



# Honour Based Violence and Forced Marriages Policy and Guidance

2025



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Teagues Bridge Primary School  
HBV and FM Policy and Guidance

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Honour Based Violence – Definition

The term 'Honour Based Violence' is the internationally recognised term describing cultural justifications for violence and abuse. It justifies violence and abuse against women, some men and children.

The Association of Chief Police Officers defines HBV as:

*'A crime or incident, which has or may have been committed, to protect or defend the honour of the family and/or community'.*

HBV is normally associated with cultures and communities from Asia, the Middle East and Africa as well as Travellers. In reality, HBV cuts across all cultures, nationalities, faith groups and communities and transcends national and international boundaries.

HBV is also a Domestic Abuse issue, a child abuse concern and a crime.

In terms of Domestic Abuse risk assessment, HBV is a significant risk factor for victims and must be regarded as a significant predictor of the likelihood of future harm or suicide.

Izzat is the word used by many cultures to describe the act of honour/shame on the family.

Izzat is like a veil. The gatekeepers of Izzat are the family members

Honour:

The term 'honour' has widely varying interpretations. For the purposes of this document however, honour relates to the concept that the reputation and social status of an individual, a family or community is based on the behaviour and

morality of its members. Obviously there is no honour in the commission of murder, rape, kidnap and many other acts which make up 'violence in the name of so-called honour.

#### Ways in which honour can be damaged:

##### Defying parental authority:

Where parents and extended family are expected to control behaviour of their children, parents are perceived to have publicly failed to do so may lose status in the community as a result.

##### Dress, behaviour and attitude:

Changing patterns of dress, behaviour and attitude whilst living in the west can impact upon their relationships within the family and the community.

##### Sexual relationships/behaviour before marriage:

Pre-marital or extra-marital relationships are not acceptable in many communities and from a faith and cultural perspective are seen as a violation of the key principles and values of that family.

##### Use of drugs or alcohol:

Drinking alcohol and using drugs which is prohibited by religion, culture or tradition can bring shame on families because their children are seen to be abandoning or rejecting the values of parents, the family and the community.

##### Gossip:

Rumours and gossip – even if untrue – can damage the status of an individual and of course the family.

Often, families are less concerned with the immoral acts themselves than they are with becoming known about in the community. As honour is an intangible asset dependent on a community's perceptions, an 'immoral' act often doesn't become 'shameful' or 'dishonourable' until it becomes public knowledge.

##### Dishonour:

Specific behaviours, attitudes and actions that may constitute 'dishonour' are wide ranging and include:

- Reporting domestic abuse
- Smoking cigarettes
- Perceived inappropriate make-up or dress
- Running away from home
- Rape or sexual assault
- The existence of a boyfriend
- Pregnancy outside marriage
- Interfaith relationships
- Rejecting a forced or arranged marriage
- Leaving a spouse or seeking divorce
- Kissing, holding hands or other intimacy in a public place
- Gay or bisexual men/women declaring their sexuality

#### Consequences of bringing dishonour:

The consequence for a person who is perceived to have damaged their honour or that of their family or community can be extreme and include the following:

- Ostracism by family and community ~ individuals who are viewed as having dishonoured themselves or their family can be ignored and ostracised by other members of the community. Their children may also be rejected at school by fellow members of their cultural, ethnic or religious group.
- Economic disadvantage ~ families whose dishonour is damaged may find their shops and businesses being boycotted or even physically attacked by community members who believe that their collective honour has been damaged.
- Loss of social status
- Abuse and violence as a consequence of dishonour and shame may include:
  - Suicide or attempted suicide as a result of controls and abuse
  - Forced suicide as an inflicted act or punishment
  - Controlling sexual activity
  - Child abuse
  - Rape
  - Kidnapping or false imprisonment
  - Threats to kill
  - Assault

- Harassment/stalking
- Bullying
- Forced abortion
- Being forced into marriage
- Pressure to return home
- Pressure to go abroad
- House 'arrest'
- Excessive restrictions on home life (not allowed a phone, to use internet or develop friendships outside of wider family/friends etc.)

