



## ***“Our Girl” Resource Pack***

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## “Our Girl” Resource Pack

### INTRODUCTION

In 2013, the Forced Marriage Unit gave advice or support to around 1500 women and men who were potentially at risk of forced marriage. This figure is likely to be an underestimate of the proportion of the number of people, mainly young, in the UK who are forced to marry someone against their will each year.

This resource pack accompanies the “Our Girl” animated film and aims to provide additional information about forced marriage, as well as offering ideas for activities to raise awareness of forced marriage among professionals, young people and wider communities.

*Our Girl* is a short film on forced marriage, directed and produced by Animage in collaboration with AVA, which won the Gold United Nations Department of Public Information Award and Bronze World Medal in Social Issues. *Our Girl* received Gold and Bronze Awards at the 58th New York International Television and Film Award. The film can be viewed at;  
<https://vimeo.com/100885525>

Along with *Our Girl* is *True Stories*, a short film made up of interviews with actors recounting the experiences of victims of forced marriage. The interviews can be viewed at;  
<https://vimeo.com/101035867>

### 1) What is a forced marriage?

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights, Article 16(2) states that “(m)arriage shall be entered into only with the free and full consent of the intending spouses.”

Forced marriage, by contrast, is where one or both people do not or cannot (due to age, a lack of capacity because of a learning or physical disability or mental illness) consent to the marriage and where duress is involved.

People may be forced into marriage through, among other things, threatened or actual physical and sexual violence, activities and communications being restricted, and emotional pressure being applied by making the person feel guilty or as though they are bringing shame on their family.

*Out of the blue this man came into our house. He was, like, old. And my parents said I'd been promised to him from the day I was born.*

*“Our Girl” survivor*

Forced marriage is closely related to so-called honour-based violence, which encompasses a range of abuses including physical and sexual assault, imprisonment and murder of a person who is seen to have brought shame or dishonour on their family or community. Refusing to marry someone chosen by the family may be seen as dishonourable.

Some forced marriages take place in the UK with no overseas element, while others involve a partner who comes from overseas or a British national being sent abroad.

### 2) What's the difference between forced and arranged marriages?

An arranged marriage is quite different from forced marriage. In an arranged marriage, the family of both parties are involved in selecting potential marriage partners and introducing couples to one another. Ultimately, however, the choice of whether or not to accept the arrangement remains with the prospective spouses. Not agreeing to the match is not seen as bringing shame on the family. **Arranged marriage is allowed in England and Wales, whereas forced marriage is a crime.**

*Sure I wanted to get married one day, and have children, but only when I'm ready and only to a person that I loved. Is that a crime?*

*“Our Girl” survivor*

### 3) Who might be forced into marriage?

Whilst anyone could be forced into marriage, the overwhelming majority of victims that contact the Forced Marriage Unit are **women below the age of 25**. Forced marriage takes place in many countries around the world, including in the UK and can impact people from a broad range of ‘communities’ including Roma, Irish Traveller, Middle Eastern, Turkish, Kurdish, Latin American, South Asian, South East Asian, East African, North African, Eastern and Central European.

#### 4) Are there any other factors that mean someone is at particular risk of forced marriage?

Families may be more likely to force a child with a learning disability, physical disability or a mental health problem into marriage. They may do so with the intention of finding a carer for their child. People with a disability may be forced into a marriage as a means of enabling someone to enter the UK, although the other party may not always be aware of the person's level of ability.

People who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender (LGBT) may also be at increased risk of forced marriage, as the family may believe that the marriage can "cure" the person of what is seen as abnormal sexual preferences, or may stop others from questioning the person's sexuality.

Men are particularly at risk if they are (or suspected of being) gay, bisexual or transgender, or if they have a physical or learning disability.

Certain events can also increase the pressure for someone to marry. This can include when a parent dies, particularly the father, as the remaining parent may feel greater need for children to be married. A new step-parent in the family may also have the same effect.

If one child refuses to marry, this can result in other siblings being forced into marriage to fulfil the original contract or to protect the family honour. Similarly, women and girls can be at greater risk of forced marriage if they disclose any experiences of sexual violence or abuse as this can be seen as bringing shame upon themselves. Marriage may restore honour to the family, and could be seen as protecting the woman from future abuse.

#### 5) Why does it happen?

Some of the risk factors already mentioned might be given by parents as a reason for forcing their child into marriage – finding a carer, stopping 'unsuitable' relationships, or trying to control unwanted behaviour such as being too 'Western'. The marriage may also be pursued to keep assets within a family, to strengthen links with other families, or to facilitate visas to the UK.

Forced marriage may happen as a result of the parents' belief that they are following a cultural or religious custom that is perceived as acceptable or desirable. It is important to note, however, that **all major religions** clearly condemn forced marriage and require consent to marriage to be given freely.

