Currently, some 300 cases of forced marriage are reported to the Forced Marriage Unit each year. Many more cases come to the attention of police, social services, health, education, and voluntary organisations. Many others go unreported. With greater awareness, the number of cases reported is likely to increase.

The majority of cases of forced marriage encountered in the UK involve South Asian families. This is partly a reflection of the fact that there is a large, established South Asian population in the UK. However, it is clear that forced marriage is not solely a South Asian problem and there have been cases involving families from East Asia, the Middle East, Europe, and Africa. Some forced marriages take place in the UK with no overseas element, while others involve a partner coming

from overseas or a British citizen being sent abroad.

Motives prompting forced marriage

Parents who force their children to marry often justify their behaviour as protecting their children, building stronger families, and preserving cultural or religious traditions. They may not see anything wrong in their actions. **Forced marriage cannot be justified on religious grounds;** every major faith condemns it and freely given consent is a prerequisite of Christian, Jewish, Hindu, Muslim and Sikh marriages.

Often parents believe that they are upholding the cultural traditions of their home country, when in fact practices and values there have changed. Some parents come under significant pressure from their extended families to get their children married. In some instances, an agreement may have been made about marriage when a child is in their infancy.

Some of the key motives that have been identified are:

- Controlling unwanted behaviour and sexuality (including perceived promiscuity, or being gay, lesbian, bisexual or transgender) – particularly the behaviour and sexuality of women.
- Protecting “family honour”.
- Responding to peer group or family pressure.
- Attempting to strengthen family links.
- Ensuring land, property and wealth remain within the family.
- Protecting perceived cultural ideals (which can often be misguided or out-of date).
- Protecting perceived religious ideals which are misguided.
- Preventing “unsuitable” relationships, e.g. outside the ethnic, cultural, religious or caste group.
- Assisting claims for residence & citizenship.
- Fulfilling long-standing family commitments.

Introduction

There have been reports of individuals with mental and physical disabilities being forced to marry. In these situations, parents often feel they are protecting their children by providing a carer for them. Some individuals do not have the capacity to consent to the marriage. Some individuals may be unable to consent to consummate the marriage.

While it is important to have an understanding of the motives that drive parents to force their children to marry, these motives should not be accepted as justification for denying them the right to choose a marriage partner. **Forced marriage should be recognised as a human rights abuse.**

“Multicultural sensitivity is not an excuse for moral blindness.”

(Mike O’Brien, House of Commons
Adjournment Debate on Human Rights
(Women) 10 February 1999)

The legal position

Although there is no specific criminal offence of “forcing someone to marry” within England and Wales, criminal offences may nevertheless be committed. Perpetrators – usually parents or family members – could be prosecuted for offences including threatening behaviour, assault, kidnap, abduction, imprisonment and, in the worst cases, murder. Sexual intercourse without consent is rape, regardless of whether this occurs within the confines of a marriage. A girl who is forced into marriage is likely to be raped and may be raped until she becomes pregnant.

The Victoria Climbié Inquiry 2003

“The basic requirement that children are kept safe is universal and cuts across cultural boundaries. Every child living in this country is entitled to be given the protection of the law, regardless of his or her background. **Cultural heritage is important to many people, but it cannot take precedence over standards of childcare embodied in law.** Every organisation concerned with the welfare and protection of children should have mechanisms in place to ensure equal access to services of the same quality, and that each child, irrespective of colour or background, should be treated as an individual requiring appropriate care.”

(16.10 Victoria Climbié Inquiry)

“There can be no excuse or justification for failing to take adequate steps to protect a vulnerable child, simply because that child’s cultural background would make the necessary action somehow inappropriate. This is not an area in which there is much scope for political correctness.”

(16.11 Victoria Climbié Inquiry)

The victim

Isolation is one of the biggest problems facing victims of forced marriage. They may feel they have no one to speak to about their situation. These feelings of isolation are very similar to those experienced by victims of domestic violence and child abuse. **Only rarely will the student disclose fear of forced marriage.** Therefore, a student who fears they may be forced to marry will often come to the attention of teachers, education welfare officers, youth offending teams, youth workers, police, health or social services for various behaviours consistent with distress.

It is important to remember that forced marriage can also affect teachers, lecturers, trainees and ancillary staff within schools, colleges and universities. This document has been written for cases where a student is at risk but the information within it may be equally useful whoever the victim.

Warning signs of forced marriage

Young people forced to marry, or those who fear they may be forced to marry, are frequently withdrawn from education, restricting their educational and personal development. They may feel unable to go against the wishes of their parents and consequently may suffer emotionally, often leading to depression and self-harm. These factors can contribute to impaired social development, limited career and educational opportunities, financial dependence and lifestyle restrictions.

