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Marriage and Civil Partnership Act 2022

The Marriage & Civil Partnership Act will raise the age of marriage and civil partnership to 18 in England and Wales to protect children from the scourge of forced marriage.

This means that 16 to 17 year olds will no longer be able to marry or enter a civil partnership under any circumstances, including with parental or judicial consent from **27 February 2023**. It will not be possible for anyone under 18 to marry or enter a civil partnership after this date.



Ending Child Marriage in the UK Marriage and Civil Partnership Act 2022



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Child Marriage and Gender Inequality

Child marriage refers to any formal marriage or informal union between a child under the age of 18 and an adult or another child.

Deep-rooted patriarchal beliefs, the low value placed on girls, and the desire to control women, especially girls' sexuality, underlie child marriage.

Child marriage is a hidden form of child abuse. In the UK, the Forced Marriage Unit provided advice or support to 118 victims below the age of 18 in 2021.

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Further Information for Practitioners

Forced Marriage Unit - [e-learning for professionals](#)

[GM Safeguarding Children procedures](#) - Also provide guidance on Forced Marriage

[Girls not Brides](#) - Global Partnership to End Child Marriage

[Karma Nirvana](#) - Run the national Honour Based Abuse Helpline and campaign for change

[Action Aid](#) - Child Marriage

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Legislation

The new legislation provides that a person commits an offence under the law of England and Wales if he or she carries out any conduct for the purpose of causing a child to enter into a marriage before the child's 18th birthday (whether or not the conduct amounts to violence, threats, any other form of coercion or deception and whether or not it is carried out in England and Wales).

A marriage is defined as any religious or civil ceremony of marriage, whether or not it is legally binding.

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Further Information for Practitioners

Underage, unrecorded marriages can occur in any community but are frequent in ultraconservative Asian and Middle Eastern populations, as well as among certain Orthodox Jewish and Roma traveller communities.

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Consequences

Girls married young are far less likely to stay in school, with lifelong economic impacts. They are often isolated, with their freedom curtailed. They are at higher risk of physical and sexual violence. Child brides are also at greater risk of experiencing dangerous complications in pregnancy and childbirth, contracting HIV/AIDS and suffering domestic violence. (Source: [Save the Children](#)). [Payzee Mahmood](#), married at 16 to a man nearly twice her age, has campaigned against child marriage in the UK and [spoken out](#) about its very dire consequences.

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Consequences

Early marriage has devastating consequences for a girl's life. Effectively, child marriage ends her childhood. Girls are forced into adulthood before they are physically and mentally ready. Child brides are frequently deprived of their rights to health, education, safety and active participation in daily lives. They frequently experience abuse, rape, and forced pregnancy. A forced marriage often means a girl is forced to wed an, at times significantly, older man.