All of these factors help us to understand why parents may force their children into marriage, but does not provide justification for forced marriage. Parents – as well as young people who may grow up expecting to marry someone of their parents' choosing – need to be aware that **forced marriage is a violation of children's rights, human rights and is internationally recognised by the UN as a form of violence against women and girls.**

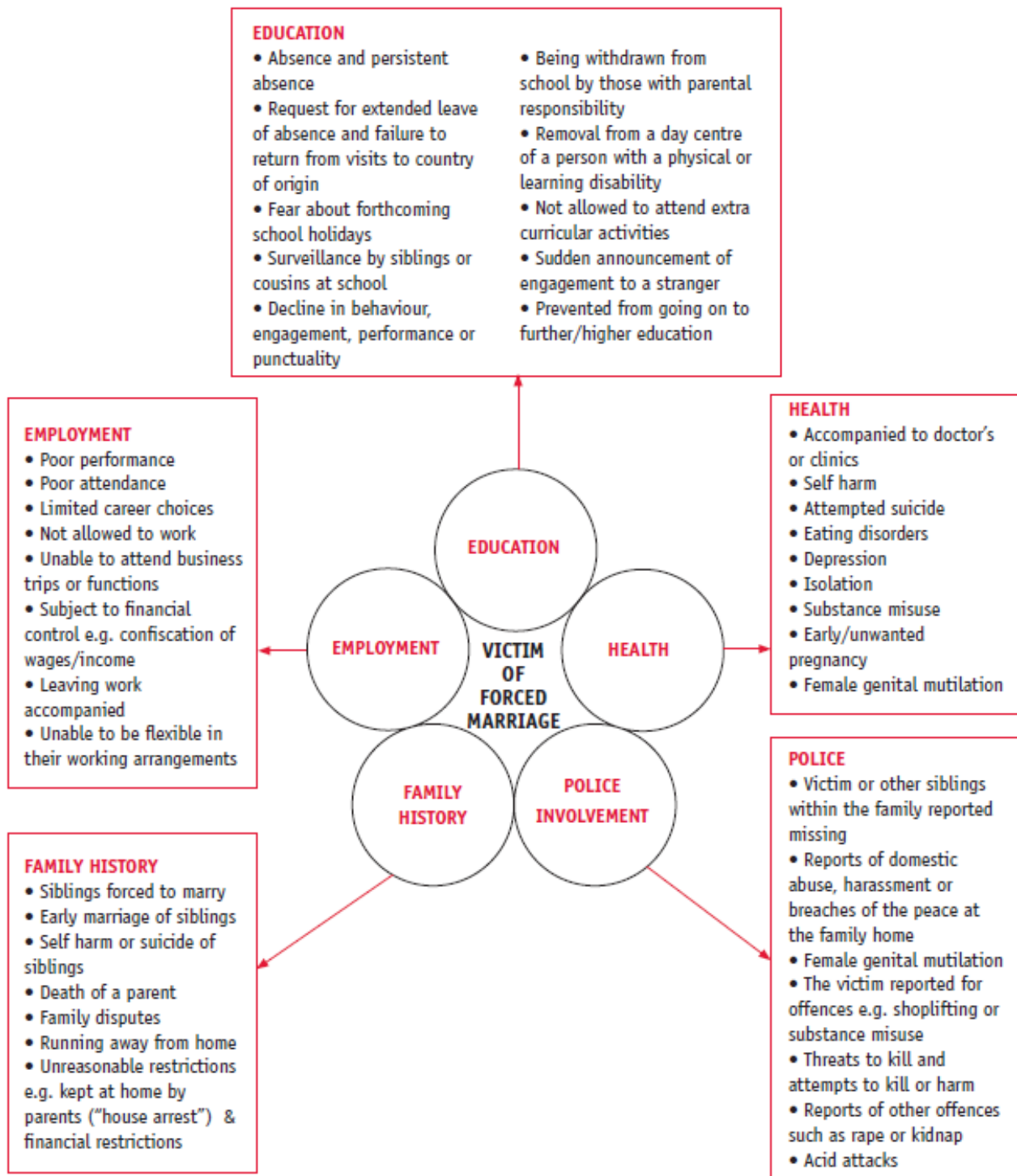
#### People with learning disabilities

Children and adults with learning disabilities are at greater risk of abuse and are less likely to be protected by safeguarding systems. Professionals may be less aware of the person being forced into marriage due, among other things, to:

- Reluctance to see a parent or carer as abusive
- Confusing behaviours that might indicate a person is being abused with those associated with a learning disability
- Reliance on parent/carer to speak for their child or explain behaviour
- Belief that someone with a learning disability cannot communicate their wishes

## 6) How might I know that someone is being forced into marriage?

It can be difficult to 'spot' forced marriage, particularly as the victim may not be willing to talk about it, out of fear for their own safety or not wanting to bring shame on their family. The diagram on the following page provides many of the potential signs, which reflect increasing control over the victim's activities and reduced contact with others.



Source: Forced Marriage Unit (2009) [Multi-Agency Practice Guidelines: Handling Cases Of Forced Marriage](#)

The Forced Marriage Unit reports a peak in reports of forced marriage cases during the summer where young people can be 'taken on holiday', unaware of the real purpose of the trip.

## 7) What might happen to someone who is forced into marriage?

Both women and men may experience violence and abuse from their spouse, as well as the extended family. Women may also be repeatedly raped, sometimes with the deliberate aim of impregnation. Young women may be withdrawn early from school to prevent any attempts at seeking help or escaping. Their education may be seen as a worthless investment as they are destined for marriage and full time motherhood. Their movements and contact with others may be strictly controlled.

*My husband hit me,  
pulled my hair.*

*“Our Girl” survivor*

Many victims may feel that running away is their only option. Due to the high levels of isolation – particularly if the person has been taken to a foreign country – accessing support can be very difficult. There are additional barriers such as possibly having to leave children behind, having nowhere to stay or any means to financially support oneself. Victims may also be forced to leave their entire community, which may be too high a price to pay.

There is also a very real risk of being seriously hurt and even murdered if they are found. Some families – often motivated by the belief that the victim has brought shame on them – will go to extreme lengths to find the victim, including using all community contacts, private investigators and even bounty hunters.