### Honour Killings:

Honour killings are an extreme example of violation of human rights of mainly women who are perceived to have brought shame or dishonour. There have been a number of high profile cases in the UK where women have lost their lives in a brutal and 'symbolic' manner.

A child or young woman who is at risk of honour based violence is at significant risk of physical harm (including being murdered), and /or neglected. They may also suffer significant emotional harm, as a result of a threat of violence or witnessing violence directed towards a sibling or family member.

Professionals should respond in a similar way to cases of honour based violence, as with domestic abuse and forced marriages. This includes facilitating disclosure, developing safety plans for the child or young person and any other family member as necessary, ensuring their safety by according them confidentiality in relation to the rest of the family, and completing individual risk assessments.

### Immediate response:

In all cases when responding to reports of HBV, the victim's immediate safety must be the overriding concern. At the earliest opportunity inform the DSL, who will proceed with the case.

A victim of HBV will have overcome immense cultural/traditional and personal beliefs, to have spoken to a trusted friend or professional. It is vital that we

respond immediately and effectively to keep the victim safe. It is vital that the following points are adhered to for the safety of the child or young person:

- Under no circumstances should the agency allow the child's family or social network to find out about the disclosure, as not to put the child at further risk of harm;
- Under no circumstances speak to victims in the presence of their relatives;
- Under no circumstances approach the family or community leaders, share information with them or attempt any form of mediation. In particular, members of the community should not be used as interpreters.

Where a child or young person discloses fear of honour based violence in respect of them or a family member, professionals should:

- Take the disclosure seriously
- See the child or young person immediately, and in a secure and private place;
- See the child or young person on their own;
- Explain to the child or young person the limits of confidentiality, what information may have to be shared, with whom and for what purpose;
- Ask direct questions to gather enough information to make a referral to Family connect and the police, ensure the child's/young person's wishes;
- Agree a means of discreet future contact with the child;
- Explain that a referral to family connect and the police will be made;
- If an interpreter is needed ensure a professional service is used;
- Assess the risk to the child, siblings etc.;
- Be wary of using public services like taxis, housing, health and whether this may jeopardise the victim's safety;
- Remind the person that they are not alone and they can speak to other victims;
- Remember HBV is everybody's concern and vigilance is required at all levels.

#### Recording information:

It is vital that you make sure that you make a full record of:

- What is said;
- By whom;
- What you have done;
- What action you have taken;
- Who you have referred the child/young person to, and
- What they have said to you about the referral and any subsequent action.

If a child or young person is at risk of, or has already suffered HBV, you should immediately contact the Police and social services via family connect.

In an emergency do not delay ~ Ring 999

Useful contacts:

Karma Nirvana ~ 08005999247

Henna Foundation ~ 02920496920

24 hour domestic violence helpline ~ 0808200247

### Forced marriage

There is a clear distinction between a forced marriage and an arranged marriage. In an arranged marriage, the families of both spouses take a leading role in arranging the marriage, but the choice of whether or not to accept the arrangement still remains with the prospective spouses. However, in forced marriages, one or both spouses do not consent to the marriage but are coerced into it. Duress can include physical, psychological, financial, sexual and emotional pressure. In the cases of some vulnerable adults who lack the capacity to consent, coercion is not required for a marriage to be forced.

The UK government regards forced marriage as an abuse of human rights and a form of domestic abuse, and where it affects children and young people, child abuse. It is a criminal offence.

It is important to acknowledge that no world religion accepts forced marriage.

If families have to resort to violence or coercion to make someone marry, that person's consent has not been given freely and it is therefore considered a forced marriage.