Education professionals may become aware of a student because they appear anxious, depressed and emotionally withdrawn with low self-esteem. They may have mental health disorders and display behaviours such as self-harming, self-

cutting or anorexia. Sometimes they may come to the attention of the police having been discovered shoplifting or taking drugs or alcohol.

Students may present with a sudden decline in their performance, aspirations or motivation. The student may feel studying is pointless if they are going to be forced to marry and therefore be unable to continue with their education.

There may be occasions when a student comes to school but then truants from lessons. Often young people at risk of forced marriage are living in virtual imprisonment. They may be subject to excessive restrictions and control at home. Some students may not be allowed to attend any extra-curricular or after school activities. They may be accompanied to and from school, and even during lunch breaks. Therefore, school time is their only “free” time to do ordinary adolescent activities that other students do at weekends with their friends.

Some students may stop attending school and visits to the home by education professionals may result in the professional being told that the student is out of the country. In some cases, the student may have been locked in a room of the house and not allowed to communicate with anyone outside.

Other students may show a decline in punctuality, especially if they are past compulsory education age, this may be the result of having to “negotiate” their way out of the house. Some students, particularly girls, are given minimal time to get to school so they do not have time to meet a boyfriend or talk to friends.

Some students may come to notice because their homework is incomplete or appears rushed. This may be the result of being actively discouraged from doing it by family members. These students may do their homework late at night, which inevitably shows in school because they are lethargic, unable to concentrate and have a general appearance of tiredness.

An education professional may become aware of conflict between the student and their parents about whether the student will be allowed to continue with GCSEs or A-levels. Sometimes there may be family arguments over whether the student can make applications to colleges or universities, and the distance of the college or university from the family home.

Another warning sign might be a family history of older siblings leaving education early and marrying early. Their parents may feel it is their duty to ensure that children are married soon after puberty in order to protect them from sex outside marriage. In these cases there may be a history of considerable absence authorised by the student's parents. These absences may be for sickness, or extended family holidays overseas often interrupting the school term.

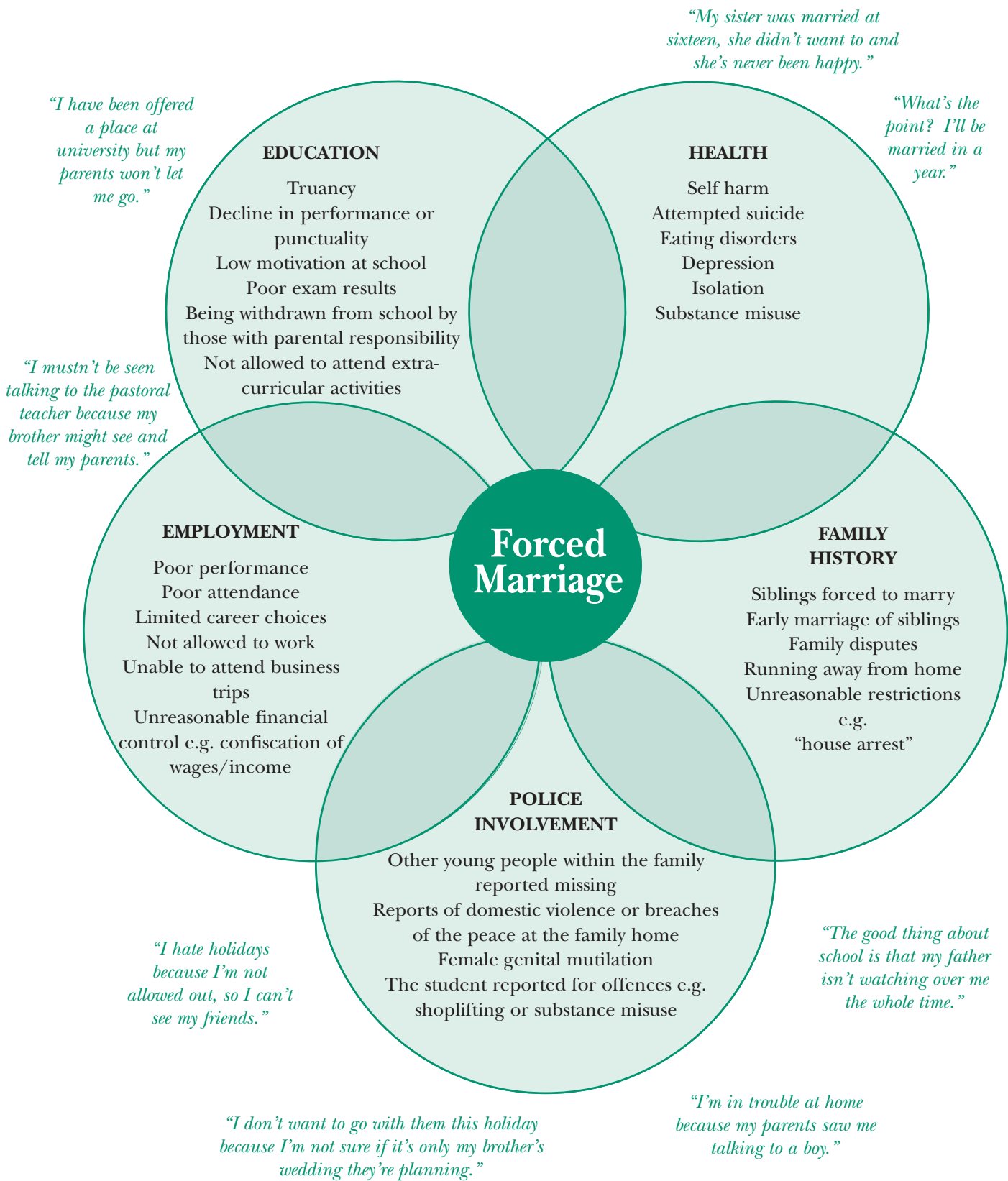
In other circumstances, forced marriage may become an issue when there is bereavement within the family. Occasionally, when a parent dies, especially the father, the remaining parent may feel there is more of an urgency to ensure that the children are married.