## 8) What should I do if I have concerns that someone is being forced into marriage?

Firstly, you must prioritise their immediate safety. Make sure you speak to them alone and in a secure and private place. Reassure them about confidentiality, i.e. that their family will not be informed but, in the case of under 18s, there may be a requirement to refer the case to children’s services. If the person is under 18 or is deemed to be a vulnerable adult, you should follow your organisation’s safeguarding procedures. This may include contacting local and national support groups that have experience of working with forced marriage (details can be found on page 10 of this resource pack).

Mediation or reconciliation with family members is **never** a safe course of action. It may place the victim at real risk of being subjected to physical or emotional duress, or possibly being kidnapped. If the person insists on meeting their family, it should take place in a safe place, supervised by a trained professional and, where needed, an independent interpreter.

At all times acknowledge the individual’s wishes. There are many reasons why someone who is at risk of forced marriage, or someone who has already been forced into marriage, may be reluctant to contact support services. In cases involving young people and some vulnerable adults, there may be a legal requirement to start safeguarding procedures, which should be done with the person’s consent wherever possible. Adults who are not deemed vulnerable are free to decide what they want to do, and should be supported to make their own decisions and to stay as safe as possible.

For cases of forced marriage that have an overseas element – if the victim is going to be taken abroad, is abroad or comes from abroad – the Forced Marriage Unit should be contacted for advice and support. The Forced Marriage Unit can assist if someone is taken abroad as well as providing initial advice to people who arrive in the UK and whose immigration status is insecure.

Full information about ways to support and protect people at risk of forced marriage can be found in the FMU’s [Multi-Agency Practice Guidelines: Handling Cases Of Forced Marriage](#), which complement the [statutory guidance](#) that came into force with the launch of the [Forced Marriage \(Civil Protection\) Act\) 2007](#).

Be sure to maintain records of all information you have been given, decisions made and the reason for the decisions. If you are likely to have future contact with the young person, agree a safe method of communication.

### 9) Can the police stop a forced marriage?

In some cases, the victim may wish to access legal remedies as a means to prevent the marriage from taking place, to protect them against violence or abuse that might result from their refusal, or to prosecute their family.

A Forced Marriage Protection Order (FMPO) is a court order that contains legally binding conditions designed to stop someone forcing another person into marriage, or to force a person's return to the UK if they have been taken abroad for marriage. FMPOs can be made in an emergency if the marriage is imminent. FMPOs are civil orders, but breaching the order can result in the person being arrested and sentenced to up to two years in prison. More information about FMPOs can be found by searching for Forced Marriage

Protection Orders here:

<http://hmctsformfinder.justice.gov.uk/>.

Victims can approach the police if they are being forced into marriage. Find out more in the box entitled "**Forced marriage = criminal offence**".

The police also have powers to remove a person under the age of 18 into temporary police protection if they believe the person is at immediate risk. If the risk is on-going, an application for an Emergency Protection Order can be made (usually by Children's Social Care), and further care orders can then be applied for if it is not safe for the young person to return home. Adults at risk of violence in the home may be able to access alternative temporary accommodation from the local authority or by calling the National Domestic Violence Helpline (0808 200 247).

#### **Forced marriage = criminal offence**

Forced marriage is a criminal offence in England and Wales. Under the Anti-Social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014, it is a criminal offence to "use violence, threats or any other form of coercion for the purpose of causing another person to enter into marriage". This also includes deceiving someone into leaving the UK for the purpose of forced marriage abroad.

This means that in addition to applying for a Forced Marriage Protection Order (FMPO) to prevent someone from being forced into marriage, victims are also able to report the offence to the police. If someone chooses to report to the police, the case will be referred to the Crown Prosecution Service (CPS). The CPS will then decide whether to proceed with a prosecution. The CPS may decide to pursue the case with or without the victim's consent.



## 10) What support is available to victims?

There are a number of sources of support for people who are at risk of forced marriage. Key national organisations include:

### **Forced Marriage Unit (FMU)**

Dedicated to preventing British nationals being forced into marriage overseas and assisting anyone in the UK who is being, or has been, forced into marriage | [www.forcedmarriage.net](http://www.forcedmarriage.net) (for young people) | 020 7008 0151 or 020 7008 1500 (out of hours)

The FMU has published a Survivor's Handbook that includes a comprehensive list of support services around the UK. It can be accessed here: [bit.ly/1kSUxEEd](http://bit.ly/1kSUxEEd) The FMU can also provide copies of 'Marriage: it's your choice' cards to provide help and information to potential victims, signposting them to confidential advice. The cards also remind young people to speak to police or airline staff if they find themselves at an airport with nowhere to turn.

### **Honour network**

Helps female and male survivors of forced marriage and honour-based violence | [www.karmanirvana.org.uk](http://www.karmanirvana.org.uk) | 0800 5999 247

### **Henna Foundation (Wales)**

A national support service and helpline for people at risk of forced marriage in, or from, Wales | [www.hennafoundation.org](http://www.hennafoundation.org) | 029 2049 9620

### **Iranian and Kurdish Women's Rights Organisation (IKRWO)**

Provides advice and support to Middle Eastern women and girls facing honour-based violence, domestic abuse, forced marriage and female genital mutilation | [www.ikrwo.org.uk](http://www.ikrwo.org.uk) | 0207 920 6460

### **Southall Black Sisters**

Offers information, advice, advocacy, practical help, support and counselling to black and ethnic minority women experiencing domestic abuse and forced marriage | [www.southallblacksisters.org.uk](http://www.southallblacksisters.org.uk) | 0208 571 0800

### **Black and minority ethnic women's services**

Imkaan provides support to their national network of members; frontline organisations led by and for black and minority ethnic women that work to end violence against women and girls through a diverse range of services. Imkaan's map of organisations is available here: [www.imkaan.org.uk/membership](http://www.imkaan.org.uk/membership)

The following activities are provided as ideas for prompting discussion about forced marriage. The activities are geared towards being used with groups of professionals, community members or young people to raise general levels of awareness about forced marriage, to dispel some of the common myths about forced marriage and to highlight sources of support for victims.

