

catch
22



Forced Marriage Guide

Forced Marriage

Most people dream about their wedding day but for some girls and boys they don't get this choice. Instead they are forced into marriage

What is Forced Marriage?

Forced Marriage (FM) is where one person or both are physically pressured or abused to get married.

This could be physical and sexual violence, financial or actual blackmail or imprisonment within the home.

Is FM an Offence?

Since 2014 FM is illegal in England and Wales.

- This involves taking someone abroad to force them to marry.
- Forcing someone to marry who lacks the mental capacity to give consent.

(Home Office, 2018)

Arranged marriages allow people to have a choice about whether they get married or not.

It is important to draw a distinction between **arranged marriages and Forced Marriages.**

Forcing someone to marry can result in a sentence of up to 7 years in prison.

How Prevalent is FM?

FM is a violation of human rights affecting hundreds of young people in the UK. According to the CPS (Crown Prosecution Service) **10,000 Forced Marriages take place in the UK every year**. However the exact number is unknown because many victims do not seek help or tell anyone. Some disappear abroad or are never reported missing and for that reason FM is an underreported crime and the scale of the problem is likely to be much greater.

People with learning disabilities and from the LGBT community are at high risk of being victims

If a victim of FM is under 18, the case should be considered as a child abuse

80% of FM victims are females, while 20% of victims are Males

Children and young people are the age group at most risk of FM

The perpetrators are always family members of the victim

FM happens across many countries, cultures and communities

The greatest number of FM cases occur in London, the North West, and West Midlands

The majority of cases in the UK occur among the South Asian population

Why does FM Happen?

There are many reasons as to why families force their children or other family members into marriage, but it can never be justified.

1. Families believe that FM is acceptable and is a way to protect their children, while preserving cultural and traditional beliefs.
2. If a person rejects a proposal, leave their current spouse or seek divorce; it is seen to be dishonouring or shaming the family.
3. Unsuitable relationships (outside of caste, religion or culture) and pregnancy outside marriage.
4. The family want to control unwanted sexuality and unwanted behaviour including being lesbian, gay bisexual or transgender, or what is perceived to be too westernised.
5. Attempting to strengthen family ties and ensure land and wealth remain in the family.
6. Ensuring care for a child/ adult with special needs
7. Assisting claims for UK residence and citizenship

What are the Warning Signs?

Practitioners need to be alert to the warning signs and consider whether forced marriage is a possible threat. Young people at risk may display many warning signs.

Family History

- History of FM in the family
- Attempts to run away from home
- Not allowed to leave the house
- Female Genital Mutilation
- Background of family disputes
- Extreme Family restrictions
- Self harm or suicide of siblings



Summer holidays mark a peak in reports of FM. Karma Nirvana, a campaign group advises girls to **use a spoon**, or any other **metal object**, to set off detectors at the airport and separate themselves from parents if they at risk.

Schools

Within schools there are many warning signs to recognise, such as the following:

- A sudden engagement or proposal from a stranger
- Fear about upcoming school holidays
- Constant monitoring by other family members at school
- Poor performance and results
- Not being allowed to go to colleague or university.
- Persistent absences , failure to return from visits

Best practice and safety planning

The practitioners role is to enhance young peoples safety by helping them to reduce or minimise the danger. The young persons safety comes first and any intervention that is planned must not put them at further risk.

Top Tips

Sensitivity

- **Listen and believe all allegations with sensitivity and respect**

Safety

- **Put together a tailored safety plan**
- **Agree discreet means of contact**
- **Gather all details of young person**

Protection

- **Inform safeguarding lead in your organisation**
- **Make referral to relevant specialist agency**
- **FM protection order**

NEVER

- Send a victim away
- Approach family members or the community to discuss any concerns
- Share information without consent
- Breach confidentiality unless there is a risk of serious harm
- Attempt to be a mediator or encourage mediation with the family

Useful Contacts

Forced Marriage Unit is run by the government and should be contacted if you need help stopping or leaving a forced marriage

<https://www.gov.uk/stop-forced-marriage>

Karma Nirvana helps and supports victims of FM

<http://www.karmanirvana.org.uk/>

ChildLine can help anyone under 19 in the UK for information and advice about FM

<https://www.childline.org.uk/info-advice/bullying-abuse-safety/crime-law/forced-marriage/>

Ann Craft Trust helps safeguard disabled people from abuse and forced marriage

<https://www.anncrafttrust.org/>

The Freedom Charity works to protect young people who are at risk of being forced to marry

<https://www.freedomcharity.org.uk/what-we-do/forced-marriage/>



Catch-22.org.uk

Catch22 charity limited. Registered charity no. 1124127.
Company limited by guarantee. Company no. 6577534