Some other warning signs are illustrated on page 7. However, there have been occasions when students have presented with less common warning signs such as cutting or shaving of the student's hair as a form of punishment for disobeying or perhaps "dishonouring" their family. In some cases, a girl may report that she has been taken to the doctors to be examined to see if she is a virgin.

Education professionals should be alert to these potential warning signs and consider that forced marriage could be the reason. However, they should be careful not to assume that forced marriage is an issue simply on the basis that a student presents with any of these problems. Of course, some of these warning signs could be indicative of other forms of abuse or neglect.

Forced Marriage

SYMPTOM CHART OF WARNING SIGNS



Possible consequences of forced marriage

Some young people may feel that running away is their only option. For young people, especially females from ethnic minority communities, leaving their family can be especially hard. The young person may have no experience of life outside the family. In addition, leaving their family (or accusing them of a crime or simply approaching statutory agencies for help) may be seen as bringing shame on the honour of the young person and their family in the eyes of the community. This may lead to social ostracism and harassment from the family and community. For many, this is simply not a price they are prepared to pay.

Those who do leave often live in fear of their own families who will go to considerable lengths to find them and ensure their return. Families may solicit the help of others to find their runaways, or involve the police by falsely accusing the young person of a crime. Some families have traced young people through bounty hunters, local taxi drivers, members of the community and shopkeepers or through national insurance numbers, benefit records, school and college records.

Case study

“Shahida” was a well-behaved, able and keen student throughout her primary and early senior school years. However, by the time she was 14 she was becoming increasingly withdrawn, she began to truant on arrival at school and seemed to be losing weight. She also was significantly less interested in her schoolwork.

She was referred to the education welfare officer and the learning mentor in the school. The school logged, over a 7-month period, that she turned up with marks consistent with physical abuse and beatings as well as self-harming behaviour. She said this was due to family conflicts but did not want her family to get in trouble.

She was referred to social services by the school. She refused to say anything against her family. Shortly afterwards she ran away staying with friends and stayed with various people locally. In each case, she ended up being returned to her family. Shahida would not press charges against them and therefore social services felt they had no grounds for any other action.

As the summer holidays approached (by now Shahida was 15 turning 16), her behaviour and attitude worsened, she missed several exams and at the start of the following autumn term she did not turn up for school. At this point the school, on speaking to some of her school friends, discovered she had told them she feared a possible forced marriage or at least being left overseas. The school then contacted the Forced Marriage Unit.

Shahida was finally located overseas and repatriated to the UK. She had to re-sit her GCSE year but is doing very well and living in foster care.

Students who fear they may be forced to marry often come to the attention of, or turn to, an education professional before seeking help from the police or social services. Often the student's friends report it to the education professional. Education professionals are in an ideal position to identify and respond to a victim's needs at an early stage. They can offer practical help such as referring the student to social services or to support groups, counselling services and black and minority ethnic women's groups (page 18) but also by providing them with information about their rights and choices.

Educational establishments should aim to create an "open environment" where students feel comfortable and safe to discuss the problems they are facing - an environment where forced marriage is discussed openly within the curriculum, and support and counselling are provided routinely. Students need to know that they will be listened to and their concerns taken seriously.

Schools, colleges and universities can create an "open" and supportive environment by:

- ✓ Displaying relevant information e.g. details of the NSPCC Asian Child Protection Helpline, Child Line, Careline and appropriate black and minority ethnic women's groups.
- ✓ Circulating and displaying copies of the Forced Marriage Unit leaflet on forced marriage.
- ✓ Ensuring that a private telephone is made available should students need to seek advice discreetly.
- ✓ Educating education professionals about the issues surrounding forced

marriage (see page 20 for a brief summary of the issues. This page can be photocopied and distributed to all education professionals).