### Preparation and groundwork

Facilitators should watch both films at least twice and ideally try out the activities they are intending to use, as well as becoming familiar with the information included in the FAQ section.

In setting up the session, it is important to establish a safe and supportive environment to discuss forced marriage. It is an emotive subject, particularly in relation to why forced marriage happens and the right way to intervene in what can be considered as acceptable cultural or religious practices. Clear ground rules should be established before starting any of the activities, to ensure participants feel able to express their opinions freely. Ask the group to contribute ground rules, list them on flipchart paper and stick them on the wall for the duration of the session. Ground rules may include:

- listening to each other
- having respect for someone else's opinions
- not to ask personal questions
- promising confidentiality - what is said in the group remaining in the group. An exception to this would be if a young person in the group is at immediate risk of harm; in such situations the relevant safeguarding procedures should be followed.

Facilitators should be aware that some participants may be at risk of forced marriage, have been affected by forced marriage, or as a result of the activities could come to question if their own marriage was forced rather than arranged. This applies whether working with young people, community members or professionals. It is therefore essential that information about support services is made available during any discussion.

### Looking after the group

“Our Girl” lasts for three and a half minutes. It includes a short animation followed by clips of young women talking about their experiences. There is a second film called “True Stories” that consists of longer pieces of the same women describing their experience of forced marriage in more detail. Both films may be distressing for the audience, and participants should be advised of this in advance.

Within the activities outlined below, you may wish to schedule a short time for debriefing after the showing of the film, followed by a break, or at the end of the session.

### Debriefing questions

- How was it for you personally to watch the film?
- Did it bring up any particular emotions you wish to share with others?
- What are some of the strengths of the young women we saw in the film?
- (If anyone is distressed) Do you have anyone you can talk to about how you are feeling outside of this training?
- (For the end of the session) Ask people to name something they are looking forward to in the next few days

### Activity instructions

There are seven activities. They are presented in a particular order, with activities building on the knowledge gained in the previous exercise. With the exception of activity A, which it is recommended that all sessions start with, you may choose to only use one or two of the subsequent activities, depending on your audience and timeframe.

The timings provided are based on a group of 12-14 participants. Smaller groups may need less time, and conversely larger groups may take longer to complete the activity.

## Activity A – Myth Busting

**Time:** 15 – 20 minutes

**Resources:** Myth Busting Cards (see below)

**Learning objectives.** By the end of the activity, participants will: 1) be able to describe the key elements of forced marriage; 2) have greater awareness of own beliefs about forced marriage; 3) be aware of changes in beliefs and attitudes during session (for option B).

### Facilitator Instructions

- Explain that the exercise is to introduce the topic of forced marriage. Forced marriage is an emotive subject and one about which people often have preconceived attitudes and beliefs. This activity will help people become aware of their own beliefs and attitudes about forced marriage.
- Ask people to work in small groups (2-3 people). Explain that they will be given a set of statements about forced marriage, and the task is for the group to decide if each statement is true or false. The group should come to a consensus, if possible.
- Hand out a set of myth busting cards to each group (found below). Give the pairs/groups 5 minutes to discuss each statement.
- There are three options for completing the activity:
  - Option A: Ask the whole group to stand up. Explain that you will say statements out loud and everyone should move to the right of the room if they think the statement is true, and to the left if it is false. People can stay in the middle if they do not know. Generate discussion based on where people have chosen to stand.
  - Option B: Ask people to feedback on their group discussions. A useful starting point is to ask which of the statements prompted the most discussion or which statement the groups found most difficult to come to a consensus about.
  - Option C: Ask each group to put the statement cards to one side, remembering which they thought were true and which were false. At the end of the session, ask the groups to review the statements and see if they have changed their mind about any of the beliefs. End the session with a quick discussion about what changes have occurred and why.
- In the latter options, it is generally better to invite people to share their decisions if they wish to, rather than force people to publicly reveal their answers.

## Activity A Resources - Myth Busting Cards

Print out and cut up one set of statements for each group (2-3 people). You may also wish to print out the facilitator notes for participants to keep for reference after the activity.

STATEMENT
Forced marriage involves a family choosing a spouse for their child. The child can disagree with the choice.
Parents have the right to choose who their child(ren) marry.
No religion supports forced marriage.
Some parents force their child(ren) into marriage as a means of protecting them.
Forced marriage is most common in South Asian families.
Forced marriage is a cultural custom that people should be free to practice.
Children who do not respect their parents' wishes bring shame on the family.

