

A choice by right



The report of the working group on forced marriage



Foreword

Our journey as parents is our most difficult and treasured. As many of us have migrated to Britain, the innate sense of obligation to maintain our cultures, languages and traditions have sometimes overwhelmed our ability to develop as a natural family unit.

The aspirations we have for our own children are sometimes marred by the need to protect them from harm and what is often seen as a Western influence. Nevertheless, the cherished dream of untainted success for our children is the central focus of all good parents.

It is to parents in particular that we want to speak about what we have learned. And why we are committed to changing attitudes to prevent using force to secure a marriage.

We were struck by the willingness of so many within our communities to tackle what is so clearly unacceptable behaviour within our society. There is rapid acceptance that children must be talked with and their views listened to.

Many parents use religious rationale to justify their use of force and violence. No religion of the world restricts choice, and we believe that good parents cannot either.

It was against the background of a Parliamentary Debate on the Human Rights of Women in February 1999 that our investigation began. We both accepted the invitation to chair this Working Group because of the commitment at the highest levels of Government to tackle this violence and abuse.

Reaching out to as many people as possible was one of our aims. We believe that a good dialogue has been initiated across communities as well as enabling Government Departments to become aware of the profile of our communities, often for the first time. We hope that our findings will enable dialogue and collaboration within and between the service providers, as well as with communities.

We believe that communities themselves need to be empowered so that forced marriage can be tackled. We also feel it is important to say that without a commitment to tackle the lack of representation of women, particularly Asian women, in prominent public positions many of the problems of empowerment highlighted in this report will not be resolved.

A great deal of detailed work has gone into our report. The Working Group is grateful for the support we received from Mike O'Brien and especially to the Government advisors to the Working Group for the huge amount of effort they put in to help us conclude our work. We want to take this opportunity to thank all the organisations we encountered, both during our visits and who responded to our call for evidence.

Most importantly, we salute the victims of forced marriage who were courageous in speaking out about their experiences.

Members of the Working Group brought a variety of perspectives along with a firm commitment to starting a process of change for the better. We have reached a broad consensus on important practical actions.

Now the Government and public services must play their part in taking this forward, in partnership with community and women's organisations, the opinion formers and the communities themselves.

For it is the communities, and above all the parents, who now need to take the leading role in eradicating forced marriage and giving all of our children peace of mind.

Baroness Uddin of Bethnal Green

Lord Ahmed of Rotherham



“A person knows when they are being forced into a marriage against their will – that must be the starting point.”



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Introduction



Children in all countries, children of all cultures play at being grown-up, acting out the role models that they see around them. Different jobs, wife and husband, partners, or mother and father.

They learn their values, right and wrong, respect, compassion, duty and love from their family and the other adults who care for them or teach them. Religion plays a major part in this for many people. These core values are timeless and common to the major world faiths and equally to the beliefs of those who do not adhere to any religion.

In today's Britain we are negotiating new common values too, based on equality and respect between men and women, and between people regardless of their race, faith or ethnicity. These values are based on building a culture of common human rights. Renewing responsibility among all citizens.

Inherent to this is the recognition of the legal rights of children and young people; the need to support families and to recognise they take many different forms. We should celebrate our multi-cultural, multi-faith society, but we also need to make clear that difference, diversity and cultural sensitivity are not excuses for moral blindness.

Forced marriage, marriage without freely given consent, is wrong. The Government is developing a broad strategy to ensure that all people can live without fear, whether from racist attacks on the street or from domestic violence. This issue must be seen as part of that wider strategy, particularly of the action being taken to tackle violence against women.

Understanding what values drive people is central to understanding why forced marriages happen. What is it that motivates families to force their children to marry? Why do so many young women and men suffer in silence?

Victims of forced marriage have spoken to the Working Group of their experiences and the fear and suffering they have endured. Families too suffer as a result of forced marriage. If building stronger families is the aim of forced marriage, then it is not the result.

Developing a shared understanding of the experiences of daughters, sons, and their parents is the first step towards addressing this abuse of trust.

Forced marriage: A marriage conducted without the valid consent of both parties, where duress is a factor.

Voices of the victims of forced marriage

“I can’t wait to finish school really. But if I don’t stay on for sixth form I’ll have to get married.”
(15 year girl, North London)

“I can follow boy bands, but I can only have a boyfriend who is Hindu or my Dad will go mad.”
(15 year old girl, North London)

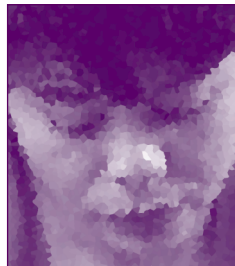
“My Mum was saying – You’ve got to marry him or your Dad will divorce me.”
(16 year old girl, Bradford)

“My cousin’s parents tricked her into going to Pakistan to see her dying Grandfather. But they forced her to marry this older man. So when she got back to England, she did a legger. Now no-one knows where she is.”
(Young woman, Bradford)

“We don’t want to leave our families, we just don’t want to be forced into a marriage.”
(Young woman, Leicester)

“My parents thought I’ll accept [sic] the marriage, get my cousin over here and keep my mouth shut like my sister. But I’ve proved them wrong. I called up the police and told them what happened. At the moment I’m living with a friend and I hate my parents for what they’ve done.”
(17 year old woman, anon)

“My parents have told me that if I promise to marry this man when I graduate then I can carry on at University. But since I’ve been here I’ve met someone else and now I don’t know what I’m going to do.”
(20 year old woman, Liverpool)



“My Mum was saying – You’ve got to marry him or your Dad will divorce me.”

Building understanding



In August 1999, Home Office Minister for Community Relations, Mike O'Brien MP established this Working Group to investigate the problem of forced marriage in England and Wales and to make proposals for tackling it effectively. The Working Group's terms of reference are set out in full in Annex 1 (page 28).

Since August last year the Working Group has undertaken a wide-ranging consultation exercise, engaging all of the key service delivery organisations and a broad range of community and voluntary organisations, particularly women's groups. We have listened to the victims of forced marriage, their families and friends.

This section of the report relates the findings of this consultation exercise, the questions we were asked, the stereotypes that surround the issues and the facts.

What is a forced marriage?

“A person knows when they are being forced into a marriage against their will – that must be the starting point.”

(Young woman, Leicester)

Forced marriage is an issue that is often misunderstood and misrepresented. The Working Group's consultations showed a lack of understanding of what constitutes a forced marriage. From the outset the Working Group has been very clear that it is a marriage conducted without the valid consent of both parties, where duress is a factor. It is a violation of internationally recognised human rights standards and cannot be justified on religious or cultural grounds.

A young woman in Leicester put it best when she said that, “A person knows when they are being forced into a marriage against their will – that must be the starting point.”

“Marriage shall be entered into only with the free and full consent of the intending spouses.”

(Universal Declaration of Human Rights, Article 16 (2))

“State parties shall ensure on a basis of equality of men and women...the same right freely to choose a spouse and to enter into marriage only with their full and free consent.”

(Convention to Eliminate All Forms of Discrimination Against Women – CEDAW, Article 16 (1) (b))

“A woman's right to choose a spouse and enter freely into marriage is central to her life and her dignity and equality as a human being.”

(General Recommendation No. 21, UN Committee on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women.)

Although in the Western world forced marriage is often discussed as a religious practice, the Working Group has found that no major world faith condones forced marriage. The freely given consent of both parties is a prerequisite of Christian, Hindu, Muslim and Sikh marriages.