- ✓ Referring students to an education welfare officer, pastoral tutor or learning mentor as appropriate.

Schools, colleges and universities can introduce forced marriage into the curriculum by:

- ✓ Discussing different types of marriage (love matches, arranged and forced marriages) within personal health and social education (PHSE), citizenship and religious knowledge classes or within drama, history and sociology classes.
- ✓ Introducing discussions about marriage within English literature classes for example when reading "Romeo and Juliet".
- ✓ Making books available such as (see page 16):
 - Brick lane
 - (Un)arranged marriage
 - Arranged marriage
 - Without mercy
 - Sold.
- ✓ Providing videos such as (see page 16):
 - Watch over me
 - Tying the knot
 - Love snatched
 - Narina's story.

What to do if you are concerned that a student is being forced to marry

An education professional may be concerned about a student because they are exhibiting some of the behaviours shown in the Symptom Chart of Warning signs on page 7. Alternatively, a student may approach an education professional because they are going on a family holiday overseas and they are concerned about this. They are often told that the purpose is to visit relatives, attend a wedding or because of the illness of a grandparent or close family relative. The student may suspect that this is a ploy and that there is an ulterior motive, which is to force them to marry.

Do not assume that a student is at risk of being forced into marriage simply on the basis that they are being taken on an extended family holiday. These assumptions and stereotyping can cause considerable distress to families. All efforts should be made to establish the full facts from the student at the earliest opportunity.

Once the full facts have been established, the education professional should be able to decide on the level of response required. This may be to offer the student advice or to provide them with information about specialist advice and information services. However, there may be occasions when the level of concern is such that it becomes a child protection issue, in these cases the appropriate child protection procedures will need to be followed.

Choices

If the student fears they may be forced to marry, they have limited choices:

- ◆ To remain with the family and try to resolve the situation
- ◆ To accede to the family's wishes
- ◆ To flee the family
- ◆ To seek legal protection.

Remember:

- ◆ Remaining with the family and trying to resolve the situation can place the student in danger.
- ◆ Acceding to the family's wishes means the student is returning to an abusive situation.
- ◆ Students fleeing a forced marriage that has not yet taken place may be reported as missing by their families. The forced marriage aspect of the case may not be apparent when the report is made.
- ◆ If the student has dual nationality, they may have two passports, one British and one from the other country of their residence (page 14).

What to do if a student seeks help:

- ✓ See the student immediately in a private place, where the conversation cannot be overheard.
- ✓ See the student on their own – even if they attend with others.
- ✓ Develop a safety plan in case the student is seen i.e. prepare another reason why you are meeting.
- ✓ Explain all the options to the student, recognise and respect their wishes. If the student does not want any referral to be made, e.g. to social services, the education professional will need to consider whether the student's wishes should be respected or whether the student's safety requires that further action be taken. If you do take action against the student's wishes, you must inform them.
- ✓ Establish if there is a family history of forced marriage, i.e. siblings forced to marry. Other indicators may include domestic violence, self-harm, family disputes, unreasonable restrictions (e.g. withdrawal from education or "house arrest") or missing persons within the family.

What to do if you are concerned that a student is being forced to marry

- ✓ Advise the student not to travel overseas and discuss the difficulties they may face (page 14).
- ✓ Liaise with the designated child protection teacher and seek advice from the Forced Marriage Unit (page 1).
- ✓ Liaise with the local police and social services to establish if any incidents concerning the family have been reported (e.g. missing persons or domestic violence etc.).
- ✓ If you have concerns for the safety of a student under 18 years old, activate local child protection procedures and use existing national and local protocols for multi-agency liaison with police and social services (*Working Together to Safeguard Children* (1999)).
- ✓ Refer to the local police Child Protection Unit if there is any suspicion that a crime has been, or may be, committed. Liaise with the police if there are concerns about the safety of the student or the student's siblings.
- ✓ Refer the student, with their consent, to appropriate local and national support groups and counselling services with a history of dealing with cases of forced marriage (page 18). If in doubt, consider seeking advice from the Forced Marriage Unit (page 1).
- ✓ There are legal remedies that social services can take to prevent young people being taken overseas. These include making the student a ward of court or surrendering their passport or passports (if they are a dual national see page 14). Full details of these remedies are set out in the Practice Guidance for Social Workers: *Young people and vulnerable adults facing forced marriage*, 2004 (Foreign & Commonwealth Office *et al.*).

What to do if a student is going overseas imminently.

Try to gather as much of the following information as possible, as there may not be another opportunity if the student goes overseas. This information may help the Forced Marriage Unit to locate the student and assist to repatriate them.