STATEMENT	FACILITATOR NOTES
Forced marriage involves a family choosing a spouse for their child. The child can disagree with the choice.	<b>FALSE.</b> When someone is being forced into marriage, it means that they cannot disagree with their parents' decision.
Parents have the right to choose who their child(ren) marry.	<b>FALSE.</b> Parents may wish to propose a potential spouse for their children, but the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, as well as the law in the UK, states that marriage can only be entered into with the full and free consent of both parties.
No religion supports forced marriage.	<b>TRUE.</b> Many people believe that forced marriage is a religious tradition. It is important for participants to know, however, that no major religion in the world condones forced marriage. Each religion clearly states that marriage is only valid if both parties freely consent to the marriage.
Some parents force their child(ren) into marriage as a means of protecting them.	<b>TRUE.</b> Parents offer many reasons for organising a marriage for their child(ren). This is particularly true where the child has a disability, and the parents see marriage as a way of arranging life-long care for the child. In other cases, parents in the UK may believe marriage will protect the child from perceived negative influences of Western culture.

<p>Forced marriage is most common in South Asian families.</p>	<p><b>FALSE.</b> Forced marriage is practised in many parts of the world, including South Asia, the Middle East, Africa and Europe. Due to the particular ethnic profile of the UK, which includes large, established Pakistani and Bangladeshi populations, it can appear that it is most prevalent in these communities.</p>
<p>Forced marriage is a cultural custom that people should be free to practice.</p>	<p><b>FALSE.</b> This is a common belief. Forced marriage violates children's rights, human rights and is recognised internationally by the UN as a form of violence against women and girls. Forced marriage is a crime in England and Wales. Whilst a person's cultural practices should generally be respected, where it contravenes a person's fundamental human rights, we have a right to intervene and protect the potential victim.</p>
<p>Children who do not respect their parents' wishes bring shame on the family.</p>	<p><b>FALSE and TRUE.</b> Forced marriage and so-called honour-based violence are closely linked, as children who refuse to marry the person chosen by their parents can be viewed by the family as dishonouring their parents. Across the world, it is also widely expected that children should respect their parents' wishes, and so victims themselves may also believe they have brought shame on their family or wider community if they do not agree to the marriage. These feelings should be taken into account and addressed when offering support to anyone affected by forced marriage.</p>
<p>Identifying as, or being perceived as lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender can be a reason for being forced into marriage.</p>	<p><b>TRUE.</b> Some parents may believe that forcing their child into marriage will stop the person being lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender (LGBT) or will be used to convince wider family and community members that the person is heterosexual.</p>
<p>Victims of forced marriage cannot be involuntarily removed from the situation, either from their parents or their spouse</p>	<p><b>TRUE and FALSE.</b> As far as possible, the victim's wishes should be respected. For adults who are not deemed vulnerable, there are no legal grounds to compel them to take any particular action. Support should be offered to leave the situation, and if the person decides to stay they should be given advice on how to stay as safe as possible. For vulnerable adults who have capacity to make their own decisions, again they cannot be forced to do anything. If the person does not have capacity to make their own decisions and/or the person is under 18, the relevant authorities may be able to put protective orders in place to safeguard the individual. This should, nonetheless, be done with the victim's consent wherever possible.</p>

## Activity B – What is forced marriage?

**Time:** 20-30 minutes

**Resources:** Flipchart paper and pens; DVD player, projector, projector screen, speakers; “Our Girl” film; Case studies (see next page)

**Learning objectives.** By the end of the activity, participants will: 1) have a fuller understanding of what forced marriage is; 2) be able to describe the difference between forced marriage and arranged marriage

### Facilitator Instructions

- This activity provides more information about what forced marriage is, including how it differs from an arranged marriage.
- Divide the participants into small groups (2-3 people); preferably with different people from in activity A. Ask each group to spend 3 minutes writing down as many words they can think that they associate with forced marriage. Invite participants to feed back some of the words they identified, and write answers on a piece of flipchart paper.
- Explain that participants are now going to watch a short film about forced marriage. Play the “Our Girl” film (you may need to play it twice). Then ask the whole group for any additional words about forced marriage that the film has evoked for them.
- If words such as control, women and sexuality have not been mentioned, try to elicit these from the group and explain why they are important words (i.e., that the majority of victims are young women; that forced marriage is a means of controlling women and particularly their sexuality, but that men’s sexuality – particularly if not heterosexual – may also be controlled through forced marriage).
- At this point, it may be appropriate to have a short debrief about the film, and possibly give participants a short break if they found the film upsetting or intense.  
*Depending on the preceding discussion, it may be beneficial to extend the activity with the following exercise to reiterate the difference between forced and arranged marriage:*
- Divide the participants into four groups. Give each group two case studies (from Activity B’s resources on the next page). Ask the group to spend 5 minutes deciding if each case study is an example of forced or arranged marriage.
- Feedback as a whole group, asking how the four different groups came to their decision.

## Activity B Resources – Case studies

Print out enough copies of the case studies to give two case studies to each group.