The Working Group has found that describing forced marriage as a religious issue feeds prejudice and intolerance of other faiths. The Working Group feels strongly that this misrepresentation of the nature of forced marriages should be challenged – religious belief does not justify removing a person's right to choose.

The law on marriage in England and Wales

The Marriage Act 1949 and the Matrimonial Causes Act 1973 govern the law on marriage in England and Wales. The minimum age at which a person is able to consent to a marriage is 16 years old; a person under the age of 18 may not marry without parental consent¹. Marriages conducted abroad in accordance with the proper formalities required by that country's laws are generally recognised in England and Wales, provided both parties have the legal capacity to marry.

Section 12c of the Matrimonial Causes Act 1973 states that a marriage shall be voidable² if "either party to the marriage did not validly consent to it, whether in consequence of duress, mistake, unsoundness of mind or otherwise".

The Working Group has found that duress is invariably a factor of forced marriages. The Court of Appeal has ruled that the test for duress for these purposes is simply "whether the mind of the applicant (the victim) has in fact been overborne, howsoever that was caused"³.

In practice, victims of forced marriage rarely know about these provisions or are unable to use them for their protection. Family pressures often make it nearly impossible for women to get their voices heard. The requirement that a petition for nullity must be sought within three years often means that women are unable to rely on these provisions. Often married young, they can lack the self-confidence to challenge their situation in these first years of marriage.

Additionally, women married abroad often face insurmountable difficulties in financing proceedings, providing instructions and evidence, remaining protected during the proceedings and having the decree of nullity recognised and enforced in the country in which they live.

The European Convention of Human Rights, which will be incorporated into UK law by the Human Rights Act this October, provides for a right to marry in accordance with national law⁴. The Convention also enshrines a number of other fundamental rights that cannot be denied to victims of forced marriage, including the right to life, the right to liberty and security and the right to an education.

1 (Unless that person is a widow/widower) Section 11 (a) (ii) Matrimonial Causes Act 1973

2 'Voidable' means that the marriage is valid until it is challenged by one of the parties, at which time the court can award a decree of nullity invalidating the marriage.

3 *Hinari v Hinari* (1984) 4 FLR 232 CA

4 Article 12 ECHR

Protecting children from forced marriage

The Working Group has found that the existing legal framework affords a great deal of protection to children at risk of being forced into a marriage, above and beyond the civil and criminal legal measures available to protect adults from a forced marriage. Many examples were given to the Working Group where authorities and individuals have effectively exercised their existing powers to help these vulnerable young people.

The courts have a range of common law and statutory civil powers that can be used to protect children who are being forced into a marriage. For example, section 31 of the Children Act 1989 provides for care and protection orders to be made by the courts, on application by a local authority, to place a child under the age of 17 under the care of that local authority. While such an order is in place, no person may remove the child from the UK without the consent of every person with parental responsibility, including the local authority.

The court's wardship powers were utilised in the case of *Re K.R. (a minor)* to protect a young girl from a forced marriage overseas, where she was being held against her will, and to facilitate her safe return to the UK⁵.

The Children Act also confers duties and powers on local authorities in respect of providing accommodation for young people in circumstances where they are in need, or where it would help safeguard a child's welfare⁶.

The Working Group has heard of cases where Airport Police have successfully utilised the Emergency Protection Order provisions of section 44 of the Children Act to prevent a child being removed from the UK for the purposes of a forced marriage. In other cases, police have relied on their powers under section 46 of the Children Act to remove a child to suitable accommodation where a police officer had reasonable cause to believe that the child would otherwise be likely to suffer significant harm.

In addition, section 17 of the Children Act places a general duty on local authorities to safeguard and promote the welfare of children within their area who are in need. And, so far as is consistent with that duty, to promote the upbringing of such children by their families by providing a range and level of services appropriate to those children's needs. The Working Group endorses the view expressed by those consulted that children at risk of being forced into a marriage should be seen as a class to whom section 17 applies.

By law, all children of compulsory school age (5-16) must receive suitable education. Parents are responsible for making sure this happens, either by registering the child at school or by arranging an effective alternative to school⁷. The period of compulsory education ends on the last Friday in June in the school year in which a child reaches age 16⁸.

5 *Re K.R.*, 1999 [2] FLR 542

6 Section 20, Children Act 1989

7 Section 7, Education Act 1996

8 Section 8 (4), Education Act 1996

Criminal law and forced marriage

Although there is no specific criminal offence of 'forcing someone to marry' within England and Wales, the law does provide protection from the crimes that can be committed when forcing someone into a marriage. Perpetrators – usually parents or family members – have been prosecuted for offences including threatening behaviour, assault, kidnap and murder. Sexual intercourse without consent is rape.

The Working Group does not support the creation of a specific offence of forcing a person to marry.

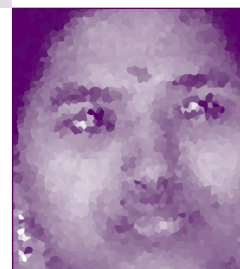
Decisions whether to prosecute for criminal offences in any given case are for the police and the prosecuting authorities, but perpetrators should be aware that in forcing someone into a marriage they are likely to commit serious criminal offences.

The Government's Sex Offences Review is considering offences, such as abduction, that can be related to a forced marriage within its review of sex offences generally. The Working Group has contributed to the Review.

Case study 1

A (female) was forced by her parents to marry her cousin B (male), from their village, back home. When they first told her about the idea she made it clear that this was not what she wanted but they insisted that she should do as she was told. A did not feel that she could go against her parents' wishes – she didn't want to hurt them, despite her friends urging her to take a stand.

She married her cousin, but was desperately unhappy and after two months she attempted suicide. Fortunately a friend found her in time and she was unsuccessful. A remains with her husband, although he treats her badly. She suffers from depression and attends an Asian women's support group following a referral by her GP. A says she can't leave her husband because it would bring shame on her family and hurt her parents.



The difference between forced and arranged marriages

A clear distinction must be made between forced and arranged marriages. Many people expressed concern to the Working Group that this distinction was not being made, giving a false impression of arranged marriages.

The Working Group is clear that the distinction lies in the right to choose. In the tradition of arranged marriages, the families of both spouses take a leading role in arranging the marriage, but the choice whether to solemnise the arrangement remains with the spouses and can be exercised at any time. The spouses have the right to choose – to say no – at any time. In forced marriage, there is no choice.

The tradition of arranged marriage has operated successfully within many communities and many countries for a very long time and remains the preferred choice of many young people who spoke to the Working Group. This report is not about arranged marriage.

Cultural difference and forced marriage

In a multi-cultural, multi-faith society like the UK we must value and celebrate our diversity. Equally, we must not excuse practices that compromise or undermine the basic rights accorded to all people.

“Multi-cultural sensitivity is not an excuse for moral blindness.”

(Mike O'Brien, House of Commons Adjournment Debate on Human Rights (Women) 10 February 1999)

In response to the Working Group's consultations, some service providers expressed concern about action to tackle forced marriage being seen as meddling in religious traditions or cultural norms. Because of this some victims of forced marriage who had sought help felt that they had been denied access to services that would have been available to women fleeing other forms of violence and abuse. Their problem was seen as a 'cultural' issue and therefore not something that service providers were prepared to deal with.

At the root of this is a mismatch of understanding about cultural differences and how these fit in to a diverse, multi-cultural, multi-faith society.

A key message from the Working Group's consultations was that different ethnic and religious minorities had different experiences, customs and needs. Government and the statutory services need to understand and value that diversity and ensure it is accounted for in developing policies and delivering services, without compromising human rights.

