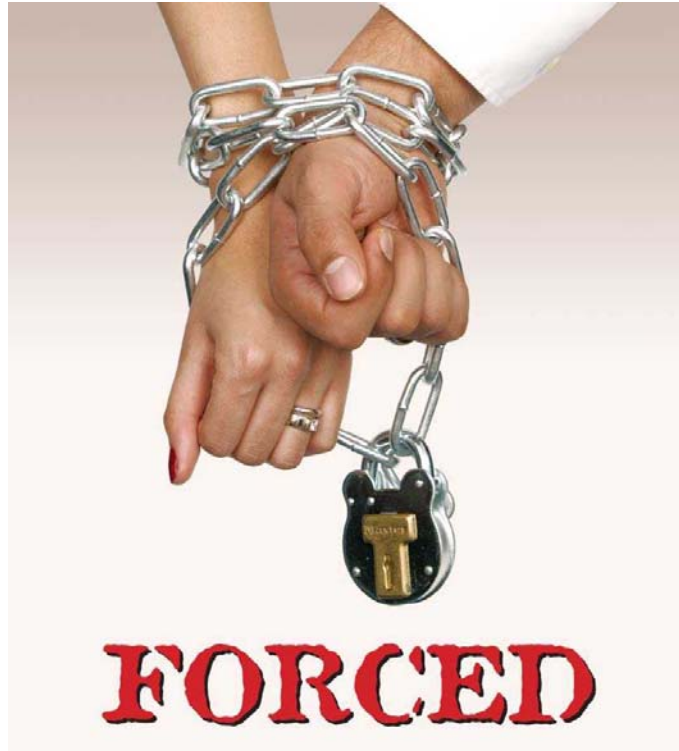




Forced Marriage Unit



Forced Marriage Unit:





Forced Marriage in the UK

“A marriage conducted without the valid consent of both parties where duress (emotional pressure in addition to physical abuse) is a factor.”

- [A Choice by Right](#) (June 2000)



Who is affected?

- Both women and men (who constitute 15% of our cases)
- Majority are aged 15-24
- 39% of our cases are minors, 14% of which were minors under 16
- Majority of cases from South Asia: Pakistan (65%), Bangladesh (15%), India (8%)
- This is not fully representative of the problem. Forced marriage exists in other communities (e.g. Turkish, Iranian, Somali) but we haven't gotten the message out yet



Why do forced marriages happen?

- Controlling unwanted behaviour and sexuality, and preventing 'unsuitable' relationships
- Peer group or family pressure
- Protecting perceived cultural or religious ideals
- Attempting to strengthen family links
- Family 'honour' or long-standing family commitments
- Ensuring land remains within the family
- Assisting claims for residence and citizenship
- Providing a carer for a disabled family member / reducing the 'stigma' of disability



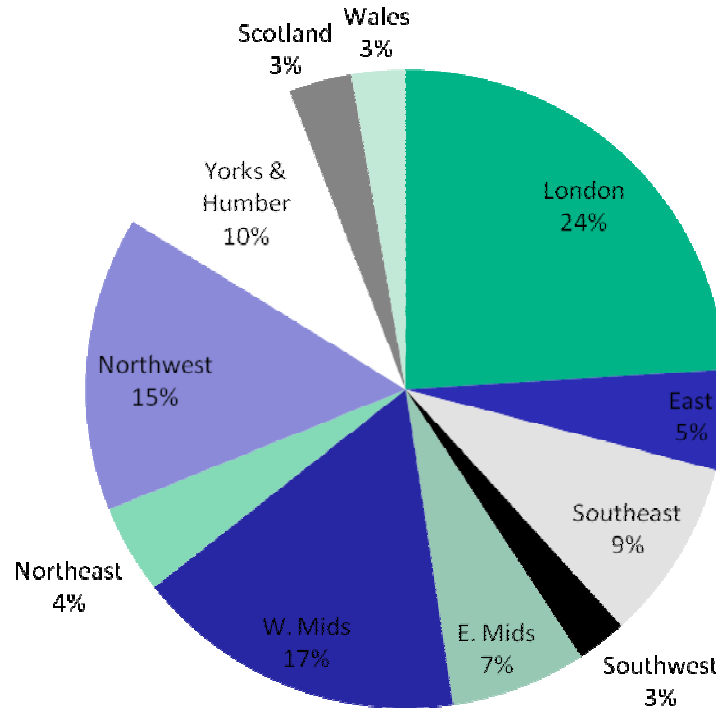
Forced Marriage Unit



Scale of the problem:

Q1-3 08 UK Region of Case Origin (all reportings)

London	256
East	54
Southeast	98
Southwest	27
E. Mids	73
W. Mids	178
Northeast	48
Northwest	159
Yorks & Humber	110
Scotland	34
Wales	29
N. Ireland	1
Unknown	241
Total	1308





What is FMU?