CASE STUDIES	FACILITATOR NOTES
<p><b>Case study 1: Nadia</b>            Nadia’s family is from Jordan and moved to England eight years ago when Nadia was seven. In the lead up to her 16<sup>th</sup> birthday, Nadia’s parents tell her they are all going home for a big party with the extended family. Nadia is extremely excited about seeing her grandparents and her cousins who she was close to as a young girl. Before leaving the UK, Nadia’s parents encourage her to say goodbye to her friends as her grandparents are sick and her parents want to stay in Jordan for an extended period. Nadia is sad about this as it means she will miss school, but understands her parents’ decision. The same day the family arrives in Jordan, Nadia is introduced a man in his thirties. She is told that she was promised to the man when she was born and tomorrow they will be married. Nadia is so shocked at the news, she doesn’t know what to say or do to stop the marriage.</p>	<p>This is a <b>forced</b> marriage.</p>
<p><b>Case study 2: Shilpi</b>            Shilpi was born in the UK. Her parents are from Bangladesh and migrated to the UK in the late 1960s. Shilpi is the oldest daughter in the family and now she has turned 18, her parents frequently talk about who and when she will marry. At family gatherings, her parents have started to introduce Shilpi to distant male relatives and family friends of her age and she feels that she has to be polite and talk with them. Her uncle’s daughter married a white British man of her own choice, and this seemed to be accepted by the family. Nonetheless, Shilpi feels that she should marry someone her parents choose, although she hopes she can delay any match for a while as she’s not ready to get married. She is worried about discussing her wishes with her parents as she doesn’t know how they will react.</p>	<p>Shilpi could be at risk of <b>forced</b> marriage. She mentions feeling that she ‘should’ marry someone that her parents choose. The root cause of this feeling is unclear.</p>
<p><b>Case study 3: Mary</b>            Mary is 15 and is part of the Irish Traveller community in England. She lives with her parents and five younger siblings and they are fairly settled, moving between two different sites in southern England. Her father works away from home a lot, and when he last returned home he told Mary that her marriage to a distant cousin had been agreed. Her father told her it’s time for her to get married and start her own family. He explained that the man moves around East Anglia and further north. Mary doesn’t want to get married until she finishes college in two years and has always said she wants to stay near to her family.</p>	<p>This is a <b>forced</b> marriage.</p>

#### **Case study 4: Ronke**

Ronke is 19 and lives in Nigeria with her aunt and uncle as her parents died several years ago. In the past six months, Ronke's family arranged meetings with several family friends and acquaintances whom they know through church that have sons living in England. Ronke was introduced at each meeting and was shown photos of the sons. She chose to speak to two of the sons, and after four conversations with one man, agreed to meet him when he next returns home. Ronke informs her family that she intends on agreeing to marry the man once she has met him. She feels ready to get married and wants to move to England. Both families are pleased with the match.

At this point, this appears to be an **arranged** marriage. It is possible, however, that if Ronke later refuses to marry the man, she may be forced into the marriage.



## Activity C – Why is forced marriage harmful?

**Time:** 15 minutes

**Resources:** DVD player, projector, projector screen, speakers; “True Stories” film; flipchart paper and pens

**Learning objectives.** By the end of the activity, participants will be able to: 1) explain the common types of abuse associated with forced marriage; 2) describe the impact of forced marriage on victims’ physical and emotional well-being

### Facilitator Instructions

- Explain that forced marriage is a crime in England and Wales. Under the Anti-Social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014, which criminalises forced marriage, forced marriage is described as the “use [of] violence, threats or any other form of coercion for the purpose of causing another person to enter into marriage.”
- Ask participants to watch the “True Stories” film (may need to be played twice) and think about two questions:
  - What types of abuse do the women describe their parents using to force them into marriage?
  - What types of abuse do the women describe experiencing from their new husband and/or in-laws?
- After watching the film, invite participants to share their answers with the whole group. Highlight both physical and emotional forms of abuse.
- To follow up, ask the group how being forced into marriage and experiencing the associated abuse made the women in the film feel. Focus on actual feelings such as sad, depressed, angry, and hopeless and write these words on flipchart paper.
- At this point, it may again be appropriate to have a short debrief about the film, and possibly give participants a short break if they found the film upsetting or intense.

## Activity D – Why does forced marriage happen?

**Time:** 30 minutes

**Resources:** Parent Quotes (see below),

**Learning objectives.** By the end of the activity, participants will: 1) have greater awareness of the reasons given by families for practising forced marriage; 2) have a better understanding of the underlying reasons why forced marriage happens; 3) be more equipped to challenge attitudes and beliefs that support forced marriage

### Facilitator Instructions

This activity follows on well from activity A as participants can use what they have learnt.

- Explain that parents often have very clear reasons why they are forcing their child into marriage; in fact, in most cases they do not see the marriage as being forced. This activity will look at the reasons for forced marriage and aims to equip participants with the knowledge to challenge attitudes and beliefs that support forced marriage.
- Divide the group into small groups of 2-3 people. Explain that they will be given a set of cards, each of which has a quote from a parent explaining the reason for forcing their child into marriage. Ask them to place the cards face down on the table. Explain they should turn the cards over one at a time and discuss. They will have 15 minutes to discuss how they might respond to the parent, or to anyone else, who may agree with the given reason.
- After 15 minutes, invite people to share examples of the responses they devised. It's likely that many of the responses will be similar, i.e. that forced marriage is a crime and a human rights violation.

## Activity D Resources – Parent Quotes

Print out and cut up one set of parent quotes for each group.

A: "I don't know who else will be able to look after her once we are gone. With her disability, she cannot look after herself. She needs someone to care for her."

B: "My son is out of control. He no longer listens to us. He's not doing well at school and spends most of his time with a friend that we don't know. When we have tried to talk about getting married, he says he's not interested in girls and never wants to get married."

C: "Our parents and grandparents were neighbours. My husband and I knew each other from a very young age. We always knew that we would be married. That's how it was. And that's how it is for our daughter. Everyone in the community knows who she will marry."

D: "She's been seen several times with a boy who we don't know. No one in the family knows him. It's bringing shame on the family. People are saying we can't control our own daughter."

E: "The marriage is important for the family. It means we will be able to keep the family's land in Pakistan. It's his duty to his family to marry her and keep the land."

F: "She's pregnant. She has to marry the man. She says he forced himself on her, but he is a good friend who I respect. I can't believe he would do that."