Where a person lacks the capacity to consent, an offence is also capable of being committed by any conduct carried out with the purpose of causing the victim to marry, whether or not it amounts to violence threats or any form of coercion/

Motives prompting forced marriages:

Perpetrators who force children or other family members into marriage often justify their behaviour as protecting their children, building stronger families and preserving 'so-called' cultural or religious beliefs. When challenged on this practice, they often do not see anything wrong in their approach. The act of forcing another person into marriage cannot be justified on religious grounds; every major faith condemns it and crucially, freely given consent is a prerequisite of all religions.

Often perpetrators are convinced that they are upholding the cultural traditions of their home country, when in fact these practices and values may have in fact changed. There are also others who are placed under significant pressure from their extended family to ensure their children are married. In some instances, an agreement may have even been made about marriage when a child is in its infancy.

What needs to be communicated to all those at risk is that forced marriage is a CRIME and that they have a fundamental human right to be able to choose their future spouse.

Some of the key motives:

- Controlling unwanted sexuality, particularly the behaviour and sexuality of women



- Controlling unwanted behaviour, for example, alcohol and drug use, wearing make-up or behaving in, what is perceived to be, a 'westernised manner'.
- Preventing 'unsuitable' relationships, e.g. outside the ethnic, cultural, religious or caste group.
- Protecting 'family honour' or 'Izzat'.
- Responding to peer group or family pressure.
- Attempt to strengthen family links
- Achieving financial gain.
- Ensuring land, property and wealth remain within the family
- Protecting perceived cultural ideals.
- Protecting perceived religious ideals which are misguided.
- Ensuring care for a child or adult with special needs when parents or existing carers are unable to fulfil that role.
- Assisting claims for UK residence and citizenship.
- Long-standing family commitments.

#### The Victim:

Isolation is one of the biggest problems facing those trapped in, or under threat of, a forced marriage. They may feel there is nobody they can trust to keep this secret from their family and they have no one to speak to about the situation. These feelings of isolation are very similar to those experienced by victims of other forms of domestic abuse and child abuse. It is only rarely that someone will disclose the fear of forced marriage. Consequently, they will often come to the attention of practitioners for behaviour that is consistent with stress.

People forced to marry, or those who fear they may be forced to marry, are frequently withdrawn from education, restricting their educational and personal development. They may feel unable to go against the wishes of the parents or wider family and be threatened with disownment if they do – consequently they may suffer emotionally, often leading to depression and self-harm. All of these factors can ultimately contribute to impaired social development, limited career and educational opportunities, financial dependence and lifestyle restrictions.

A learning or physical disability or illness may also add to a person's vulnerability and may make it more difficult for them to report abuse or to leave an abusive situation. Their care needs may make them entirely dependent on their carers.

### Consequences:

Women forced to marry may find it very difficult to initiate any action to end the marriage and may be subjected to repeated rape and ongoing domestic abuse within the marriage. In some cases they suffer violence and abuse from the extended family, often being forced to undertake all the household chores for the family.

Victims frequently end up trapped in a relationship marred by physical and sexual abuse. The impact this has on children within the marriage is immense. Children may learn that it is acceptable to be abusive and that violence is an effective way to get what you want. They may learn that violence is justified, particularly when you are angry with someone. Children witnessing abuse can be traumatised because witnessing persistent violence undermines children's emotional security and capacity to meet the demands of everyday life. Children's academic abilities can be affected. Witnessing violence as a child is often associated with depression, trauma-related symptoms and low self-esteem in adulthood.

Both male and female victims of forced marriage may feel that running away is their only option. This can be hard if they have minimal experience of life outside the family. Living away from home with minimal support can make a person, particularly a woman, more isolated, thus making it more likely that they will return to the abusive situation.

Those who do leave still often fear of their own families, as they will go to considerable lengths to find them and ensure their return. Some families have traced individuals through medical and dental records, bounty hunters, private investigators, local taxi drivers, members of the community and shopkeepers or through national insurance numbers, benefit records, school and college records. Sometimes having traced them, the family may subject them to further violence or abuse, or at worst resort to murder claiming it to be a so called 'honour killing'.

### Legal Position:

Forced marriage became a criminal offence in June 16<sup>th</sup> 2014. Even if a forced marriage takes place overseas, they can still be prosecuted on their return to the UK.

