



Freephone 24-Hour National Domestic Abuse Helpline: **0808 2000 247**

or visit www.nationaldahelpline.org.uk (access live chat Mon-Fri 3-10pm)

Forced marriage

A forced marriage is where one or both people do not (or in cases of people with learning difficulties or who are under-age, cannot) consent to the marriage and where duress is used to enforce the marriage. 'Duress' includes psychological, sexual, financial or emotional pressure and physical violence.

Forced marriage is a violation of human rights and is seen in the UK as a form of domestic violence and/or child abuse. It may affect girls, boys, women and men from any community or background. However, existing statistics show that greater numbers of women are affected.

Forcing someone to marry without their consent is a criminal offence. The maximum penalty is seven years imprisonment. It is also illegal to take someone overseas to force them to marry (whether or not the forced marriage takes place) or to marry someone who lacks the mental capacity to consent to the marriage (whether they are pressured to or not).

You could be a victim of forced marriage if:

- You did not say 'yes' to getting married
- You were not consulted or aware that you were getting married
- Your family or extended family used emotional pressure and/or physical violence to make you agree to a marriage
- You have been forced to stay in confinement and have not been allowed to discuss your marriage with anyone

You could be at risk of forced marriage if:

- Your family is arranging your marriage without your approval
- Your official papers or passport have been taken away
- You are being taken abroad and you are not sure why
- You have been told you must leave education against your will