

PREVENTION OF FORCED MARRIAGE DURING EXTENDED VISITS OVERSEAS

Information for Suffolk Schools

Schools are well placed to raise concerns and take action to prevent young people from being forced into marriage whilst on extended visits to parents' home country. Suffolk Safeguarding Children Board have developed procedures – see 'Quick Guide' and the full Policy [Safeguarding Children who may have been Forced into Marriage- Policy, Procedures and Practice Guidance](#) which should be used together with the full Suffolk Safeguarding Children Board Procedures and Guidance found at www.suffolkscb.org.uk

- ✚ 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 a Social Care Manager at Children & Young Peoples Services:

Customer First	Tel 0808 800 4005
Out of Hours Emergency Duty Service	Tel 0808 800 4005
Or Suffolk Constabulary: Force Operations	Tel 101
For urgent cases	Tel 999

All schools can prominently display posters/ leaflets with guidance and contact information for victims of forced marriage. Resources are available from www.fco.gov.uk/forcedmarriage.

Practice Guidelines for Schools are available: **Handling Cases of Forced Marriage**

<http://www.fco.gov.uk/resources/en/pdf/3849543/forced-marriage-guidelines09.pdf>

General points to consider

- The majority of extended holiday/ visits to family overseas are for valid reasons and not for a forced marriage. This guidance aims to raise awareness in educational professionals regarding the safeguarding of children at risk.
- It is useful for school clusters/pyramids to share a common absence request form. For example, the Holywells/Copleston pyramid share a common form which requests information on all siblings who attend other schools. Sometimes younger siblings tell teachers information that has a bearing on older members of the family. Schools should liaise with each other.

- Parents/carers often require translation or interpretation of absence request forms and explanation of the rules concerning term time holidays. Where head teachers require a meeting with parents to authorise extended absence in term time, this can provide an opportunity to explain the county policy and also to gather important information. There is evidence that such an interview has reduced the number of applications for extended leave of absence.
- Parents/carers sometimes do not know a firm return date due to return flights being booked as last minute availability occurs. Also the circumstances triggering a trip may necessitate a flexible return date. However, if a date has been specified and a child has not returned to school, notice must be given to the Education Attendance Service.

Who is at risk?

Pupils, male or female, from as young as 11 may be at risk of being forced into marriage by parents once out of the UK.

They may be pressurised and then agree to marry one of the prospective candidates without time for reflection. The younger pupils may be betrothed with the expectation that they will enter full married state at a later stage of their lives.

In the UK young people can be forced into a legal marriage from age 16 or undergo a religious ceremony at an earlier age and suffer sexual abuse.

Female Genital Mutilation

Girls from the age of 4 to 14 years from North African countries and Somalia are also at risk of being taken overseas for female circumcision (female genital mutilation).

What can you do to spot the risks?

When parents/carers make requests for extended holiday leave, consider whether the parents/carers are volunteering information on the following:

- Precise location of where the pupil is going
- The purpose of the visit – is this corroborated by what the child says?
- The child/children know the purpose of the visit
- The return date: is it a firm or an estimated date?

Educational professionals might ask the following questions:

- Do parents know that EAS will be notified if the pupil does not return on given date?
- Do parents understand the authorising process and penalties for non authorised absence? Can they notify a named person by email or text message if there is a change of plans/ delay?
- Are the parents aware of the disadvantages to their child of a missed school period or examination?
- What educational provision have parents made for child/children during extended visit?

- Are there other historical factors to consider? Such as persistent unexplained absence from school; child not allowed to attend extra curricular activities; close supervision of child by family/carers; maltreatment of siblings.

If the parents are vague about plans or there are other concerns amongst staff, expert advice is available from:

The Forced Marriage Unit [FMU]

Tel **020 7008 0151**

<http://www.fco.gov.uk/en/fco-in-action/nationals/forced-marriage-unit>

This service provides advice and guidance for British nationals being forced into marriage overseas. The Unit also provides expert advice to professionals, especially those confronted by it for the first time.

The key motives for forcing a child into marriage have been identified as:

- Controlling unwanted behaviour and sexuality (including perceived promiscuity such as kissing or hand holding, or being gay, lesbian, bisexual or transgender) - particularly the behaviour and sexuality of women
- Controlling unwanted behaviour, for example, alcohol and drug use, wearing make-up or behaving in a 'westernized manner'
- Preventing 'unsuitable' relationships, e.g. outside the ethnic, cultural religious or caste group
- Protecting 'family honour' or 'izzat'
- Rejecting a proposal of marriage
- Responding to peer group or family pressure
- Attempting to strengthen family links
- Achieving financial gain
- Ensuring land, property and wealth remain within the family
- Protecting perceived cultural ideas
- Protecting perceived religious ideals that are misguided
- Ensuring care for a child or vulnerable adult with special needs when parents or existing carers are unable to fulfill that role
- Assisting claims for residence and citizenship.
- Long standing family commitments

If a situation is urgent a professional or a child should call 999