Many parents may take the children abroad to be married, they will inform schools it is for a holiday, visit a sick relative or even a funeral. Schools must always follow though when someone is missing in education.

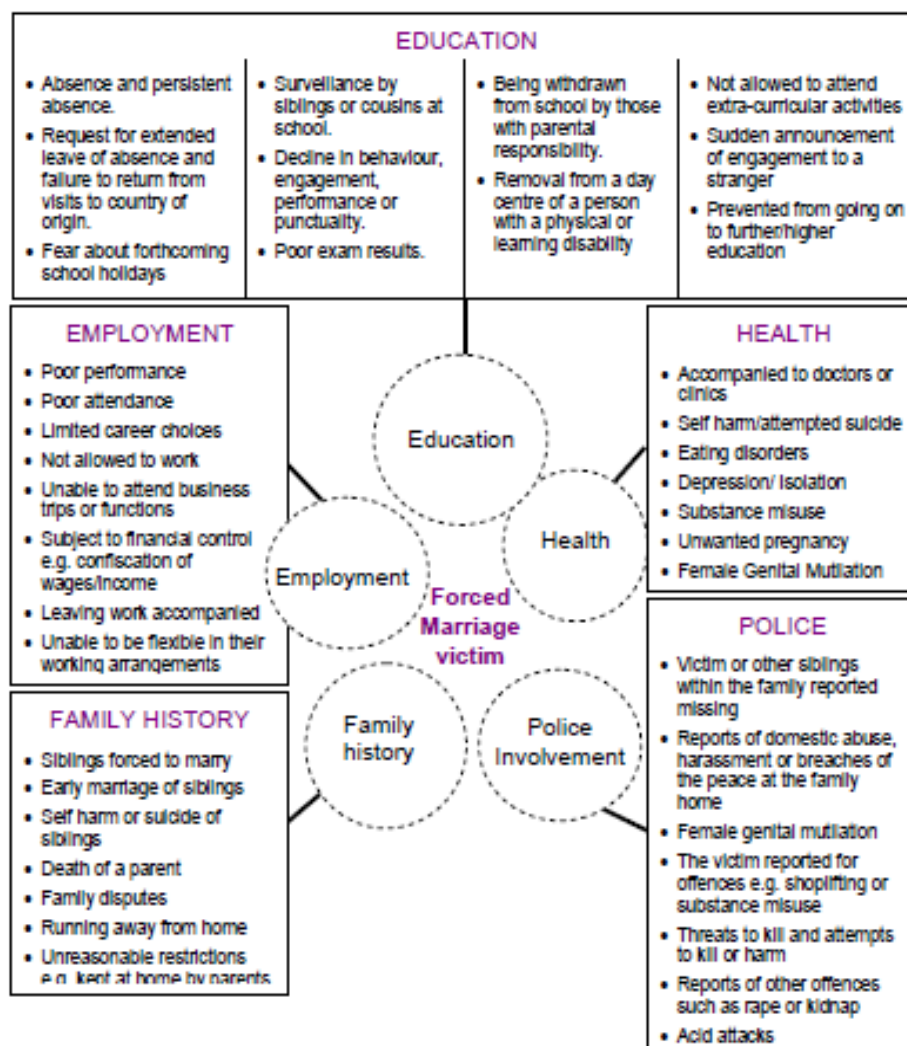
If forced marriage is suspected or promised a 'forced marriage protection order' can be sought under section 4A of the Family Law Act 1996. The 1996 act makes provision for protecting both children and adults at risk of being forced into marriage. A breach of this order can serve up to 5 years in prison.

### Potential warning signs or Indicators:

Women and men may become anxious, depressed and emotionally withdrawn with low self-esteem.

#### **CHART OF POTENTIAL WARNING SIGNS OR INDICATORS**

These indicators are not intended to be an exhaustive list.