People have spoken to the Working Group of the need to develop a shared understanding, between communities, families, services and Government, that forced marriage cannot be justified on religious or cultural grounds and that it is unacceptable in modern Britain. This shared understanding would empower professionals to tackle forced marriage with sensitivity and competence.

***“Multi-cultural sensitivity is not
an excuse for moral blindness.”***

Forced marriage in England and Wales

The Working Group has found that there is a lack of reliable data on the cases of forced marriage, and that this lack of information has been a barrier to:

- recognition of the problem
- getting commitment to tackling it
- securing the right skills and resources to take effective action
- planning the provision of services for victims.

Forced marriage is a hidden problem. With a small number of exceptions, none of the relevant service providers keep detailed figures on the number of cases of forced marriage they deal with. There are similarities with the problems of data collection experienced with other issues, like domestic violence.

“Even one case is one too many for the victims, who can suffer terribly as a result of being forced to marry against their will.”

(Mike O'Brien, Minister for Community Relations, Home Office)

The Working Group believes that forced marriage must be seen primarily as an issue of violence against women. It was clear from the consultations that it is women who most often live in fear and suffer violence as a result of forced marriage. The Working Group recognises that forced marriage affects men as well as women and that the experience of men who are forced into a marriage should not be ignored. The Working Group also recognises that both women and men perpetrate forced marriages.

Further work will be needed to address in more detail the needs of men who are forced into a marriage.

Most of the cases of forced marriage that the Working Group encountered involved young women, from teenagers to people in their early twenties. The Working Group heard of cases where girls under 16 years old were married abroad, despite not being legally capable of contracting a marriage in England and Wales. Many women forced into a marriage only sought help much later, when they had endured the relationship for several years. Family, social and economic pressures have all been cited as factors in a woman enduring an abusive relationship.

There is a spectrum of behaviours behind the term forced marriage, ranging from emotional pressure, exerted by close family members and the extended family, to the more extreme cases, which can involve threatening behaviour; abduction, imprisonment, physical violence, rape and in some cases murder. People spoke to the Working Group about 'loving manipulation' in the majority of cases, where parents genuinely felt that they were acting in their children and family's best interests.

“My parents said that I could go to University, but only if I agreed to marry a cousin from back home once I'd graduated.”

(Young woman, Leeds)

The majority of the evidence presented to the Working Group involved families with a cultural background in the Indian sub-continent. But this is not solely an 'Asian' problem. In England and Wales there are cases involving families from East Asia, the Middle East, Europe and Africa.

Not just an 'Asian' issue

Forced marriage is not just an 'Asian' issue and to discuss it as such denies a voice to those from other communities who have experienced it. In this country, forced marriages were commonplace a hundred years ago, and they continue to happen in many countries and cultures around the world. History, time and place shape people's motivations and experiences and the emerging new values in modern Britain and elsewhere will affect these behaviours and practices over time.

The Working Group accepts that many families with a cultural background in the Indian sub-continent will never have come across an instance of forced marriage, but will only have positive experiences of the arranged marriage tradition.

It should also be noted that the British Asian communities, led by their women's groups, have been at the forefront of much of the existing action aimed at tackling forced marriage and domestic violence. Religious and community organisations are also becoming increasingly involved in activities to tackle forced marriage.

The Working Group is clear that the issue of forced marriage should not be used to stigmatise any community.

International dimensions

Forced marriages do not only happen in England and Wales. Several other countries are now looking at this issue. In April this year the Working Group met with representatives of the Norwegian Government who are currently implementing an action plan to tackle forced marriage. It is important that different countries are able to learn from each other as responses to forced marriage develop internationally.

Many of the cases brought to the Working Group's attention involved a spouse from overseas. A British national is either taken to live in their spouse's country (where they often have antecedents) or they are to act as a sponsor for their spouse's immigration to the UK.

Women described the fear that compelled them to support their spouse's immigration to the UK. Often family members had directly threatened them before their interview with an immigration officer. This fear prevented most women from putting on record that their marriage was forced.

Some women who had been brought to the UK for a forced marriage told the Working Group of the hardship they had suffered because of their unsound immigration status. Not being able to speak English and not having any family or friends to support them in the UK often added to these women's problems.

Some anecdotal evidence has been presented to the Working Group of cases where forced marriage has been deliberately used as part of a wider scheme to circumvent the immigration rules. These cases are not the norm.

The Working Group has heard of cases where a young woman has been taken (sometimes forcibly, sometimes through deception) overseas for the purposes of a forced marriage. Often these women reported having their documents, including passports, taken away from them on their arrival. In some cases, parents had taken the extreme action of drugging their daughter to ensure that she travelled overseas without complaint.

Dual nationality

Where the domestic law of two countries gives a person two nationalities, Article 3 of the Convention on Certain Questions Relating to the Conflict of Nationality Laws permits that person to be treated as a national of both states. Article 4 of that Convention prevents a country from affording diplomatic or consular protection to one of its nationals 'against' a state whose nationality that person also possesses.

In most cases of forced marriage help 'against' the state is not needed and the approach should be for the Foreign and Commonwealth Office to work with authorities and local agencies overseas to support and protect victims.

Some of those consulted by the Working Group felt that dual nationality had been used as an excuse for a lack of action to help victims of forced marriage and challenged the UK's interpretation of the law.

Dual nationality is a fact of international law and the scope of consular protection for dual nationals is different from country to country and a matter of state practice. But Government officials should not allow it to get in the way of helping the victims of forced marriage. A proactive approach is needed, with officials, law enforcement and service providers from different jurisdictions working together to protect and support victims.

Case study 2

C (male) and D (female) are both from the UK. Their parents arranged a marriage between them, despite the fact that they had never met. D's parents put a great deal of emotional pressure on her to force her to accept the arrangement, and she agreed.

A friend of D's contacted a local religious leader whom she trusted and explained what was happening to her friend. He visited the family and asked the parents whether they were forcing D into a marriage. He explained that in their religion marriage could only happen with the freely given consent of both man and woman.

D's father denied that the arrangement was forced and asked the religious leader to speak to D himself. D was afraid of what might happen to her if she accused her father to the religious leader, so she lied and said she was happy with the match her parents had made for her. C and D are married. D never sees her friend any more.



Cause and effect

While it is important to have an understanding of the motivations that drive parents to force their children to marry, this does not mean we should accept justifications for denying the right to choose a marriage partner. Motivations are complex and highly personal. It is important not to oversimplify when thinking about motivations – there will often be deeper reasons, which are not understood. These are some of the key motivations that the Working Group has heard about:

- peer group or family pressure
- attempting to strengthen family links
- protecting perceived cultural and religious ideals (which can often be misguided or out of date)
- preventing 'unsuitable' relationships, (e.g. outside ethnic, cultural, religious or caste group)
- family honour
- long-standing family commitments
- controlling female behaviour and sexuality.

The Working Group has found that perspectives on motivations vary significantly between the parents themselves, their children and others outside of the immediate relationship.

Parents who forced their children to marry often justified their behaviour as building stronger families and protecting cultural or religious traditions – they did not see anything wrong with their actions. Many people felt that parents believed they were upholding the cultural traditions of their home country, when in fact practices and values there had moved on. They described a fossilisation of cultural values within some families who had migrated to the UK.

It was explained to the Working Group that some parents came under significant pressure from their extended families to get their children married, even if force is required. Family honour was a significant factor – motivating the behaviour of many parents. In some instances, agreements had been made about marriage when children were very young.