- ✓ A photocopy of the student's passport for retention. Encourage them to keep details of their passport number and the place and date of issue.
- ✓ As much information as possible about the family (this will need to be gathered discreetly) including:
 - Full name and date of birth of the student under threat
 - Their father's name
 - Any addresses where the student may be staying overseas
 - Potential spouse's name
 - Date of the proposed wedding
 - The name of the potential spouse's father (if known)
 - Addresses of the extended family in the UK and overseas.
- ✓ Information that only the student would be aware of (this may assist any subsequent interview at an Embassy/British High Commission in case another person of the same sex/age is produced pretending to be the student).
- ✓ Details of any travel plans and people likely to accompany the student.
- ✓ Names and addresses of any close relatives remaining in the UK.
- ✓ A safe means by which contact may be made with the student e.g. a secret mobile telephone that will function overseas. Record the number.

What to do if you are concerned that a student is being forced to marry

- ✓ An estimated return date. Ask that the student contact you **without fail** on their return.
- ✓ A written statement by the student explaining that they want the police/social services/third party to act on their behalf if they do not return/make contact by a certain date.

Remember:

- ◆ Give the student the contact details of the nearest British High Commission/Embassy (page 17).
- ◆ Explain the difficulties that the student may face when overseas (page 14).

What to do if you have suspicions that a student may be forced to marry

- ✓ Refer to warning signs (page 5 – 7)
- ✓ Liaise with the guidance/pastoral/head teacher as appropriate.
- ✓ Seek advice from the Forced Marriage Unit (page 3).
- ✓ Speak to the student about your concerns.
- ✓ Establish if there is a family history of forced marriage, i.e. siblings forced to marry. Other indicators may include domestic violence, self-harm, family disputes, unreasonable restrictions (e.g. withdrawal from education or “house arrest”) or missing persons within the family.
- ✓ Liaise with the local police and social services to establish if any incidents concerning the family have been reported (e.g. missing persons or domestic violence etc.).
- ✓ If you have concerns for the safety of a student under 18 years old, activate local child protection procedures and use existing national and local protocols for multi-agency liaison with police and social services (*Working Together to Safeguard Children* (1999)).

- ✓ Establish if the student is a dual national as they may have two passports (page 14)

What you should NOT do:

- ✗ Treat such allegations merely as a domestic issue and send the student back to the family home.
- ✗ Ignore what the student has told you or dismiss out of hand the need for immediate protection.
- ✗ Approach the student’s family or those with influence within the community, without the express consent of the student, as this will alert them to your concerns and may place the student in danger.
- ✗ Contact the family in advance of any enquiries by the police, social services or the Forced Marriage Unit, either by telephone or letter.
- ✗ Share information outside child protection information sharing protocols without the express consent of the student.
- ✗ Breach confidentiality except where necessary in order to ensure the student’s safety.
- ✗ **Attempt to be a mediator** (page 13).

Mediation/reconciliation and dealing with the parents

Forced marriage should not be viewed as a “generational or culture clash” that can be solved by mediation.

Mediation, reconciliation and family counselling as a response to forced marriage can be extremely dangerous. Educational professionals undertaking these activities may unwittingly increase the student’s vulnerability and place them in danger.

Remember:

- ◆ Mediation can be extremely dangerous. There have been cases of young people being murdered by their families whilst mediation was being undertaken.
- ◆ Mediation can place the student at risk of further emotional abuse.
- ◆ If it is necessary to have a meeting with the student and their parents, you may wish to have an interpreter present.

Referrals

It is not the role of the education professional to investigate allegations of abuse of a student and therefore, all referrals should be made in accordance with *Working Together to Safeguard Children*, 1999. These referrals will usually be to social services, police or the Forced Marriage Unit.

Remember:

- ◆ The student may not wish to be referred to a social worker, police officer or a guidance/pastoral/head teacher from his or her own community.
- ◆ Speaking to the student’s parents about the action you are taking may place the student at risk of harm. Therefore, do not approach the family as they may deny that the student is being forced to marry, move the student, expedite any travel arrangements and bring forward the forced marriage.
- ◆ Report details of the case, with full family history, to the Forced Marriage Unit (page 1). Encourage the student to get in touch with the Forced Marriage Unit. The Unit gives **confidential** advice to individuals who fear they may be forced to marry.

Mediation Case Study

“Hina” had planned to leave home from the age of ten, when she met her future husband. At 14, she had become engaged. However, Hina waited until she was 17 to make her escape, days before she was due to travel overseas with her family in order to marry. Hina had turned to her school for help, but they refused to get involved. Her parents later withdrew her from college when she turned to them for help at the age of 16. Hina was extremely depressed and suicidal. She started to see a therapist in secret, who referred her to social services. Although social services eventually placed Hina into care, she came under tremendous pressure to hold mediation meetings with her parents, which at times were organised without her consent. Hina’s mother had been married at the age of ten, and so her family did not feel they were in the wrong. They had often subjected Hina to horrific violence. Even at the mediation meetings, Hina’s parents would threaten her with violence in their language, which the social workers did not understand. When Hina told the social workers, she was not believed. Hina refused to return home and is no longer under the care of social services. However, she remains in hiding and is in the process of changing her whole identity as her family have continued to look for her and have, from time to time, threatened and attempted to assault her upon discovering her whereabouts.