Forced marriage is a crime. It form of child/ adult/ domestic abuse and has to be treated as such; ignoring the needs of victims should never be an option. Forced marriage affects people from many communities and cultures, so cases should always be addressed using all of your existing structures, policies and procedures designed to safeguard children, adults with support needs and victims of domestic abuse.

Existing strategic bodies also need to ensure that their member agencies work effectively, using agreed policies and procedures to address this issue. This includes Local Government Associations, Local Authorities, Local Councils, Community Safety Partnerships, Local Strategic Partnerships, Local Safeguarding Children and Adults Boards, Children's Trusts, Multi-agency Risk Assessment Conferences, Learning Disability Partnership Boards, Local Criminal Justice Boards, Local Family Justice Councils and Multi-Agency Adult Protection Management Committees.

**Teagues Bridge will ensure that:**

A lead person with overall responsibility for safeguarding children, protecting adults with support needs or victims of domestic abuse – where possible the same person should lead on forced marriage.

Policies and procedures in place to protect those facing forced marriage. The policies and procedures should be in line with existing statutory and non-statutory guidance on safeguarding children, protecting adults with support needs and victims of domestic abuse. These policies and procedures should form part of an overall child/adult protection strategy.

Policies and procedures that are updated regularly to reflect any structural, departmental and legal changes.

A named person whose responsibility it is to ensure that cases of forced marriage are handled, monitored and recorded properly.

### **Roles and responsibilities**

Staff understand their role in protecting people at risk of, or already trapped in, a forced marriage.

Through policies and procedures, their staff are familiar with their duties and responsibilities when protecting individuals threatened with, or already in, a forced marriage.

Their staff know to whom they should refer cases within their organisation and when to refer cases to other agencies.

Front line staff dealing with cases of forced marriage have access to, and are strongly recommended to consult, the multi-agency practice guidelines issued by the Forced Marriage Unit.

### **Clear lines of accountability**

There is a designated person within the organisation who is accountable for promoting awareness of forced marriage and a designated individual responsible for developing and updating all policies and procedures associated with forced marriage. This is likely to be the person with overall responsibility for promoting awareness of, and updating policies and procedures concerning the protection of children/adults/ adults with support needs or victims of domestic abuse.

The designated person is a specialist in domestic abuse, adult protection or child protection with existing experience, expertise and knowledge.

There is a senior specialist who has undertaken additional training who can be approached to discuss and direct difficult cases.

There are clear lines of accountability from the front-line staff to senior management.

### **Victim-centred approach**

Victims are listened to and they are able to communicate their needs and wishes.

Victims are given accurate information about their rights and choices.

Victims wishes are respected about the level of intervention they require.

Staff are aware that relatives, friends, community leaders and neighbours should not be used as interpreters or advocates – despite any reassurances from this known person. If it is appropriate to use an advocate then an independent advocate would be advised.

### **Effective inter-agency working and information sharing**

There are policies and procedures in place so organisations can work effectively together to protect people facing forced marriage. These procedures are set out in existing guidance on safeguarding children and adults with support needs.

These procedures include arrangements for sharing information and arrangements for making referrals including, where appropriate, with police, social care services, health and the Forced Marriage Unit.

Staff understand the importance of sharing information with other agencies at the earliest opportunity.

Staff understand the difference between breaking confidence (involving the family without the individual's consent) and sharing information. Local Safeguarding Children Boards and Multi-Agency Adult Protection Management Committees are likely to take a lead role in developing policies and procedures for inter-agency working and information sharing to protect adults and children from harm.

### **Confidentiality**

A dilemma may occur because someone facing a forced marriage may be concerned that if confidentiality is breached and their family finds out that they have sought help they will be in serious danger. On the other hand, those facing forced marriage are often already facing serious danger because of domestic abuse, "honour-based" violence, rape, imprisonment etc. Therefore, in order to protect them, it may be necessary to share information with other agencies such as the police.

Consequently, confidentiality and information sharing are extremely important for anyone threatened with, or already in, a forced marriage. Professionals need to be clear about when confidentiality can be promised and when information may need to be shared.

