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### Forced marriage

A forced marriage is where one or both people do not (or in cases of people with learning disabilities or reduced capacity, cannot) consent to the marriage as they are pressurised, or abuse is used, to force them to do so. **It is recognised in the UK as a form of domestic or child abuse and a serious abuse of human rights.**



## Forced Marriage



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### Background

A forced marriage is not the same as an arranged marriage. In an arranged marriage, the families of both spouses take a leading role in the arrangements, but the choice of whether to go ahead with the marriage remains the decision of the prospective spouses. However, in a forced marriage, one or both spouses do not consent to the marriage but are coerced into it. An arranged marriage can, however, become a forced marriage if there is any form of coercion.

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### Free training for professionals

The FMU has also developed free forced marriage [e-learning for professionals](#).

The modules aim to enable professionals to recognise the warning signs and ensure that appropriate action is taken to help protect and support all those at risk.

The [GM Safeguarding Children procedures](#) also cover Forced Marriage

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### So-called 'Honour' Based Abuse

As with all forms of so-called 'honour'-based abuse, women and girls are the main victims of forced marriage, however there is complexity in the concept of so-called honour. Men may be at heightened risk of forced marriage and so-called 'honour'-based abuse if they identify as LGBT, and women may be perpetrators as well as victims in certain circumstances. There may also be multiple victims, such as siblings who are at risk of forced marriage and so-called 'honour'-based abuse.

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### Multi-agency statutory guidance

The Forced Marriage Unit has created a [guidance document](#) which comprises:

- multi-agency statutory guidance for dealing with forced marriage, relating to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and vulnerable adults; and
- multi-agency (non-statutory) practice guidelines on handling cases of forced marriage, for frontline workers,

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### The Forced Marriage Unit

The Forced Marriage Unit (FMU) leads on the government's forced marriage policy 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).

The FMU operates a [public helpline](#) providing advice and support to both victims and professionals.

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### Legislation on forced marriage

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 mental capacity to consent to marriage (whether pressured or not)

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