



### WHAT IS FORCED MARRIAGE?

Everyone has the right to choose who they marry. A forced marriage is a marriage lacking the free and full consent of both parties where duress is a factor.

Forced marriages are different to arranged marriages. In an arranged marriage, the family will take the lead in arranging the match but couples have the choice as to whether or not to proceed with the marriage. With forced marriages there is no choice.

Forced marriage is not condoned by any religion. It is a form of domestic violence and an abuse of human rights. Victims of forced marriage are often subjected to physical and emotional abuse and rape.

### WHO IS AFFECTED?



85% of victims of forced marriage are women and girls



44% of overseas cases dealt with by the Government's Forced Marriage Unit in 2008 involved minors (10% under 16 years old)

Forced marriage is not a 'Muslim' or 'South Asian' problem. Many cases do involve the Pakistani, Bangladeshi and Indian communities, but others involve Middle Eastern, Far Eastern, African, South American and Eastern European communities.

### HOW IS THE GOVERNMENT HELPING?

#### Forced Marriage (Civil Protection) Act

The Government introduced the Forced Marriage (Civil Protection) Act 2007 to protect people from being forced into marriage and help remove victims from the situation if a forced marriage has taken place. The Act:

- Gives family courts the power to issue Forced Marriage Protection Orders to prevent someone from forcing another person into marriage.
- Enables the police to arrest people suspected of breaching a Forced Marriage Protection Order. If found guilty they could face up to two years imprisonment.

#### Forced Marriage Unit

The Government launched the joint Home Office/Foreign and Commonwealth Office Forced Marriage Unit in January 2005. The Unit provides confidential advice and support to victims and those at risk of forced marriage, as well as advice to professionals handling forced marriage cases. If a victim is a British national facing forced marriage overseas, the Unit works with consular staff in British embassies and high commissions to provide assistance. So far the Unit has helped over 1,800 people facing forced marriage.

## **Guidelines for professionals**

The Government has produced guidelines for police, health professionals, education professionals and social workers on how to handle forced marriage cases. Under the provisions of the Forced Marriage (Civil Protection) Act 2007, the Government will also issue statutory guidance to agencies with responsibility for safeguarding and protection.

## **Survivors Handbook & Forced Marriage Publications**

The Forced Marriage Unit published a *Survivors' Handbook* in May 2007. This gives practical guidance on how to cope with life after a forced marriage. The Unit has also published a range of materials to raise awareness of the issue and of support options for people who feel they may be facing forced marriage. These include materials for schools and for young people, posters in Urdu, Punjabi, Bengali, Arabic and Kurdish, and leaflets for the Lesbian Gay Bisexual and Transgender community.

## **WHERE TO GET HELP**

### **Forced Marriage Unit:**

Open Monday – Friday from 9.00am – 5.00pm (+44) (0)20 7008 0151  
Emergency Duty Officer (+44) (0)20 7008 1500 (limited service only)  
Or email: [fmu@fco.gov.uk](mailto:fmu@fco.gov.uk)

### **National 24 Hour Domestic Violence Helpline:**

Website: [www.nationaldomesticviolencehelpline.org.uk](http://www.nationaldomesticviolencehelpline.org.uk)  
Telephone: 0808 2000 247

### **NSPCC Helpline:**

Website: [www.nspcc.org.uk](http://www.nspcc.org.uk)  
Telephone: 0808 800 5000

### **Asian Family Counselling Service:**

Website: [www.asianfamilycounselling.org.uk](http://www.asianfamilycounselling.org.uk)  
Telephone: 020 8813 9714

### **Shelter (for housing advice):**

Website: [www.shelter.org.uk](http://www.shelter.org.uk)  
Telephone: 0808 800 4444

Government Equalities Office  
Eland House  
Bressenden Place  
London  
SW1E 5DU

**[www.equalities.gov.uk](http://www.equalities.gov.uk)**

This leaflet is also available on our website in Urdu and Arabic

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