

# Forced Marriage

Forced Marriage is a topic that you may be hearing more about, as it has become increasingly prevalent in the media and also within the education and social care sectors. In the last year alone, a government-funded helpline reported they received 8,870 calls (over 200 from under 15's) relating to concerns of possible forced marriages. To date there have only been three convictions in the UK for this crime.

## What is Forced Marriage?

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

The pressure put on people to marry against their will may be:

- Physical (e.g. threats, physical violence or sexual violence)
- Emotional and psychological (e.g. making someone feel like they are bringing 'shame' on their family)
- Financial abuse (for example, taking someone's wages) may also be a factor.

The government made forced marriage a criminal offence in England and Wales in 2014, to protect victims and send a clear message that this practice is totally unacceptable and will not be tolerated.

In 2017 the government introduced lifelong anonymity for victims of forced marriage to encourage more victims of this hidden crime to come forward.

Forced marriage is illegal in England and Wales and 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)

## Why does it happen?

Some families force their children to marry because they:

- Think it's an important part of religion or culture
- Are worried about the family's reputation and honour (in some cultures also known as 'izzat')



MacIntyre

Providing support...your way



[hello@macintyrecharity.org](mailto:hello@macintyrecharity.org)



[www.macintyrecharity.org](http://www.macintyrecharity.org)

- Want all of the family's money to stay together
- Want to marry their children off in exchange for money
- Don't approve of their child being gay, lesbian, bisexual or transgender
- Don't want their children to have relationships or sex
- Feel pressured by the community or other family members to follow traditions
- Want to keep family values and honour

## Is an arranged marriage a forced marriage?

An 'arranged marriage' is a marriage set up by family members and is not a forced marriage. Within arranged marriages, people will often marry before having a long-term relationship. An arranged marriage has the consent of both parties.

## Case Study

MacIntyre have implemented strategies and training, so staff are aware of any signs that someone we support may be at risk of a forced marriage.

MacIntyre supports a 15-year-old girl with learning disabilities and ASD, who receives education under MacIntyre's No Limits. Staff began to raise concerns after it was reported the young girl shared she was getting married and having a big party with all of her family and friends, who would be coming from abroad.

Staff knew that the girl's passport had previously been seized due to concerns that she may be at risk from a forced marriage, so began to take action. This was immediately raised to the local authority and investigated by staff and the police.

During the investigation, it became clear that the young girl had been referencing another family member's wedding. Despite this, the processes and staff training in place showed that we had acted swiftly and appropriately to safeguard the young person.



**MacIntyre**

Providing support...your way



[hello@macintyrecharity.org](mailto:hello@macintyrecharity.org)



[www.macintyrecharity.org](http://www.macintyrecharity.org)

**More information on Forced Marriage is available at:**



<https://www.gov.uk/stop-forced-marriage>

<https://www.childline.org.uk/info-advice/bullying-abuse-safety/crime-law/forced-marriage>

**If you are concerned about this in any way you can contact:**

Forced Marriage Unit



[fmu@fco.gov.uk](mailto:fmu@fco.gov.uk)



020 7008 0151

+44 (0)20 7008 0151 (overseas)

Monday to Friday, 9 am to 5 pm

Out of hours: 020 7008 1500 (ask for the Global Response Centre)



**MacIntyre**

Providing support...your way

602 South Seventh Street

Milton Keynes

Buckinghamshire MK9 2JA

Tel: 01908 230100

[www.macintyrecharity.org](http://www.macintyrecharity.org)

Registered Charity No. 250840