(*Southall Black Sisters, Forced Marriage Interim Report, July 2001*).

Dual nationality

If a person holds the nationality of two countries, they are considered a dual national. This may mean that in the country of their second nationality, they are subject to the laws of that country. Should the British High Commission (BHC) or Embassy try to offer assistance to them as a British national the other country, under the Geneva Convention, is entitled to object. However, the BHC will offer all possible assistance to British nationals who are victims of forced marriage unless and until they are actively stopped. It is advisable, to inform any individual intending to travel that they should try to travel using their British passport and not the passport of their second nationality. Similarly, when asking a court to surrender the passports of an individual to prevent them from being taken abroad, ensure that this includes all passports if they are dual nationals. Any queries concerning dual nationality should be addressed to the Forced Marriage Unit (page 1).

Difficulties faced when overseas

For many young people it may be their first experience of travelling overseas. If they are being held against their will and forced to marry there are various difficulties they may encounter if they want to return to the UK. They may find it impossible to communicate by telephone, letter and e-mail. They may not have access to their passport and money. Women may not be allowed to leave the house unescorted. They may be unable to speak the local language. Often individuals find themselves in remote areas where even getting to the nearest road can be hazardous. They may not receive the assistance they might expect from the local police, neighbours, family, friends or taxi drivers. Some individuals may find themselves subjected to violence or threats of violence.

Remember:

- ◆ Even if the authorities in the UK are aware of the whereabouts of an individual overseas, it may not be possible to provide suitable assistance to reach the area or to rescue the individual. **Therefore, it is always advisable to warn the student not to travel overseas.**

Case Study

When 15-year-old “Rumi” did not return from summer holidays for the autumn term, her teacher asked her younger sister. She said that Rumi was staying overseas and would be getting married when she turned 16 in a month’s time. The teacher suspected that this was not what Rumi wanted. The teacher tried to get the sister to arrange for Rumi to phone the teacher to talk about work she could do while she was away as it was her GCSE year. Luckily, Rumi did phone the teacher but said she was not coming back to school, as she was to get married. The teacher felt Rumi was not speaking freely and asked her to give “yes” or “no” answers. She then asked Rumi if she could speak freely and if she wanted to get married. Rumi replied no to both questions but then the phone was cut off.

The teacher informed the Forced Marriage Unit (FMU). The FMU had no address for her and could not ask her family without alerting them. Often the FMU tries to make girls a Ward of Court, which requires that they be brought to the High Commission. However, the FMU needs to serve orders on a close family relative in the UK and the only relative in the UK was Rumi’s sister-in-law, so this was not an option. Eventually the FMU did manage to exert police pressure on the sister-in-law to reveal an address overseas for Rumi’s family. The British High Commission then had to write to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in the overseas government for permission to obtain a police escort for a rescue mission to the remote village where Rumi was being held. Attempts to contact Rumi had continued to fail. It was two weeks before permission was granted. Staff from the High Commission set out to rescue Rumi and the journey took several hours due to severe localised flooding. On arrival in the village, large numbers of the villagers turned out, they surrounded the High Commission car, shouted and asked questions - it was very intimidating. Finally, the High Commission staff spoke to Rumi alone, though her family were in the neighbouring room. She was very distressed and felt it would be too embarrassing for her family if she were to leave with the High Commission staff but confirmed she was being held against her will and was to be forced into a marriage. Eventually, after further discussions, Rumi did leave with the High Commission staff. She was repatriated to the UK to take up her schooling again.

Other resources

Books

(Un) arranged Marriage by Bali Rai	(ISBN 0 552 547344)
Brick Lane by Monica Ali	(ISBN 038560484X)
Arranged Marriage by Chitra Bannerjee Divruka	(ISBN 0-552-99669-6)
Without Mercy by Miriam Ali	(ISBN 0 7515 1635 X)
Sold by Zana Muhsen	(ISBN 0 7515 0951 5)

Films and videos

TYING THE KNOT

This is a 12-minute video for young people (12-18) featuring young people's views on marriage.

The video distinguishes between arranged and forced marriages. There is also an accompanying pack with background information and discussion points.

Faction Films

26 Shacklewell Lane
London
E8 2EZ

Telephone: 020 7690 4446

LOVE SNATCHED

This video tells the stories of several young peoples' fight for freedom.

Lawyers and activists situate forced marriage as a violation of human rights. The video discusses some of the help available.

Faction Films

26 Shacklewell Lane
London
E8 2EZ

Telephone: 020 7690 4446

NARINA'S STORY

Narina describes her remarkable escape from the threat of a forced marriage, along with her two sisters.