- FCO offering consular assistance since 1999
- 2005: Forced Marriage Unit established
- FMU is now the Government's one-stop shop for:
 1. Developing effective Government policy
 2. Awareness raising
 3. Casework:
 - Reluctant Sponsors
 - Consular
 - Domestic



Home Office

Forced Marriage Unit



Foreign &
Commonwealth Office

The Forced Marriage Unit: *Case Response*



“Razia’s” Story: A Forced Marriage Timeline

Sep 08

- Razia (15) taken out of school by father. Taken to Bangladesh.

Oct 08

- School contacts FMU after student receives text from Razia saying that she is being beaten and family are planning to force her into marriage.
- At our request, School contact Razia and confirm address in Bangladesh.
- Ongoing contact established between Razia and BCG Sylhet. Razia not in immediate risk of further abuse or marriage. Father instructed to bring Razia to BCG for welfare check.
- Razia’s father returns to UK. She remains in Bangladesh but said that marriage threat had dissipated after contact from BCG.



“Razia’s” Story: A Forced Marriage Timeline

Feb 08

- Razia contacted BCG. Her uncles were looking at potential partners for her. Marriage was imminent.
- School welfare officer approached father in UK at our request (to make enquiry look routine). He refused to return her to the UK.
- Solicitor drew up wardship papers. Father made to surrender passport.
- BHC Dhaka carried out a rescue operation
- Razia transferred to refuge in Dhaka and repatriation to UK arranged.
- Razia met off plane by social workers at Heathrow and transferred into care of children’s social care.



Responding to Forced Marriage

“Multicultural sensitivity is no excuse for moral blindness”
- Mike O’Brien former Solicitor General



Criminalising Forced Marriage

2005: National consultation on whether or not to introduce a specific criminal offence for forced marriage.

- Majority felt that disadvantages of new legislation outweighed advantages;
 - Many worried that criminalising forced marriage would force the issue underground;
 - Many felt that the legislation would not be used.

Therefore, the Government decided not to introduce specific legislation.



Forced Marriage (Civil Protection) Act 2007 (England/Wales)

- ✓ Courts can now issue Forced Marriage Protection Orders (FMPO)
- ✓ Breach of an FMPO is contempt of court (punishment can be imprisonment)
- ✓ Can apply for FMPO at county courts, not just high courts
- ✓ Can apply for FMPO on behalf of someone else (relevant third party)
- ✓ Places FMU Guidelines on statutory footing

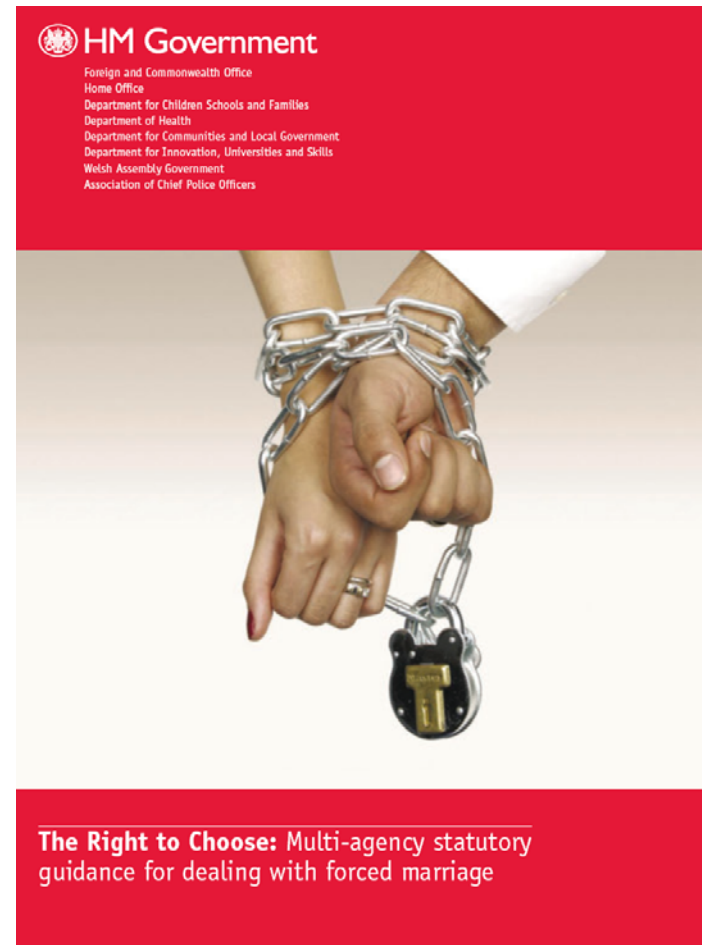


Challenges for Practitioners:

