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## Handout - Forced marriage and honour-based violence

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Forced marriage and honour-based violence are types of child abuse and as such should be dealt with as a child protection issue.

A forced marriage is technically one where an individual is coerced into marrying someone against their will. Pressure can be placed on them to enter into the marriage through:

- being physically threatened
- actual physical violence
- emotional blackmail e.g. through feeling they are bringing shame on their family
- financial abuse e.g. taking someone's wages
- keeping them isolated and withdrawing them from society.

It is important that forced marriage is not confused with an arranged marriage. In the case of an arranged marriage the families take a leading role in choosing the marriage partner but the couple have a choice as to whether they opt into the arrangement or not.

The person affected can be male or female. Although in the majority of cases it applies to young women this is not always the case and 15% of forced marriages involve men. In some cases, students can be below the age when they are legally allowed to marry.

Sometimes the young woman or man can be forced into marriage on a trip abroad. They might not be aware of what is planned and have their passports removed once they arrive. In other cases, it might be that a partner is brought from overseas or that the marriage takes place in the UK with no overseas involvement. The young person may be withdrawn from school without explanation or the marriage may take place during the summer holiday or extended visit.

Families might engage in conspiracy, threatening behaviour, assault, kidnap, abduction, threats to kill, imprisonment or rape. A Forced Marriage Protection Order can be requested under the Forced Marriage (Civil Protection) Act 2007. This protects both children and adults at risk.

### What to look out for

Signs include:

- an extended absence from school/college
- a drop in performance or low motivation
- excessive parental restrictions
- siblings who have left education to marry early
- limitation of financial independence and career aspirations by family
- evidence of self-harm, e.g. depression, attempted suicide, eating disorders, substance abuse
- social isolation
- evidence of family disputes and conflict
- apparent surveillance by a sibling or cousin
- sudden announcement of an engagement
- reluctance or disinterest in further/higher education.

It might be that a girl has her hair cut or shaved as a form of punishment if she doesn't comply or there might even be physical signs of abuse.

### 'Honour-based' violence

'Honour-based' violence (HBV) includes incidents or crimes which have been committed to protect or defend the honour of the family and/or the community. This can include FGM, forced marriage and practices such as breast ironing. Breast ironing is the practice whereby mothers, aunts and grandmothers use a hot stone to massage across the breast to slow its growth.

Preserving 'honour' often includes a number of people within the family or even the community. All HBV is classed as abuse whatever the stated reason for it. If the possibility of HBV is brought to the DSL's attention then the case must be referred to the police and social care. It requires a multi-

agency response. It is important that the family is not approached first as this could put the child at greater risk.

Both FGM and forced-marriage come under the heading of honour-based violence.

### **What you can do**

There are some preventative measures that you can take to ensure that young people in your school are aware that the issue is recognised in the UK and help is available if they find themselves in this situation. This might include:

- ensure that all pupils are in a position to speak to a trusted member of staff if they have concerns for themselves or a friend
- raising awareness of the issue through the display of posters and materials
- making contact numbers for help lines and support groups available
- providing opportunity to discuss the subject.

The Forced Marriage Unit has published statutory guidance and Multi-agency guidelines that include the role of schools and colleges on pages 35-36. The [Forced Marriage Unit](#) can be contacted for advice and information. <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/forced-marriage>