Victims of forced marriage often described the pressure from other family members, both on them and their parents. Many also described how a relationship deemed 'unsuitable' by their parents had been the catalyst for marriage arrangements being made for them. There is a strongly held view, among some women's groups working with victims of forced marriage in particular; that forced marriage is a tool used to control female behaviour and sexuality – a means of oppressing women.

Whatever the motivations, the consequences of a forced marriage can be devastating to the whole family. The victims of forced marriage suffer terribly, but parents, siblings, and the wider family members suffer too. Young women forced into a marriage often become estranged from their families. The impact on the children of a forced marriage is often that they themselves become trapped in the cycle of abuse with serious long-term consequences.

The Working Group has heard that many women who were forced into a marriage suffered for many years from domestic violence. These women felt unable to leave because of the lack of family support, economic pressures and other social circumstances. The Working Group met women who had lived within a forced marriage for many years before they felt they were able to challenge the situation.

The Working Group notes with concern that recent studies have shown that self-harm and suicide rates are high for Asian women. Several people the Working Group consulted felt that there was a link between self-harm amongst Asian women and forced marriage⁹.

Young girls, taken out of school to be married overseas, spoke of the suffering caused by the loss of educational opportunities. Their marriages cannot be recognised in the UK, although they may be legal in the country in which they were married. These young women are often kept overseas until they reach sixteen. The Working Group has heard of cases where young women have not been allowed to return to the UK until they are pregnant, to make it even more difficult for them to escape the relationship.

Isolation is one of the biggest problems facing victims of forced marriage. Women often described having no one they could speak to about their situation. These feelings of isolation are very similar to those experienced by those who have suffered domestic violence, often in silence. Isolation is also very real for women who have escaped a forced marriage or the threat of one. For many of these women the contact they have with women's groups and other support structures are a critical part of their surviving the experience.

Runaways

The Working Group heard evidence of the plight of many young women who had run away to escape a forced marriage. These women live in fear of their own families and suffer because of having to leave behind family, friends and all they know.

“One young woman arrived at our organisation (in Cardiff) having travelled alone from Scotland to escape her family who insisted she would marry a man from her parent’s village that she had never met.”

(Women’s outreach worker in Cardiff)

Isolation is a serious problem for these women, many of whom will never have had any experience of living away from their family before.

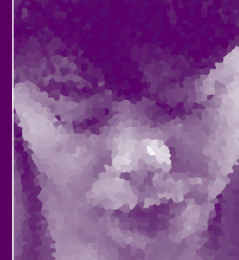
Many people told the Working Group that, with honour at stake, families would often go to ‘incredible’ lengths to find and bring back their runaways. There were reports of some families utilising extended family networks, often in different areas of the country, and even of families being willing to pay people to find their daughters.

“I’m scared that one day I’ll open the door and they’ll have found me.”

(Young woman, anon)

9 Veena Soni Raleigh *Suicide Patterns and Trends in People of Indian Sub-continent and Caribbean Origins in England and Wales* (1996); D. Bhugra, M. Desai, & D.S. Baldwin *Attempted Suicide in West London, I. Rates across ethnic communities* (1999); D. Bhugra, M. Desai, D.S. Baldwin & K.S. Jacob *Attempted Suicide in West London, II. Inter-group comparisons* (1999); J. Merrill, J. Owens, S. Wynne & R. Whittington *Asian Suicides* (1990); J. Merrill & J. Owens *Ethnic difference in self-poisoning: a comparison of Asian and White Groups* (1986).

Tackling forced marriage



A process of change

The decision to set up this Working Group was widely welcomed – by service providers and communities – and has led to a new public debate on the issue of forced marriage. The Working Group welcomes the fact that the debate is now beginning to acknowledge the distinction between forced and arranged marriage and the need to avoid stigmatising particular communities. There is a long way to go – but progress is starting to be made and there is a momentum for change.

“We need to support the communities in sending a clear message to their peers that, whatever their motivations, forcing children into a marriage is wrong.”

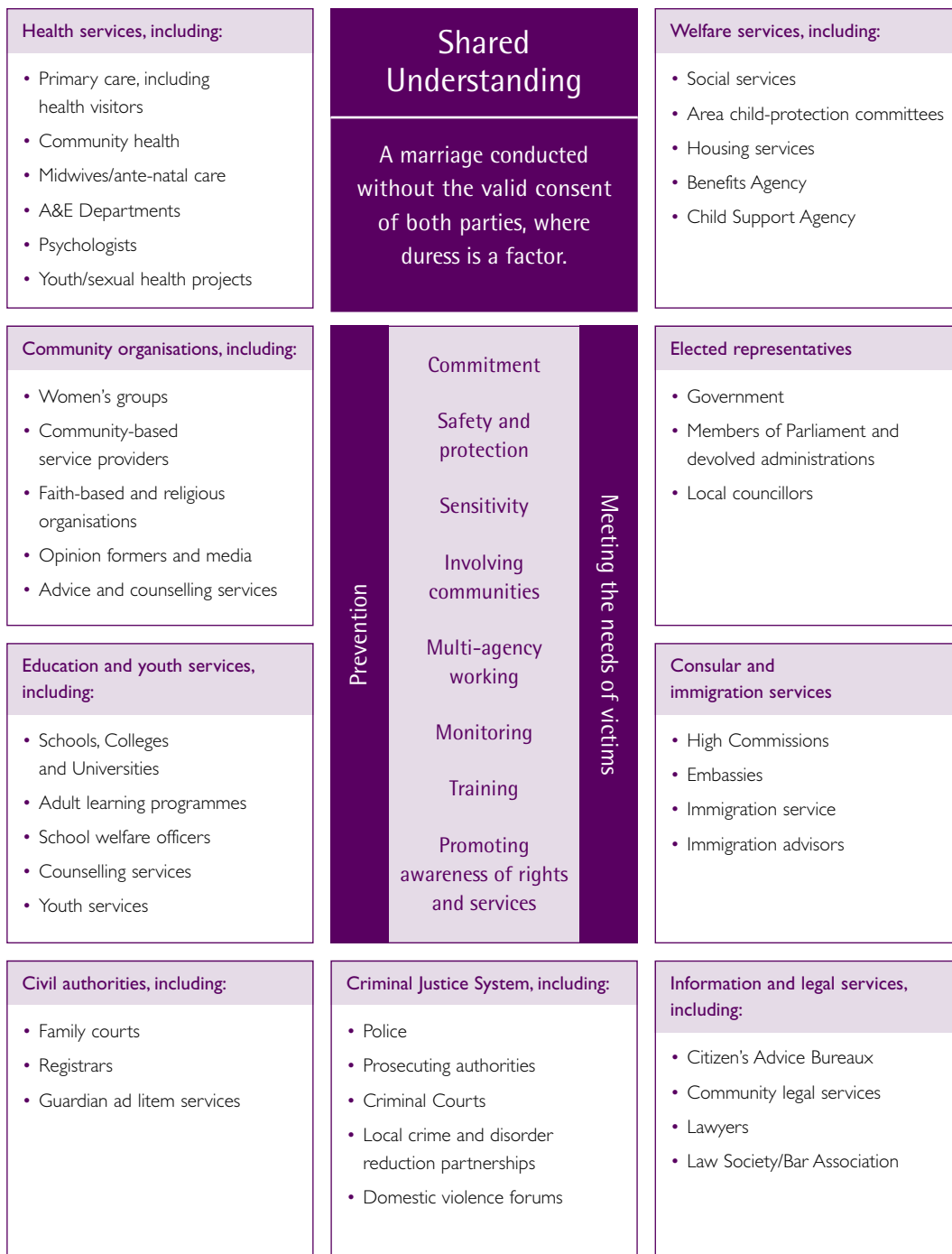
(Baroness Scotland of Asthal QC, Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State at the Foreign and Commonwealth Office)

Statements – from Government, service providers, community and religious organisations – about the unacceptability of forced marriage have demonstrated a commitment to tackle this issue. There is now an expectation that commitment will be transformed into practical action following this report. This is an opportunity that should not be missed.