Faction Films

26 Shacklewell Lane
London E8 2EZ
Telephone: 020 7690 4446

WATCH OVER ME II

This video is a "soap" based educational programme for Key Stage 3 & 4. The six episodes are based on real experiences and see a range of characters involved in different issues including Forced Marriage.

Telephone: 0870 759 3388

E-mail:

office@missdorothy.com

Website: *missdorothy.com*

The video comes with a teacher's guide.

Other films that contain some of the issues around forced marriage include East is East, Monsoon Wedding, Bride and Prejudice and "Ae Fond Kiss".

Listed below are the details of British High Commissions in countries where most cases occur. However, forced marriage can take place in any country, therefore contact the Forced Marriage Unit if you require details of any other British High Commission or Embassy (Page 1).

BANGLADESH

Dhaka

British High Commission
United Nations Road
Baridhara
Dhaka

Postal Address:

PO Box 6079, Dhaka - 1212
Telephone: (00) (880) (2) 8822705

Office Hours (GMT)

Sun to Wed 02.00 - 10.00
Thurs 02.00 - 08.00

Local Time

Sun - Wed 08.00 - 15.00
Thurs 08.00 - 13.00

INDIA

New Delhi

British High Commission
Chanakyapuri
New Delhi 110021
Telephone: (00) (91) (112) 687 2161

Office Hours (GMT)

Mon - Fri 03.30 - 07.30 and 08.30 - 11.30

Local Time

Mon- Fri 09.00 - 13.00 and 14.00 - 17.00

INDIA

Mumbai (Bombay)

Office of the British Deputy High Commissioner
Maker Chambers IV
222 Jamnalal Bajaj Road
PO Box 11714 Nariman Point
Mumbai 400 021
Telephone: (00) (91) (222) 283 0517/2330

Office Hours (GMT)

Mon-Fri 02.30 - 07.30 and 08.30 - 10.30

Local Time

Mon-Fri 08.00 - 13.00 and 14.00 - 16.00

INDIA

Chennai

Office of the British Deputy High Commissioner in Southern India
20 Anderson Road
Chennai 600 006
Telephone: (00) (91) (44) 52192151

Office Hours (GMT)

Mon - Fri 03.00 - 07.30 and 0800 - 10.30

Local Time

Mon - Fri 08.30 - 13.00 and 13.30 - 16.00

PAKISTAN

Islamabad

British High Commission
Diplomatic Enclave,
Ramna 5
PO Box 1122
Islamabad
Telephone: (00) (92) (51) 2012000

Office Hours (GMT)

Mon - Thurs 03.00 - 11.00
Fri 03.00 - 07.00

Local Time

Mon - Thurs 08.00 - 16.00
Friday 08.00 - 12.00

PAKISTAN

Karachi

British Deputy High Commission
Shahrah-E-Iran
Clifton
Karachi 75600
Telephone: (00) (92) (21) 5872431-6

Office Hours (GMT)

Mon - Thurs 03.30 - 11.00
Fri 03.30 - 07.30

Local Time

Mon - Thurs 08.30 - 16.00
Friday 08.30 - 12.30

National support agencies

This section gives details of national professional/support agencies including addresses, telephone numbers, and an explanation of the service.

Careline **020 8514 1177**
This is a national confidential counselling line for children, young people and adults on any issue including family, marital and relationship problems, child abuse, rape and sexual assault, depression and anxiety.

Child Line **0800 1111**
This service is for any child or young person with a problem.

London Lesbian and Gay Switchboard **020 7837 7324**
This service provides a 24-hour helpline.

Muslim Women's Helpline
020 8904 8193 (Advice line)
020 8908 6715 (Advice line)
020 8908 3205 (Admin line)
This confidential telephone helpline offers information, advice, and a listening service for Muslim women from any ethnicity. Some face to face counselling is available. It is open Monday – Friday 10.00 – 16.00.

NSPCC **0800 096 7719**
Asian Child Protection Helpline
This free, confidential service for anyone concerned about children at risk of harm offers counselling, information and advice. The service also connects vulnerable young people, particularly runaways, to services that can help.

NSPCC **0808 800 5000**
Child Protection Helpline
0800 056 0566 (text phone)
help@nspcc.org.uk (e-mail)
This free, confidential service for anyone concerned about children at risk of harm offers counselling, information and advice. The service also connects vulnerable young people, particularly runaways, to services that can help.

reunite International Child Abduction Centre
PO Box 7124
Leicester
LE1 7XX
0116 2555345 (Administration line)
0116 2556234 (Advice line)
0116 2556370 (Fax line)

reunite is the leading charity specialising in international parental child abduction. It operates a 24-hour advice line providing advice, support and information to parents, family members and guardians who have had a child abducted or who fear abduction. **reunite** also supports and informs parents who have abducted their children and assists with international contact issues. **reunite's** advice is impartial and confidential to one or both parties involved in an international parental child abduction case. **reunite** also provides information and support on the issue of forced marriage.