G: "My marriage was arranged so that my wife could get a visa to come here and work. I see no reason why my son shouldn't do the same."

### **Example answers (for facilitator's use)**

A: *"I understand that you are concerned about your daughter's future. Forcing her into marriage might seem like a good idea, but could leave her vulnerable to being abused by her husband and his family if they do not want to care for her. It is also against the law. Are there other ways to provide care for your daughter in the long term?"*

B and D: *"It sounds like you are very concerned about your son/daughter, but forcing him/her into marriage will not necessarily change his/her behaviour. Forced marriage is also a crime."*

C and G: *"It can be difficult when customs change with time, but even if it has been practised in your family before, forced marriage is not acceptable. It is a crime in the UK and a violation of a person's human rights."*

E: *"I understand that the marriage is important to your family, but in the UK, making someone marry a person they do not know or do not want to marry is against the law."*

F: *"If your daughter says she does not want to marry the man – particularly if he forced her into having sex with him – this would be a forced marriage and is a crime in this country."*

## Activity E – What can I do to help?

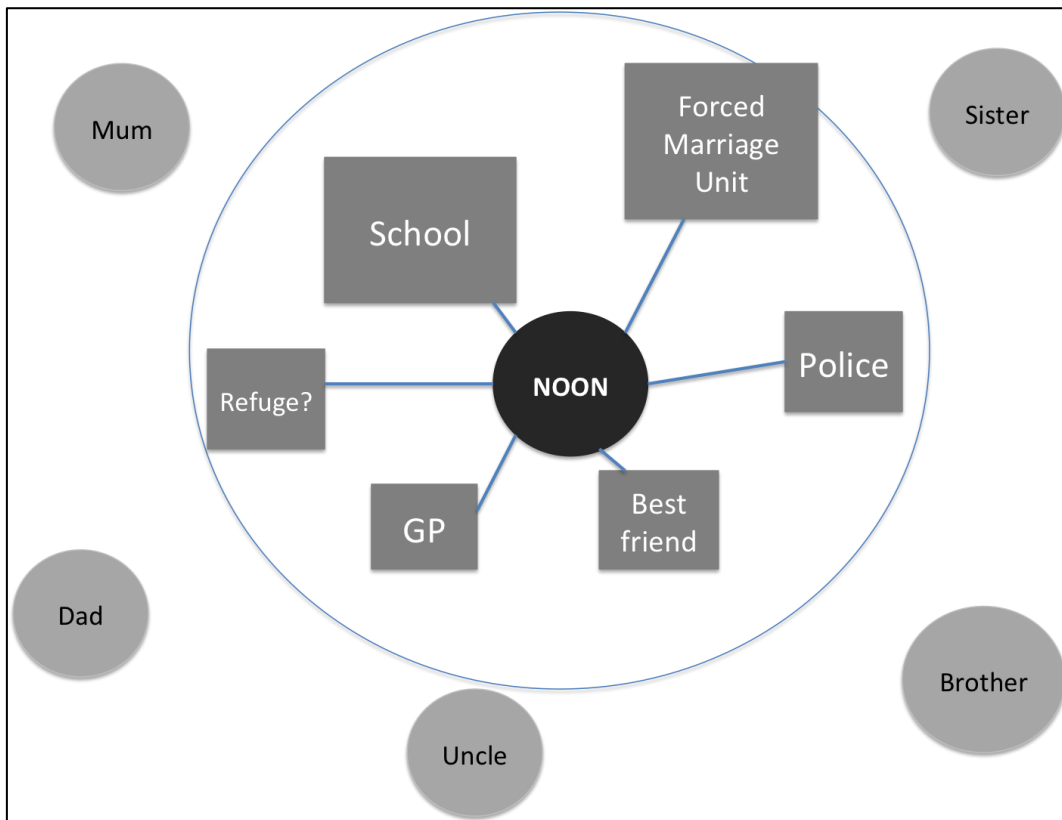
**Time:** 20 minutes

**Resources:** Flipchart paper and pens; case studies (see next page)

**Learning objectives.** By the end of the activity, participants will: 1) be aware of the support and protection available to people who are at risk of forced marriage, or have already been forced into marriage; 2) be able to describe responsibilities to safeguard children, young people and vulnerable adults at risk of forced marriage (for professionals); have greater understanding of some of the barriers to accessing support

## Facilitator Instructions

- This activity will help participants identify what they can do to help someone – depending on the participants, this might be a friend or a service user – who is at risk of being forced into marriage, or has already been forced into marriage.
- In preparation for this exercise, facilitators should read the answer to question 8 in the FAQ section at the beginning of this resource pack. It provides an outline of what to do if someone is at risk of forced marriage as well as the FMU's [Multi-Agency Practice Guidelines: Handling Cases Of Forced Marriage](#).
- Divide participants into groups of 3-4 people. Explain that each group will be given a short case study, and that they will be drawing an 'ecogram' of how they might support a forced marriage victim. The ecogram should be created by:
  - Drawing the person in the case study in the middle of a piece of flipchart paper.
  - Next, towards the edge of the paper, draw a 'circle of safety' around the person. Outside the circle, draw/write the names of the people who might be a risk to the victim.
  - Finally, in the space around the person, add a box for every person or agency that might be able to assist the victim and label the box. Draw a line from the person to each box. The size of the boxes should reflect the relative importance of the person/agency, e.g. a large box means the person/agency can offer vital support. The distance of the box from the person in the middle should reflect how easy/likely it will be for the victim to access this support, i.e. a short distance indicates very easy. Here's an example:



- To feedback, ask the groups to place their ecograms next to each other on the table or the floor. Generate discussion by asking participants to note similarities and differences between each diagram. Ask for or provide clarification about the role of different agencies as needed. Prompt discussion about the barriers to accessing support.

