



TEA-BREAK GUIDE



What is Forced Marriage?

A forced marriage occurs when a child marries without the full consent of one or both parties, or where consent is unable to be given (due to learning/ physical disabilities).

A child could also be under duress when agree to marry this can include physical, psychological, financial, sexual and emotional pressure, use of deception and other means. Duress may come from parents, the wider family and /or the community. Duress and forced marriage cannot be justified on religious or cultural grounds. A 'forced' marriage is not the same as an arranged marriage; in an arranged marriage, the choice of whether or not to accept the arrangement ultimately is with those due to be married.

Most cases of forced marriage involve girls and young women aged between 13 and 30, although victims can be male. Some forced marriages take place in the UK and may involve a partner coming from overseas; others may involve a British citizen being sent abroad. Forced marriage is an abuse of human rights and is contrary to UK law. Where forced marriage involves a child it is in breach of children's rights. A child who is forced to marry is at risk of significant harm through physical, sexual and emotional abuse. Parents who force their children to marry may seek to justify their behaviour, believing that it protects their children, preserves cultural and /or religious traditions and caters for stronger family relationships.

What the Law says

The Anti-social behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014 made it a criminal offence, 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're pressured to or not)

Warning Signs

The following warning signs may be displayed by a young person at fear of being forced into marriage.

- An extended absence, truancy, drop in performance, low motivation may be seen in school.
- A history of siblings leaving education early to marry.
- Talking of an upcoming family holiday they are worried about, with a fear they will be kept abroad.
- Evidence of a family dispute / conflict.
- Unreasonable restrictions being place on the child.
- Going missing or running away
- Always being accompanied to school, doctors' appointments etc.
- A direct disclosure a child is worried he/she will be forced to marry.

What to do

If you suspect a child is at risk of Forced Marriage you can read the full procedure [here](#).

Professionals should make a referral using the Referrals procedure to report concerns to the MASH.

In cases of Forced Marriage practitioners should always consider the need for immediate protection, as disclosure of forced marriage may be a direct consequence of an impending event.

This may result in professionals being able to gain a Forced Marriage Protection Order preventing the young person being taken abroad and forced to marry. Should a Forced Marriage Protection Order be granted this should be reported immediately to staff within Children's Social Care.