Southall Black Sisters **020 8571 9595**
This is a resource centre offering information, advice, advocacy, practical help, counselling, and support to black and minority women experiencing domestic violence. Southall Black Sisters specialise in forced marriage particularly in relation to South Asian women. The office is open weekdays (except Wednesday) 10.00 – 12.30 and 13.30 – 16.00.

The Asian Family Counselling Service **020 85713933**
This is a national service offering counselling on marital and family issues for Asian men and women. The national helpline is open from 9am to 5pm Monday to Friday. Telephone counselling is also available.

The Children's Legal Centre

University of Essex
Wivenhoe Park
Colchester
Essex
CO4 3SQ

01206 872566 (Admin line)

01206 874026 (Fax)

clc@essex.ac.uk (e-mail)

www.childrenslegalcentre.com

The Children's Legal Centre is a unique, independent national charity concerned with law and policy affecting children and young people. The Children's Legal Centre has many years of experience in providing legal advice and representation to children, their carers and professionals throughout the UK.

Freephone 24 Hour National Domestic Violence Helpline

0808 2000 247

This Freephone 24-hour National Domestic Violence Helpline is run in partnership by Women's Aid and Refuge. The helpline is staffed 24 hours a day by fully trained helpline support workers and volunteers. It is a member of Language Line and can provide access to interpreters and access the BT Type Talk Service for deaf callers. The helpline provides confidential support, information and a listening ear to women experiencing domestic abuse and to those seeking help on a woman's behalf. Helpline staff will discuss and, if appropriate, refer callers on to refuges and other sources of help and information. They will help women to discuss options for action and to empower them to make informed choices.

Marriage

Forced marriage has been recognised in the UK as a form of domestic violence and a serious abuse of human rights. The DfES has joined forces with the Forced Marriage Unit to raise awareness of the problem within schools, colleges and universities. Full guidance about the issue can be found in *“Dealing with cases of forced marriage: Guidance for Education Professionals”* (Foreign & Commonwealth Office *et al.*, 2005).

Did you know?

- ◆ Hundreds of young people (particularly girls and young women) some as young as 13 are forced into marriage each year. Some are taken overseas to marry whilst others may be married in the UK.
- ◆ Forced marriage is NOT the same as an arranged marriage in which both spouses can choose whether or not to accept the arrangement. In forced marriage one or both the spouses do not consent to the marriage or consent is extracted under duress. Duress includes both physical and emotional pressure.
- ◆ Forced marriage can involve child abuse, including abduction, violence, rape, enforced pregnancy and enforced abortion.
- ◆ Refusing to marry can place a young person at risk of murder, sometimes also known as “honour killing”.
- ◆ Forced marriage is not sanctioned within any culture or religion.
- ◆ The majority of cases in the UK involve South Asian families, but also involve families from East Asia, the Middle East, Europe and Africa.

Education professionals should be alert to potential warning signs and consider (whilst being careful not to assume) that forced marriage may be the reason.

The warning signs can include:

- ◆ A sudden drop in performance – “What’s the point? I’ll be married next year”.
- ◆ Truancy from lessons – it provides an escape from virtual imprisonment at home.
- ◆ Conflicts with parents over continued or further education.
- ◆ Excessive parental restrictions and control.
- ◆ History of domestic violence within the family.
- ◆ Extended absence through sickness or overseas commitments.
- ◆ Depressive behaviour including self-harming.
- ◆ History of older siblings leaving education early and marrying early.

Further information can be obtained from the Forced Marriage Unit (FMU).

How to contact the Forced Marriage Unit

(Monday – Friday 09.00 – 17.00)

The Forced Marriage Unit
Room G/55
Old Admiralty Building
Whitehall
SW1A 2PA

Telephone: 020 7008 0135/0230/8706
Email: fmu@fco.gov.uk

For out of hours emergencies with an overseas dimension telephone 020 7008 1500 and ask to speak to the Foreign & Commonwealth Office Response Centre.

**If you wish to comment on this document
or receive an electronic copy, please
contact:**

The Children's Safeguards Policy Unit
Mowden Hall
Staindrop Road
Darlington
DL3 9BG

Telephone: 01325 392104

**If you wish to receive a hard copy, please
contact:**

The Forced Marriage Unit
Room G/55
Old Admiralty Building
Whitehall
SW1A 2PA

Telephone: 020 7008 0135/0230/8706
Email: fmu@fco.gov.uk

These guidelines have been produced by the Foreign & Commonwealth Office and the Department for Education and Skills. They have been compiled by Eleanor Stobart in consultation with national and local elements of education and with relevant non-governmental organisations (NGOs).

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