## Activity E Resources – case studies

Print out sufficient copies of the case studies to give one to each group.

### Case study 1: Seema

Seema was born in Pakistan but her family moved to the UK when she was only a few months old. She is now 15. Her family have started talking about going to Pakistan next year to get married, just like her sister did two years ago. Her parents have started to check her mobile phone and won't let her use her laptop in her room.

### Case study 2: Aman

Aman is 17 years old. His parents are from Bangladesh and he was born in the UK. Aman has three older sisters, all of whom left home when they got married. As the only son, Aman's parents are now putting pressure on him to marry so that someone is at home to care for them as they get older. They have already started talking to the family in Bangladesh about a suitable match. Aman wants to look after his family, but he also wants to go to university before finding a job and getting married.

### Case study 3: Ivana

Ivana is from Russia and is 19. She and her family have lived in the England for 15 years. Ivana has a moderate learning disability and is partially sighted. Her knowledge of English is limited and it is unclear if she will ever be able to live independently. Ivana's father has a friend in Kazakhstan whose 21-year old son wants to come to England. They discuss the possibility of Ivana and the son getting married. The friend is not fully aware of Ivana's disability.

### Case study 4: Noon

Noon is from Thailand and moved to London seven years ago when she was 14. Since then they moved to Cardiff. Noon's parents have recently told her that they have arranged a good marriage for her with the son of a family friend from Thailand. They have booked flights to Thailand in two months' time, where they will get married. Noon's husband will then return to Wales with Noon and work in the family business.

## Activity F – The Impacts of Forced Marriage

**Time:** 20 minutes

**Resources:** Flipchart paper and pens

**Learning objectives.** By the end of the activity, participants will: 1) be able to critically think about the impacts of forced marriage on life choices; 2) understand that forced marriage can have long-lasting impacts

### Facilitator Instructions

- Explain that in the film 'Our Girls' some of the young women started by saying what they wanted to be when they grew up. One young woman also said 'I want to finish my studies and become a grown up'.
- Begin by drawing the outline of a girl on a piece of flipchart paper (or split the group into smaller groups of 3-4 and ask them to each draw an outline of a girl). Inside the body write down a list of hopes and dreams that the group have for their own lives in the future. Then ask the group/s to discuss what the impacts of forced marriage may be on someone's life ambitions. On the outside of the figure write all of the impacts that they come up with.
- Prompt questions could include:
  - Can someone finish their education if they have been forced to marry?
  - Do they become 'grown up' earlier than they should?
  - Can they still have any job they want?
  - What would their day to day life look like?
- Feedback as a whole group and look at the differences between hopes and aspirations and the reality of being forced into marriage and the limits that can place on someone's dreams and ambitions.

## Activity G – The Impacts of Forced Marriage

**Time: 10 mins**

**Resources: Flipchart paper and pens;** quiz questions (see below)

**Learning objectives.** By the end of the activity, participants will: 1) Learn some key legal facts about marriage; 2) Understand the difference between forced and arranged marriage

### Facilitator Instructions

Split the group into smaller teams and ask them to come up with a team name.

Write up the names on flipchart paper

Ask each of the questions from appendix E in turn and allow the teams to confer before calling out their answer

Provide the right answer and any accompanying info and record the team scores on the paper (1 point for each correct answer)



**Activity G Resources – quiz questions (adapted from Womankind resource ‘for better or for worse’)**

One copy needed for facilitator

**1.) If you break off an engagement you are obliged by law to return the ring.**

False: Engagement stopped being considered a legal contract in 1970. It is no longer possible to sue for ‘breach of promise’ and, unless the couple agreed to return the rings if the engagement was broken they are not legally obliged to do so.

**2.) If you are under 16 years of age you cannot legally be married.**

True: Because the age of consent for sexual intercourse in the UK is 16, no one under that age can be legally married. A ‘marriage’ contracted by a couple where one is below the age of 16 is not recognised by law.

**3.) You used to have to be 21 to get married in the UK without parental consent, what year was it reduced to 18?**

1929

1950

1969

**4.) If you are between 16-18 years old you have to get your parent/guardians permission to marry**

True

**5.) Women who held property of any kind were required to give up all rights to it to their husbands when they got married. What year do you think this changed?**

1855

1870

1902

**6.) If you are forced to marry someone against your wishes, the marriage is not valid.**

True: If either partner in a marriage did not give full consent to it (for example if they were threatened or frightened into it, or if they were brought under pressure to marry although they did not want to) the marriage is legally ‘voidable’ – which means it can be declared not to be a legitimate marriage. A petition has to be made to the courts within three years of the marriage taking place.

**7.) So long as you are old enough and you give free consent you can marry whoever you want to.**

False: The law does not allow people who are close blood relations to marry. For example you cannot marry your grandparent, your brother/sister, your adoptive parent, your niece/nephew, half-sister/brother or his/her child.

**8.) If your religion says you have to marry who your parents tell you to, that’s OK with the law.**

False: No religions say you have to marry against your will – in fact sacred texts across religions agree on how important it is that a marriage is based on mutual consent. Many cultures place importance on a marriage as a uniting of families, but this usually allows for the couple to select each other from a number of possible matches. If one partner in a marriage is being made to act against his/her wishes this is against the law.