The Working Group recommends that organisations should assess what action they can take to tackle forced marriage with a view to developing their own responses. They need to draw on their experience and expertise, working with each other, and other partners, including community and women's organisations. This work needs to be led by Government, through Departments and their services, developing and implementing policies aimed both at prevention and meeting the needs of the victims.

The Working Group believes that action to tackle forced marriage should be developed and implemented as part of mainstream services. This should ensure equality of access for all. Although resources will need to be targeted in order that real and sustainable change can be achieved, much can be done through a reassessment of existing protocols and procedures, taking account of the needs of victims of forced marriage. This is particularly true of the protocols and procedures aimed at tackling domestic violence and child protection.

This section of the report sets out the areas in which action should be taken and offers some basic guiding principles that have emerged from the Working Group's consultations. It also highlights those issues that demand further detailed investigation by Government.



Meeting the needs of victims

The Working Group has learnt that the needs of women – as victims of forced marriage – vary widely, depending on their circumstances. They may need assistance in avoiding a threatened forced marriage or in dealing with the consequences of a forced marriage that has already taken place. Whatever an individual's circumstances, there are basic needs that should always be considered, including:

- personal safety
- confidentiality
- accurate information about rights and choices.

The needs of victims of forced marriage can also include:

- safe accommodation
- source of income
- counselling and support.

The Working Group believes that the starting point should always be the perception of the individual. They know when they are being forced to do something against their will and a person's cry for help should be the trigger for a range of appropriate responses. Again, there are similarities here between the approach to forced marriage, domestic violence and child protection.

There is a difference between being aware and responsive to the needs of individuals, and intervention on the basis of assumptions and stereotypes.

An example given to the Working Group was of a young Asian girl taken out of school for an extended holiday to visit family overseas. In some cases the pretence of an extended holiday has been used to hide the intention of a forced marriage. The fact that this has happened in some cases must not lead schools to conclude that every time a young Asian girl is taken abroad for an extended family visit it is a cover for forcing her into a marriage.

In this example great distress would be caused to the family by the assumption that the young girl was at risk of being forced into a marriage just on the basis that she was being taken on an extended family holiday. This demonstrates the dangers of assumptions and stereotyping. There is no simple solution to these difficulties, but services can, and should, build on their experience in dealing with other sensitive issues, such as domestic violence and child protection.

The Working Group has found that the needs of victims of forced marriage often extend far beyond their immediate situation. Consideration should be given to the long-term needs of individuals as well as their immediate circumstances.

Mediation

The Working Group has found that mediation, with the aim of reconciliation, is a controversial issue in cases of forced marriage. Some women's groups have opposed the provision of mediation in any case of actual or threatened forced marriage.

Based on the evidence presented, the Working Group feels that victims should be able to access mediation as a means of conflict resolution if they wish to do so. Their choice should be respected. But mediation services should only be provided where there are professional guidelines and a code of conduct, and only staff specifically trained in mediation skills should undertake this work.

The Working Group has heard of a number of specific risks of mediation and care should be taken to ensure that:

- it does not place the victim at further risk of abuse – the safety of the individual must be the paramount concern
- a victim's advisor is not compromised by their involvement in mediation, leading to a loss of the victim's confidence in their advisor's role as advocate
- agreements are monitored and reviewed
- failures do not deter women from seeking further help, because of their experience of poor quality and unsuccessful mediation.

The Working Group recommends that further work should be undertaken to evaluate mediation in cases of forced marriage, with the aim of ensuring the safety of victims.

Case study 3

E is 18, he was born in the UK. He was forced into a marriage with a woman from overseas (his parents' village) who couldn't speak English and whom he saw as coming from a different world. After 6 months of marriage, E ran away. He was away for a year before he heard that his father had died and returned to be with his family.

His running away had caused a serious rift in the family and E was distraught at the pain he had caused. His family tried to encourage him into another marriage (by this stage his first wife had returned home), but E ran away again.

He has never contacted his family since and is now happily married to someone else.



Preventing forced marriage

The Working Group has found that challenging and changing people's attitudes is the key to preventing forced marriage.

There is a general lack of awareness and understanding of individuals' rights – both legal and religious – relating to marriage. Young people, their parents and families need to be educated about these rights and a dialogue needs to be facilitated between young people and their elders about their different expectations. For such a dialogue to be meaningful it would need to ensure that both young people and their parents are empowered to talk openly and safely about their expectations.

The Working Group acknowledges the importance of the role of opinion formers in developing an understanding of the right to choose. This includes anyone who is able to influence values, attitudes and behaviours. Religious and community leaders are key opinion formers, but the definition also takes account of local and national politicians, leaders of community and women's groups and many others who can make a difference.

The Working Group has heard people talk of their disappointment with many of these opinion formers who have failed to speak out against forced marriage because it was seen as a 'taboo' subject. People who have spoken to the Working Group have an expectation that opinion formers will send a clear and consistent message about the unacceptability of forced marriage. It is hoped that following this report, opinion formers will be in a more robust position to lead and send a clear message about the unacceptability of forced marriage.

Several suggestions for public information and education campaigns were made to the Working Group. The common themes amongst these were the need to speak to both young people and their elders, and that they should be sensitive and not alienate or stigmatise communities. Most suggestions involved campaigns designed to address forced marriage within the wider contexts of human rights or family issues. The Government will need to develop and utilise public information opportunities to educate people about forced marriage and their rights. This may include using schools, colleges and universities, media or faith-based organisations to reach out to young people.

A crucial area of misunderstanding that needs to be addressed is the effect on a family of a forced marriage. The Working Group has found that one of the main motivations for parents forcing their children into marriages is the desire to strengthen families and protect their cultures. In fact, the opposite is often the outcome, with families breaking apart and children turning against their cultural background because of their experiences. People who spoke to the Working Group felt that an understanding of the consequences of forced marriage would help prevent it happening.



“We don’t want to leave our families, we just don’t want to be forced into a marriage.”

Guiding principles for effective action to tackle forced marriage

The Working Group recommends these guiding principles that should be adopted in developing a response to forced marriage within any organisation or area of service delivery.

- Commitment
- Safety and protection
- Sensitivity
- Involving communities
- Multi-agency working
- Monitoring
- Training
- Promoting awareness of rights and services.

Commitment

A shared commitment to tackle forced marriage must be developed within and between Government, service providers, communities and opinion formers. This should be based on a common understanding that forced marriage is wrong and that it cannot be justified on cultural or religious grounds. There also needs to be a common understanding of the distinction between forced and arranged marriage and recognition that the arranged marriage system should be respected and valued.

Safety and protection

The safety and protection of the victim of forced marriage or the person threatened with a forced marriage should be at the heart of any work with them. It is equally important to consider the long-term safety and protection of victims of forced marriage as it is their immediate circumstances.

Sensitivity

This is a difficult and sensitive issue, raising questions of the relationship between young people and their parents and elders, and the values of minority communities.

