



Forced Marriage Factsheet

Forced Marriage Unit

The Forced Marriage Unit (FMU) is a joint Foreign & Commonwealth Office and Home Office unit which was set up in 2005. Inside the UK, the FMU provides support to victims of forced marriage as well as supporting frontline workers dealing with cases. Overseas, consular assistance is provided to British nationals, including dual nationals. The FMU operates a helpline and provides assistance from safety advice through to aiding their unwanted spouse to move to the UK. In extreme circumstances, to rescue victims held against their will overseas.

Forced marriage is where one or both people do not consent to a marriage, and pressure and/or abuse is used. In the UK it is recognised as a form of violence against women and men, domestic/child abuse and a serious violation of human rights. The pressure put on victims can be physical (including threats, physical violence and sexual violence), emotional or psychological (for instance, bringing shame to the family) and financial (for instance, taking away wages or allowances). Forced marriages have doubled in London over the past five years.

There is a distinction between forced marriage and arranged marriage. In arranged marriages, the families of the spouses arrange the marriage but the prospective spouses are free to choose whether to go ahead with it or not and can even be the ones to initiate the process. In forced marriage the prospective spouses, generally the bride, does not give consent. In the cases of vulnerable adults and children under the age of 16 who lack the capacity to consent, coercion is not required for a marriage to be forced. The UK Government made forced marriage a criminal offence in 2014.

Victims face feelings of isolation very similar to those felt by victims of domestic abuse and child abuse. They are often withdrawn from education, restricting their personal development. They may be forbidden to talk to their families thus may suffer emotionally from depression. Women trapped in forced marriage often suffer violence, rape, forced pregnancy and forced childbearing. They may also be forced to go overseas, which is often where the marriage will take place. Even if the authorities are aware of the whereabouts of a British national, it may not be possible to provide suitable assistance, to reach the area or to repatriate them. Therefore, it is always advisable to warn victims not to travel overseas.

Spot the Signs

Look out for someone who:

- *Exhibits distressed behaviour or is emotionally withdrawn*
- *Is not attending school*
- *Is financially dependent*
- *May be a victim of FGM, Female Genital Mutilation*
- *Is accompanied to doctors or clinics*
- *Makes a sudden announcement of their engagement to a stranger*

NB: These warning signs may indicate other types of abuse or psychological issues that will also require a multi-agency

If you spot any signs call

Modern Slavery Helpline:

0800 0121 700

Police (emergencies) **999**

Police (non-emergencies) **101**

Forced Marriage Unit

0207 008 0151

Salvation Army Helpline

0300 303 8151

Crimestoppers **0800 555 111**

Useful resources

Home Office, 2017, Forced Marriage Unit Statistics 2016

Home Office, 2017, Guidance: Forced Marriage

HMIC, 2015, The Depths of Dishonour

Links

The Halo Project, www.haloproject.org.uk

Forced Marriage Unit, www.gov.uk/stop-forced-marriage

Karma Nirvana, (NGO) - www.karmanirvana.org.uk/