



One Minute Guide



What is a forced marriage?

Forced marriage is a marriage that takes place without the full and free consent of both parties.

In a forced marriage, a child, young person or adult is coerced into marrying someone against their will. They may be physically threatened or emotionally blackmailed to do so, or they may be a victim of psychological abuse. Forced marriage cannot be justified on any religious or cultural basis.

Forced marriages are not the same as arranged marriages, where a person can choose whether to accept the arrangement or not. In an arranged marriage, families take the lead in selecting a marriage partner but the couple has the free will and choice to accept or decline the arrangement. The tradition of arranged marriages has operated successfully within many communities and countries for a very long time.

Is it legal?

The Anti-Social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act (2014) made it a criminal offence in England, Wales and Scotland to force someone to marry.

This includes:

- Taking someone overseas to force them to marry (whether or not the forced marriage takes place)
- Marrying someone who lacks the mental capacity to consent to the marriage (whether they are pressured to or not).

What are the signs of a forced marriage?

- Young people who are persistently absent from school, college or university
- Requests for extended leaves of absence, particularly if overseas travel is involved
- Inflexibility with arrangements and future planning. Victims of forced marriage are often subjected to strict controls over their movements
- A woman who is often accompanied by male members of their family
- Evidence of domestic abuse or depression
- Young people who are prevented from continuing into higher education

- Financial abuse, for example taking someone's wages, may also be a factor
- Young people who are anxious about school holidays

How can people be protected?

A Forced Marriage Protection Order can help if:

- A person is being forced into marriage, or
- A person is already in a forced marriage

Applications for Forced Marriage Protection Orders can be made at the same time as a police investigation or other criminal proceedings. Someone who disobeys a court order can be sent to prison for up to two years for contempt of court; but breach of a Forced Marriage Protection Order is also a criminal offence with a maximum sentence of five years' imprisonment.

Who should I contact?

If you believe that someone is being forced to marry you should contact the Police on 101. You can also contact the North Yorkshire Customer Service Centre on 01069 780780.

The Forced Marriage Unit (FMU) is a joint Foreign and Commonwealth Office and Home Office Unit which leads on the government's forced marriage policy, outreach and casework. It operates both inside the UK (where support is provided to any individual) and overseas (where Consular assistance is provided to British Nationals, including dual nationals). They should be contacted at:

- telephone: +44 (0) 20 7008 0151
- email: fmu@fco.gov.uk
- email for outreach work: fmuoutreach@fco.gov.uk

Where can I find out more information?

Further information and training can be obtained from:

- [FMU Multi-agency guidance for handling cases of Forced Marriage](#)
- [FMU Multi-agency guidance for dealing with forced marriage](#)
- [Forced Marriage E-Learning](#)