Circumstances sometimes arise where a child, or more probably a young person, explicitly asks a professional not to give information to their parents/guardians or others with some authority over them. Those who are 16 and above are assumed to have capacity to make decisions and their decisions should be respected. However, those under 16 may also have capacity and it is important to try where possible to respect the requests they make.

If a decision is made to disclose information to another person (usually another professional), the professional should seek the consent of the person before the disclosure. Most people will consent to the disclosure if they receive a careful explanation of why the disclosure is to be made and are assured about their safety (e.g. information will not be passed to their family) and what will happen following such a disclosure. Whether or not the person agrees to the disclosure, they should be told if there is to be disclosure of confidential information.

Staff understand that the individual's confidence should be respected at all times and that they should not approach family, friends or members of the community without the express permission of the individual as this may place the individual at risk of harm.

All records belonging to individuals facing forced marriage should be kept secure to prevent unauthorised access by those within the broader community who may potentially pass on confidential information to a victim's family. Records should only be available to those directly dealing with the case.

### **Staff training and awareness raising**

Suitable training and awareness raising is incorporated into existing training within agencies to ensure front-line staff are aware of the issue and know how to respond quickly and appropriately to individuals threatened with, or already in, a forced marriage.

Staff receive updates on the issues surrounding forced marriage and honour-based violence within their existing training on child/adult protection.

Existing work on social cohesion, equality and community outreach programmes should be used to raise general awareness of forced marriage and the help and support available within the local community.

### **Signposting existing practice guidelines on forced marriage**

All front line professionals have access to, and are strongly recommended to consult, the practice guidelines issued by the Forced Marriage Unit.

### **Monitoring and evaluation**

In line with existing guidance concerning safeguarding children and protecting adults at risk, the effectiveness of their organisation's response to forced marriage is monitored and evaluated. This might include collecting information about the number of cases, the source of referrals, information about the individual such as age and gender, together with information about the outcome of the case.

### **Record keeping**

Staff keep clear, concise records of all actions taken and the reasons why particular actions were taken. There should be a recorded agreement of which agency is to undertake each proposed action together with the outcomes of each action.

If no further action is to be taken this should be clearly documented together with the reasons.

### **Risk assessment**

Staff within their organisation understand the risks facing victims of forced marriage, their siblings and other family members – including the possibility of “honour-based” violence, murder, kidnap, rape, held against will, threats to kill and being abducted overseas.

Staff alleviate these risks by undertaking risk assessments on a case-by-case basis and then manage any risks identified appropriately.

Their organisational risk assessments are evaluated to ensure that they are appropriate for handling cases of forced marriage – and recognise the potential risk of harm to victims and professionals.

Multi Agency Public Protection Arrangements (MAPPA)<sup>6</sup> and Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conferences play a role in managing the significant risk to individuals facing forced marriage. For children, the Assessment Framework should be used to assess the risks.

### **The danger of family counselling, mediation, arbitration and reconciliation**

Due to the nature of forced marriage and honour-based violence, some of the underlying principles and themes within existing guidance may inadvertently place young people and adults with support needs at greater risk of harm. This includes the belief that the best place for them is with their family and the practice of attempting to resolve cases through family counselling, mediation, arbitration and reconciliation.

### **The danger of involving the family and the community**

In cases of forced marriage, involving the family and the community may increase the risk of significant harm to the child or young person. The family may deny that the child or young person is being forced to marry and they may expedite any travel arrangements and bring forward the marriage.

Any discussion and agreement-seeking between the family and the Local Authority children’s social care should only be done where it will not place a child at increased risk of significant harm. **In cases of forced marriage, discussion with the family or any type of family involvement will often place the child or young person at greater risk of harm.**

In care proceedings, local authorities are required to demonstrate to the court that they have considered family members and friends as potential carers at each stage of their decision-making. However, in cases of forced marriage, professionals should exercise extreme caution around how they evidence this, and consider carefully whether, for example, family group conferences are appropriate in these cases. Ideally, family group conferences should not be used in cases where a young person is at risk of forced marriage because of the physical danger and potential emotional manipulation they may experience during this type of session with their parents and other members of their family or community.