There is an increasing awareness of the need to be sensitive to cultural differences in the provision of services. But cultural sensitivity has to be based on knowledge and understanding and must be seen as an issue of competent practice. This has been lacking in responding to the needs of victims of forced marriage in many cases the Working Group has heard about.

Victims of forced marriage have the same rights to access services as anyone else, irrespective of their cultural background. Law and human rights instruments define the boundaries of acceptable behaviour. Professionals must feel empowered to act.

Involving communities

Listening to communities is the first step in developing understanding and tackling forced marriage. This means more than engaging with the traditional community institutions or organisations. It is important to engage women, youth groups and especially the victims of forced marriage on a basis that ensures that their voices are heard.

It is important to listen to communities in determining whether or not forced marriage is an issue in any particular community or area and also in developing procedures for tackling it effectively. Again, all levels of a community must be engaged for the consultation to be meaningful, including women and young people.

The Working Group has found a wealth of expertise and knowledge within community-based organisations, particularly women's groups. Services need to identify these groups and build relationships with them.

It is clear from the Working Group's consultations that the most effective services have been delivered by community-based organisations, notably women's groups. Victims who had received services from these organisations told the Working Group how important it was for them to be able to access services delivered by their own community. These services were widely seen by women to be non-judgmental and understanding, and often far more accessible due to reasons of gender, language or culture. Some services provided from a religious perspective were also found to be valuable by many women.

However, many of the community-based women's organisations the Working Group encountered were poorly funded and lacked support from traditional community institutions. Some felt that they had to operate in virtual secrecy and feared reprisals for their work with victims of forced marriage. The Working Group has found that developing links between Government, service providers and community-based women's groups is essential to unlocking the potential of these organisations.

Multi-agency working

As with the needs of victims of domestic violence and child abuse, the needs of victims of forced marriage cut across service providers' boundaries. It is very unlikely that one agency or organisation will be able to meet the needs of any single person that finds themselves either at risk or actually forced into a marriage. A multi-agency approach is essential to making a real difference and this should include community and women's organisations. But multi-agency working should not lead to the exclusion of other initiatives that can help victims of forced marriage.

Involving community and women's organisations in multi-agency working needs to be taken seriously. They can, and should, be able to make a valuable contribution to multi-agency working.

There are now in existence a whole range of local and national multi-agency structures – for example, domestic violence and child protection forums – which bring relevant services together to ensure that needs of victims are met effectively, and also forums with broader remits, such as the crime and disorder reduction partnerships. Wherever appropriate, the Working Group feels that these forums should be developed to take forward action to combat forced marriage.

Forced marriage raises many issues that cannot be dealt with solely in these domestic forums, for example where a person is taken against their will overseas to be married. It is important for services to develop multi-agency working with organisations operating internationally as well as their partners in other countries. This has been described to the Working Group as developing networks of 'like-minded individuals'. New structures may be required in time to formalise these networks.

Monitoring

The Working Group has found that forced marriage is a 'hidden problem'. Information and statistics are often not available on the number of cases that services have encountered or how they were dealt with and their outcomes.

Policies developed to prevent forced marriage and to meet the needs of victims of forced marriage need to be monitored to ensure they are relevant, accessible and effective. This will require aggregated anonymised data that enables agencies to share information as to the scale of the problem and the resources devoted to dealing with its consequences. This should be on the basis of the common understanding that forced marriage is a marriage conducted without the valid consent of both parties, where duress is a factor.

Because the continuing safety and welfare of the individual are paramount concerns, monitoring will also mean follow up work in many individual cases. Too often, the Working Group heard of cases where a young person remained at risk without follow up by service providers. Any solutions need to take into account the long-term safety and needs of the person.

The Working Group feels that service providers should work towards establishing benchmarks for service standards in tackling forced marriage, against which service provision can be monitored and evaluated.

Training

People on the front line of service delivery need to have the necessary knowledge and training to deal competently and sensitively with a case of forced marriage.

As well as understanding the legal framework within which they operate and the needs of victims, people delivering services need access to information on forced marriage and the cultural framework in which it occurs. It is also essential for service providers to receive appropriate training so that they can acquire the necessary skills to conduct interviews and assessments with people who don't have English as a first language.

Services in different areas will need to work with different communities, taking account of different experiences and needs. And this will need to be reflected in the training and information packages developed. Communities and their women's groups should be involved in the development of training packages.

Training packages should have evaluation criteria and mechanisms built in to make sure that they are achieving the right results.

Promoting awareness of rights and services

The Working Group has found that many young people and their parents do not have a clear understanding of a person's right, religious or legal, to choose their marriage partner. Government and service providers should utilise every appropriate opportunity to educate people about their rights and responsibilities, including in relation to marriage. This should always be done with sensitivity, ensuring individual rights and informed choice.

It has also become clear through the Working Group's consultations that victims of forced marriage have had difficulty accessing services. Often they were not aware that services were available to them or how to access them. Leaflets, information campaigns and community-based sources of information, such as the Citizen's Advice Bureaux, should be used to publicise the availability of services to help victims of forced marriage. Information should be made available in appropriate languages.

Dealing with the wider issues

Forced marriage cannot be tackled in isolation. It must be seen within the broader context of social exclusion and family breakdown.

Many of the issues raised with the Working Group during the consultation process demand further detailed investigation within a wider policy context. These issues are not within this Working Group's remit, but have been reported to the Working Group as having an impact on the effectiveness of action to tackle forced marriage.

Government, service providers, communities and opinion formers all need to take account of the impact these issues have on tackling forced marriage. In particular, the impact on victims of forced marriage should be considered in detail within any review of the policy or practice in these areas.

Accessing legal services

Access to legal services is crucial for many victims of forced marriage. Nevertheless, many women experience problems accessing legal services. In cases where a woman is held against her will – either in the UK or overseas – these problems are exacerbated and women often rely on friends, relatives or women's groups to take action on their behalf. The lack of availability of third party actions was identified as a particular problem in some cases. Women have reported problems to the Working Group in the following areas:

- securing legal aid
- giving instructions to lawyers
- providing evidence to courts.

Immigration issues

Two key issues have emerged from the Working Group's consultations with victims of forced marriage in the area of immigration.

Women who are forced to act as the sponsor for their husband's immigration to the UK find themselves in an extremely difficult situation. A person who is refused immigration to the UK has a right to know the reasons why – and the right to appeal against the decision. This is a fundamental human right and should be protected. But this does mean that a woman's statement that a marriage is forced cannot be kept confidential if the decision to refuse entry to the UK is to be based on that statement.

Fear of reprisals for going against their family's wishes, often reinforced by direct threats, means that women are often unable to place their reluctance on record with the immigration service. Support from women's groups at this stage has proved invaluable to those women who have refused to support their forced partner's application, but this is not always enough.

Women brought to the UK for the purposes of a forced marriage also find themselves in a difficult situation. The Working Group met with women who were brought to the UK, married against their wishes and then found that they lacked any support to help them escape their situation. These women often suffered violence and degrading treatment by their spouse and his family. In particular, these women described problems with:

- uncertain immigration status – compounded by issues of family honour and shame if they went home
- language – many women in this position did not speak English
- accurate and relevant information about their rights
- recourse to funds and housing to help them escape the relationship.

Housing

Safe and secure accommodation is often a key need of a woman escaping a forced marriage. The Women's Aid Networks and local refuges and hostels, particularly those working specifically with Asian women, have been at the forefront of emergency housing provision for victims of forced marriage. There is nevertheless a need for more housing provision for victims of forced marriage, particularly permanent accommodation to address their long-term needs.

