

Forced Marriage, FGM and HBV Awareness

The UK government previously **issued a warning** to teachers, doctors and airport staff to be alert to the risk of forced marriages over school summer holidays. The summer marks a peak in reports of forced marriage cases, when youngsters can be taken on 'holiday', unaware of the real purpose of the trip. So with the Easter holidays approaching, a young person could possibly be at risk during this time too.

You might be surprised by the number of enquiries dealt with by the Government's **Forced Marriage Unit in 2013**. You may be equally surprised that Suffolk have taken out 6 Forced Marriage Protection Orders covering 8 young people to prevent them being married against their will:

- 2 were students with learning disabilities (they did not have capacity to consent)
- 4 were for a 15, 16, 17 & 18 year old

This isn't a London, Manchester, Birmingham problem, it is happening right here on our doorstep, in Suffolk.



What is Forced Marriage?

This is when a person faces physical pressure to marry (threats, physical violence or sexual violence) or emotional and psychological pressure (made to feel like you're bringing shame on the family). **Forced marriage** also has links to other forms of abuse such as **Female Genital Mutilation*** (FGM) and Honour Based Violence (HBV). These are crimes or incidents, which have or might have been committed to protect or defend the honour of the family and/or community.

A person has the right to choose who they marry, when they marry, or if they marry at all. In this [video](#), you can listen to a woman explaining how she was forced to marry a man she barely knew to protect the honour of her family. She has spoken out about how she came through the experience to help others.

Other victims comments include:

"I didn't want to get married, but felt pressure from my family"

"My mum said her health wasn't good and she wanted to see me married – so I did it!"

"Don't want to get married, but I'll do it anyway, that is what my family want and its part of my culture & tradition"

"I want to marry my boyfriend/girlfriend, not one of my cousins or a stranger"

*Note: In regard to female genital mutilation, the Education Secretary [Michael Gove](#) has agreed to write to all schools in England, after [a Guardian-backed petition](#) urging the education secretary to take action attracted nearly 250,000 signatures.

Recent TV Coverage about Forced Marriage



BBC Look East reporter, Mariam Issimdar [talked to one woman](#) who went into hiding to escape being forced into marriage and who is still in hiding after 7 years. Mariam also interviewed Aneeta Prem from Freedom Charity and Bal Howard who leads on Forced Marriage and Honour Based Violence for Suffolk Police, whilst they were visiting a School in Bury St Edmunds to deliver forced marriage awareness sessions to young people at the school.

The film quoted that number of recorded forced marriage cases in East Anglia appears to be rising according to new government figures. Nationally in 2012 there were 1485 forced marriages cases, of which 29 were investigated in the region. However in 2013 the national figure decreased to 1302, but the numbers in the East rose to 45.

Bal mentioned in the interview that the increase in the East could possibly be due to the amount of work carried out in the East which may have led to increased reporting. Of the 50 cases Bal investigated last year, 50% were concerning forced marriage and 30% of those cases the victim was under 18. Several of these cases have shown that it is sometimes a young male adult or brother, rather than the parents, that's involved in forcing marriages.

Bal also talked about the seriousness of this issue (which in many cases is child abuse), many would have led to rape, and in extreme cases murder. *"This could be the tip of the iceberg and fears that the true numbers are in the thousands."*

What should teachers look out for?

Who hasn't come back to school after the summer holidays? The loud lad in the class, what happened to him, why has he gone quiet? Is a pupil in your school missing from education? Where are they? What happened to them?

Did they say that grandparents were ill? Or did they say it was a cousins wedding? Or did they say it was a cultural visit?

Is there is a drop in their performance and motivation or unexplained health problems (could possibly be a sign of child abuse). Other signs could be that they are not allowed to do after school activities, not allowed westernised clothes/make-up/friends, terminology used by the young person like *"I had an arranged marriage, I chose to go through with it"*.

The young person may also start to truant from school (their only bit of freedom) and if suspect this could be a result of force marriage, or any other kind of abuse, **DO NOT** send a letter home to the parents, this might put the person at greater risk. The

young person may stop taking part in physical education, always being brought and taken from school by a family member, someone may be watching them (like their siblings or cousins) during school time or they could be in a “secret relationship” which they have to hide from family members and they may also own a ‘secret’ mobile phone.

What should I do if I have concerns?

For Teachers:

If teachers and support staff suspect there could be a case of potential Forced Marriage then follow the [Suffolk Local Safeguarding Children Board](#) Procedures.

DO NOT CONTACT FAMILY MEMBERS IF YOU SUSPECT THERE IS A POTENTIAL FORCED MARRIAGE

A child at risk of forced marriage may also be at risk of honour based violence. Extreme caution should be taken in sharing information especially if honour based violence is suspected. If you have concerns that a child is at risk contact the Customer First Freephone number:

Customer First: 0808 800 4005

Out of Hours Emergency Duty Service: 0808 800 4005

Or Suffolk Constabulary: Force Operations: 01473 613500

For urgent cases always call: 999

For more information see the Suffolk Local Safeguarding Children Board guidance on:

[Safeguarding Children Who May Be Forced Into Marriage
Prevention of Forced Marriages During Extended Visits Overseas](#)

www.suffolkscb.org.uk

General Advice and Information:

If you, or someone you know would like to speak to someone about forced marriage, female genital mutilation, honour based violence or any kind of domestic abuse, there are [many organisations](#) in Suffolk that can help. You can also call Suffolk Police on 101 and ask for their Domestic Abuse Team. Alternatively there are a number of national organisations that you can speak to, all of their contact details are below.

Suffolk Police also have their own [Honour-Based Violence \(HBV\) Projects](#) Officer who can also offer advice and expert knowledge on these subjects to victims and practitioners. Contact Suffolk Police on 101.

In an Emergency always dial 999

Details of National Support Groups:



Freedom Charity

Celebrates the UK's cultural diversity and all the traditions that these bring - but it makes a clear distinction between an arranged marriage and a forced marriage. Call 0845 607 0133 or text "4freedom" 88802



Southall Black Sisters

A not-for-profit organisation set up in 1979 to meet the needs of black (Asian and African-Caribbean) and minority ethnic women. Helpline 0208 571 0800
General Enquiries 0208 571 9595



Newham Asian Women's Project

Working for women - working against violence

Newham Asian Women's Project

This project is a woman only organisation and charity working to end violence against women and girls.
Telephone 0208 472 0528



Supporting victims of honour crimes and forced marriages since 1992

Karma Nirvana

They have one clear aim: to stop the scandal of forced marriage and honour-based violence. No apologies. No excuses. No backing down.
Honour Network Helpline 0800 599 9247



The Kiran Project

A project set up in 1990 to meet the needs of women from the Indian sub-continent experiencing domestic violence.
Telephone 0208 558 1986



Forced marriage

Forced Marriage Unit

The Government's Forced Marriage Unit (FMU), contact them if you're trying to stop a forced marriage or you need help leaving a marriage you've been forced into.

Email: fm@fco.gov.uk

Telephone: 020 7008 0151

From overseas: +44 (0)20 7008 0151

Monday to Friday, 9am to 5pm

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