- Concern around cultural sensitivity
- Lack of understanding of cultural context and responses (seriousness of abuse)
- Children's Act 1989: encourages dangerous mediation
- Underground issue: victims reluctant to come forward
- Confidentiality
- Resourcefulness of perpetrators
- Complexity: forced marriage requires multi-agency response
- International dimension

Statutory Guidance:

- Senior Management Commitment
- Defined Roles & Responsibilities
- Clear Lines of Accountability
- Staff Training & Awareness Raising
- Signposting Practice Guidelines
- Monitoring and Evaluation
- Record Keeping
- Risk Assessment
- Confidentiality
- Victim-centred Approach
- Danger of Family Mediation

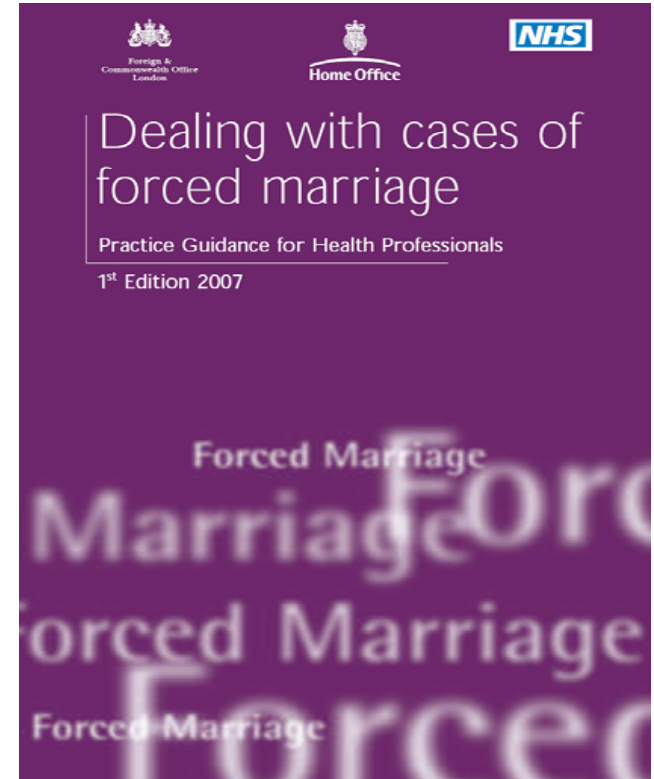




Practice Guidelines:

Best Practice and Step-by-Step guide for frontline practitioners. New multi-agency version due out Spring 2009 for:

- Health Professionals
- Education Professionals
- Police
- Social Services
- Housing Agencies





When dealing with cases, remember:

- Consult with Forced Marriage Unit
- **One Chance Rule:** make it your problem
- Confidentiality
- Risk Assessment
- Activate multi-agency procedures
- Preventative information if victim travelling overseas



Mediation

- As a response to forced marriage, it can be extremely dangerous
- Mediation attempts have, in some cases, resulted in murder
- Never allow victim to have unsupervised contact with their family – even if they request it
- Mediation can place victim at greater risk
- Simply arranging a meeting between victim and family may lead to undue pressure on victim to return home
- If victim wishes to go home or talk to family, explain all the risks of and ensure you monitor their ongoing safety



Finally...

Remind victims that they have rights:

- Right only to enter into marriage with their full and free consent
- Right to make decisions about their life and their own bodies
- Right to education, freedom of movement, freedom of thought

Remind victims that they have choices:

- To go through with the marriage
- To avoid the marriage by fleeing their family
- To remain with the family and try to resolve the situation (this does not usually work and can place them in danger)
- To seek legal protection
- Refer to FMU and support agencies



Do you need further information?

- **Please contact:**

- fmufco.gov.uk

- 020 7008 0151

- www.fco.gov.uk/forcedmarriage

- **Leaflets and guidance available**