At present, the Housing Act 1996 does not acknowledge domestic violence or forced marriage as a priority ground for determining homelessness. The Working Group has been told that this is a specific problem for women seeking to escape abusive or forced relationships.

Women who have suffered forced marriage have also experienced problems where housing departments have contacted their families to gather evidence of their homelessness. In cases of forced marriage this can place the woman at risk and the Working Group feels that it constitutes a breach of confidentiality in these circumstances.

Support for women's organisations

The role of women's organisations in tackling forced marriage has been highlighted throughout this report. The Working Group has been impressed with the quality and effectiveness of service that many women's groups have been able to provide to victims of forced marriage and others – with such limited resources. Predictably, the majority of these organisations reported that funding was a significant barrier to their providing effective responses to forced marriage.

In addition, it has become clear to the Working Group that many women's organisations feel unsupported by the traditional community institutions within their local communities. Several have described the need to operate in secrecy following threats from some members of the community.

Government, service providers and communities themselves need to constantly review the provision of funding for women's groups, which are at the front line of providing services to vulnerable women, including victims of forced marriage. They must also actively support the work of women's organisations in meeting the needs of victims of forced marriage.



***“I can't wait to finish school really.
But if I don't stay on for sixth form
I'll have to get married.”***

Monitoring implementation

The Working Group has concluded that challenging and changing attitudes is the key to preventing forced marriage. Individual's attitudes can never be effectively monitored and the test will be whether or not the incidence of forced marriage reduces over time.

What can and should be monitored is the action taken by Government Departments, service providers, communities and opinion formers to respond to the problem of forced marriage and the action proposed in this report.

This report began with the statement that the issue of forced marriage should be seen as part of the Government's wider strategy to ensure that all people can live without fear, particularly the action already being taken to tackle violence against women.

There are already a number of forums at local and national level with responsibility for monitoring this work. Two of the key national groups are the All-Party Parliamentary Group on Domestic Violence and the Inter-Departmental Group on Violence against Women and Domestic Violence.

All-Party Parliamentary Group on Domestic Violence

The All-Party Parliamentary Group on Domestic Violence is a cross-party network of MPs and Peers, formed in 1999, to work towards the elimination of domestic violence and other forms of violence against women. The Group aims to contribute to the development of domestic violence policy and meets regularly to discuss and monitor current issues for policy and practice development.

The Working Group recommends that the All-Party Parliamentary Group should take forced marriage as an issue within its remit.

Inter-Departmental Group on Violence against Women and Domestic Violence

The Inter-Departmental Group on Violence against Women and Domestic Violence brings together, under a Home Office chair, officials from all the Government Departments involved in addressing these issues. Its role is to take forward the initiatives and commitments set out in *Living without Fear* and to ensure that policy is developed and delivered comprehensively in a coherent, consistent and properly co-ordinated way.

The Working Group recommends that the Inter-Departmental Group on Violence against Women and Domestic Violence should monitor the work across Government Departments aimed at tackling the issue of forced marriage.

Case study 4

F (girl) is a 17 year old, who until recently was studying for her A levels. She got engaged to G (boy), who converted to the same religion as her to help her family accept the fact that she was planning to marry outside of her ethnic, cultural and religious group. F's parents were not happy with the relationship, but went along with it, arranging an engagement party. Then she was suddenly taken abroad to her parents' home country.

Once there, F realised that her parents planned to force her into a marriage and she managed to send a message to G asking him for help to return to the UK. G contacted a British women's organisation, which referred him to lawyers in the country where F was. The lawyers made enquiries at the family home, but were unable to speak to F.

Several weeks later, an official at the British High Commission recognised F, who had been brought there by her family to renew her passport. Consular officials arranged to interview her separately, and for her to meet the lawyers G had engaged. F said she wanted to return to the UK, but was afraid of the repercussions from her family.

A few days later, F contacted the High Commission and asked for help to escape back to the UK. The next day she ran away and made it to the High Commission. She was issued with an emergency passport – her parents had confiscated hers. As she was leaving, F's family arrived and shouted at her to return. With the help of consular officials and her lawyers F returned safely to the UK.



“A woman’s right to choose a spouse and enter freely into marriage is central to her life and her dignity and equality as a human being.”

Annex 1 The Working Group

Membership

Members of the Working Group

Lord Ahmed of Rotherham	<i>co-Chair</i>
Baroness Uddin of Bethnal Green	<i>co-Chair</i>
Lord Dholakia OBE	<i>Chair of the National Association for the Care and Resettlement of Offenders and member of the Home Secretary's Race Relations Forum</i>
Yasmin Alibhai-Brown	<i>Author and journalist and member of the Home Secretary's Race Relations Forum</i>
Surinder Singh Attariwala	<i>Education and language consultant</i>
Thomas Chan	<i>Member of the Metropolitan Police Committee, member of the Home Secretary's Race Relations Forum and the Deputy Chairman of the Chinese in Britain Forum</i>
Humera Khan	<i>Consultant to the Muslim women's organisation, the An-Nisa Society</i>
Rita Patel	<i>Chair of the 1990 Trust, Director of the Belgrave Baheno women's organisation</i>
Hannana Siddiqui	<i>Member of the Southall Black Sisters women's organisation (resigned 24 May 2000)</i>

Secretary to the Working Group

Philip Colligan	<i>Home Office</i>
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Government advisors to the Working Group

Valerie Brasse	<i>Department of Health</i>
Helena Charlton	<i>Women's Unit, Cabinet Office</i>
Anna Green	<i>Local Government Association</i>
Sara Marshall	<i>Home Office</i>
Stuart McLaren	<i>Foreign and Commonwealth Office</i>
Rashpal Kaur Singh	<i>Social Services Inspectorate</i>
Alison Venner Jones	<i>Department for Education and Employment</i>

Terms of reference

The terms of reference of the Working Group were to:

- probe the extent of the problem;
- engage all of the relevant service delivery agencies, affected communities and relevant non-governmental organisations on this issue;
- stimulate a public debate to raise awareness of the issue of forced marriage; and,
- develop a comprehensive strategy for tackling the issue of forced marriage effectively, including preventative measures.

Consultation

The Working Group undertook an extensive consultation exercise from August 1999 to April 2000, involving written submissions and evidence, seminars, visits to women's organisations and meetings with victims of forced marriage and their families.

All evidence to the Working Group was provided in confidence, but with the understanding that it would be used to inform the deliberations of the Working Group and to develop responses to the problem of forced marriage.

The Working Group would like to thank everyone who contributed to the consultation exercise and to pay particular tribute to those women who met with members of the Working Group to share their experiences.

