

Safeguarding Children Who May Be Forced Into Marriage

This 'Quick Guide' and the full Policy [Safeguarding Children who may be Forced into Marriage](#) must be used together with the full Suffolk Safeguarding Children Board Procedures and Guidance found at www.suffolkscb.org.uk

A marriage conducted without the full and valid consent of both parties and where duress is a factor – may include physical, psychological, financial, sexual and emotional pressure.

- Forced Marriage, where it affects children and young people, is child abuse and must be responded to as a protection and safeguarding issue. Rape, assault, abduction, forced pregnancy and childbearing can result from forced marriage, in addition to emotional and psychological harm.
- Key motives for parents who force their children to marry include: long standing family commitments, protecting perceived cultural or religious ideals, controlling unwanted behaviour and sexuality, protecting family honour, ensuring care for a child with special needs.
- Boys as well as girls can be forced to marry; disabled young people can be particularly vulnerable to forced marriage and its consequences.
- Most cases of forced marriage involve a British citizen being sent abroad or a partner coming from overseas, some take place in the UK with no overseas element. The majority of cases in the UK involve South Asian families but can also involve families from the Middle East, Europe and Africa.

'One Chance Rule':

There may be only one opportunity to help a victim. All practitioners need to be aware of their responsibilities and obligations when they come across forced marriage.

Only rarely will someone who fears they may be forced to marry disclose – through fear of bringing 'shame' or 'dishonour' to their family and the consequences which may follow.

It is important to be alert to signs of distress and indications such as self-harm, absence from school, unreasonable restrictions at home...

If you suspect that a child may be forced into marriage:

- Discuss your concerns with your manager, designated colleague
- Practitioners should not approach or involve families if forced marriage is suspected – *this may increase the risk of significant harm to the child or young person.*

Make your referral to:

Customer First 0808 800 4005

or

Suffolk Police: Force Operating Room 101 or 01473 613500

Children Who Go Missing may be at risk

A missing child/young person must be reported to:

Suffolk Police: Force Operating Room 01473 613500

Practice Guidance

[Multi-Agency Practice Guidelines: Handling Cases of Forced Marriage:](#)

Further Information

The Foreign and Commonwealth Office's

[Forced Marriage Unit](#) **020 7008 0151**

Further information about all Suffolk Safeguarding Children Board publications can be found on our website. www.suffolkscb.org.uk