There must not be any burden on the child or young person to agree to a family conference.



Chief Executives, directors and senior managers should ensure that staff have appropriate training in order to:

Understand the danger of involving the family and the community in cases of forced marriage.

Recognise that they should not approach or involve families if forced marriage is suspected.

Understand that family group conferences are not normally appropriate in cases of forced marriage because it will often place the child or young person at greater risk of harm.

### **The assessment framework**

The Framework for the Assessment of Children in Need and their Families provides a systematic way of analysing, understanding and recording what is happening to children and young people within their families and the wider context of the community in which they live. This framework assists professionals to decide what support a child and family may need.

The assessment has three main parts:

i.

Child's developmental needs.

ii.

Parenting capacity.

iii.

Family and environmental factors.

The Assessment Framework may not highlight any problems concerning children and young people facing forced marriage. They often come from very loving families where the parents capacity to provide safety, emotional warmth and stability is excellent. The children are often high achievers at school, their health is good, they are well integrated into the local community and have good relations with the wider family – they may not necessarily exhibit the warning signs.

Therefore, professionals working with children and young people facing forced marriage require additional training in assessing families to identify those where forced marriage may be an issue. In all cases, forced marriage must be responded to as a child protection, and safeguarding issue.

Staff have appropriate training in order to enable them to effectively assess children and young people facing forced marriage using the Assessment Framework.

## **Safeguarding children and young people from harm by sharing information or to prevent a crime being committed**

Although forced marriage is now a specific criminal offence, there are still a number of other offences that may nevertheless be committed. Perpetrators – usually parents or family members – may also be prosecuted for offences including fear or provocation of violence, common assault, actual bodily harm, grievous bodily harm, harassment, common assault, kidnap, abduction, theft (of passport), threats to kill, false imprisonment and murder. Sexual intercourse without consent is rape, regardless of whether this occurs within a marriage or not.

Where it may arise that a local authority children's social care has a case referred to it that constitutes, or may constitute, a criminal offence against a child; social workers or their managers should always discuss the case with the police at the earliest opportunity.

Where other agencies encounter concerns about a child's welfare that constitutes, or may constitute, a criminal offence against a child they must consider sharing that information with Local Authority children's social care or the police in order to protect the child or other children from the risk of significant harm. If a decision is reached not to share information, the reasons must be recorded.

Forced marriage is automatically handled as a child protection issue.

Staff have appropriate training in order to understand the importance of sharing information with other agencies at the earliest opportunity to safeguard children and young people from significant harm or to prevent a crime being committed.

Staff share information promptly when a child or young person is at risk of forced marriage.

Staff provide information to the Forced Marriage Unit.

Staff understand the difference between breaking confidence (involving the child or young person's family without consent) and sharing information with consent with other appropriate professionals to prevent the child or young person being at risk of significant harm.

### **Immediate protection**

Ideally, professionals should discuss cases of forced marriage with, and seek advice from, a designated professional or another statutory agency; however, there may be occasions when immediate emergency action is necessary to protect a child or young person from being forced to marry or abducted e.g. police protection or emergency protection orders. In this case, a strategy discussion should take place as soon as possible after the immediate protection to plan next steps.

Chief Executives, directors and senior managers should ensure that staff have appropriate training in order to:

Recognise the importance and relevance of immediate protection.

Recognise the risk to other siblings in the household who might also be threatened with, or already in, a forced marriage.

Understand that under no circumstances is it sufficient to protect a child or young person by removing the alleged perpetrator from the household (as in the significant majority of cases the extended family and wider community are also involved).

Recognise that placing the child or young person with a family member or member of the same community may place them at risk of significant harm.

Karam (Peace) Nirvana (enlightenment) - charity founded in 1993 to supporting all victims of honoured based violence/abuse and forced marriages