In one form or another, the Working Group has received evidence from the following range of organisations and individuals:

- Victims of forced marriage and their families and friends
- Women's organisations and groups
- Human rights organisations
- Community and religious institutions and organisations
- Parliamentarians
- Government Departments
- Local authorities
- Police forces
- Social services
- Housing services
- NHS Executive
- General Practitioners
- Health services
- Education authorities
- Youth services
- Teachers and headteachers
- Colleges
- Universities
- Academics and researchers
- Journalists
- High Commissions and Embassies
- The Immigration Service
- Lawyers
- Members of the judiciary
- The Official Solicitor
- The Registrar General
- Unions and professional organisations
- National charities
- Advice services

This report can be found on the Home Office web-site at: <http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk>

For further copies of this report please contact: 020 7273 4536 (24 hour answer phone)

This report will be translated into Bengali, Gujarati, Punjabi and Urdu during June and July 2000. The translated versions of the report will be available by the end of July on the Home Office web-site at: <http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk>

Annex 2 Useful contacts

Government

Any inquiries about the working group on forced marriage should be directed to:

Dee Brown
Race Equality Unit
Home Office
12th Floor
50 Queen Anne's Gate
London SW1H 9AT
Tel: 020 7273 3349
Fax: 020 7273 3376
Dee.Brown@homeoffice.gsi.gov.uk

Any inquiries about the Inter-Departmental Group on Violence against Women and Domestic Violence should be directed to:

Geoffrey Biddulph
Home Office
50 Queen Anne's Gate
London SW1H 9AT
Tel: 020 7273 3800
Fax: 020 7273 3714
Geoffrey.Biddulph@homeoffice.gsi.gov.uk
or Jackie Westlake
Home Office
50 Queen Anne's Gate
London SW1H 9AT
Tel: 020 7271 8923
Fax: 020 7271 8202
Jackie.Westlake@homeoffice.gsi.gov.uk

For information on the Home Office Connecting Communities – Race Equality Support grant, contact:

Richard Brett
Race Equality Unit
Home Office
12th Floor
50 Queen Anne's Gate
London SW1H 9AT
Tel: 020 7273 3772
Fax: 020 7273 3771
RichardJ.Brett@homeoffice.gsi.gov.uk

For information and assistance on consular matters, contact:

Foreign and Commonwealth Office
Consular Division
Tel: 020 7238 4511 (policy)
020 7238 4536 (inquiries)

Correspondence with the joint chairs of the Working Group should be directed to:

House of Lords
London SW1A 0AA
Tel: 020 7219 3000

Other Government publications referenced in this report are available from:

Home Office
Marketing and Communications Group
Room 157
50 Queen Anne's Gate
London SW1H 9AT
Fax: 020 7273 2568
Department of Health
DH Publications
PO Box 777
London SE1 6XH
Fax: 01623 724 524
Email: doh@prologistics.co.uk
Women's Unit, Cabinet Office
Tel: 020 7273 8880

<http://www.womens-unit.gov.uk>

Social Services publications
Tel: 020 8867 3201

DETR Publications Sales Centre
Tel: 01709 891 318

Women's Aid

Women's Aid Federation of England
PO Box 391
Bristol BS99 7WS
Tel: 0117 944 4411 (office)
08457 023468 (helpline)

Welsh Women's Aid
38-48 Crwys Road
Cardiff CF24 4NN
Tel: 029 2039 0874

Refuge

2-8 Meltravers Street
London WC2R 3EE
Tel: 020 7395 7700 (office)
0870 599 5443 (24 hour helpline)

Zero Tolerance helpline

Tel: 0800 028 3398
0800 028 3397 (Textphone)

Ethnic minority women's groups

An-Nisa Society
85 Wembley Hill Road
Wembley
Middlesex
Tel: 020 7902 0100

Belgrave Baheno
14 Melrose Street
Leicester
LE4 6FA
Tel: 0116 266 7673

Black Association of Women Step Out (BAWSO)
109 St Mary Street
Cardiff CF1 1DX
Tel: 01222 343 154

East London Family Counselling Service
The Jagonari Centre
183-185 Whitechapel Road
London E1 1DW
Tel: 020 7377 8640

Muslim Women's Helpline
Available: Monday – Friday, 10 a.m. – 4 p.m.
Tel: 020 8904 8193
020 8908 6715

Newham Asian Women's Project

661 Barking Road
London E13 9EX
Tel: 020 8472 0528
020 8552 5524 (advice line)

Southall Black Sisters

52 Norwood Road
Southall
Middlesex UB2 4DW
Tel: 020 8571 9595
Fax: 020 8574 6781

Victim support

Victim Support National Office

Cranmer House
39 Brixton Road
London SW9 6DZ
Tel: 020 7735 9166 (enquiries)

Victim Support Line

PO Box 11431
London SW9 6ZH
Tel: 0845 3030 900

Advice & Legal Advice

NACAB (National Association of Citizen's Advice Bureaux)

Middleton House
115-123 Pentonville Road
London N1 9LZ
Tel: 020 7833 2181

Rape Crisis

PO Box 69
London WC1X 9LZ
Tel: 020 7837 1600 (24 hour helpline)

Cardiff Rape Crisis Line

PO Box 338
Cardiff CF2 4XH
Tel: 020 2037 3181

Rights of Women

52-54 Featherstone Street
London EC1Y 8RT
Tel: 020 7251 6575 (office)
020 7251 6577 (advice)

Immigration Advisory Service

Tel: 020 7378 9191

Immigration and Joint Council for the Welfare of Immigrants

Tel: 020 7251 8706

Other useful contact details

Childline

Freepost 1111
London N1 0BR
Tel: 020 7273 1000 (office)
0800 1111 (freephone helpline for children & young people)

Childline (Wales)

9th Floor
Alexander House
Alexander Road
Swansea SA1 5ED
Tel: 01792 480 111 (office)
0800 1111 (freephone helpline for children & young people)

National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children (NSPCC)

Tel: 0800 800 500
(national freephone child protection helpline)

NSPCC (Wales)

Maes y ffynnon
Penrhosgarnedd
Bangor
Gwynedd LL57 2DW
Tel: 0808 100 2524
(child protection helpline)
0800 100 1033 (textphone)

Reunite (for parents of abducted children)

International Child Abduction Centre
PO Box 24875
London E1 6FR
Tel: 020 7375 3440 (advice line)

Useful web-sites

<http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk/domesticviolence>

Sets out the Government's policy around domestic violence; lists relevant publications and provides links to other sites.

<http://www.domesticviolencedata.org>

The Domestic Violence Data Source is an information co-ordinating system providing up to date material about domestic violence in England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland.

Although targeted mainly at practitioners, researchers and other academics, the site is also sensitive to the needs of those who have experienced violence.

<http://www.womensaid.org.uk>

Web-site of Women's Aid, providing information and help and local refuge contact details and sources of help for women experiencing violence, as well as information about domestic violence, and links to other useful web-sites.

ANNEX 3 Publications

- England Directory of Domestic Violence Multi-agency Fora (England and Wales)*
Women's Aid Federation (2000)
- Reducing Domestic Violence... What works? Multi-agency Fora*
G Hague (2000) PRCU briefing note, Home Office publication
- Arresting Evidence: Domestic Violence and Repeat Victimisation*
Home Office paper 104. J. Hanmer, S. Griffiths, D. Jerwood (1999)
- Attempted Suicide in West London, I. Rates across ethnic communities*
D. Bhugra, M. Desai, & D.S. Baldwin (1999) *Psychological Medicine*
- Attempted Suicide in West London, II. Inter-group comparisons*
D. Bhugra, M. Desai, D.S. Baldwin & K.S. Jacob (1999) *Psychological Medicine*
- The Gold Book: The UK wide directory of domestic violence refuge and helpline services*
Women's Aid Federation (1999)
- Living without fear: An integrated approach to tackling domestic violence*
The Women's Unit Cabinet Office (1999)
- Multi-agency Guidance for Addressing Domestic Violence*
Home Office (1999)
- No Secrets: Guidance on developing and implementing multi-agency policies and procedures to protect vulnerable adults from abuse*
Department of Health (1999)
- Relationship Breakdown: a guide for social landlords*
Department for the Environment, Transport and the Regions et al (1999)
- Supporting People*
Department of Social Services (1999)
- Working Together to Safeguard Children*
Department of Health (1999)
- Domestic Violence: A healthcare issue*
British Medical Association (1998)
- Tackling Violence against Women*
Women's Unit (1998)
- Suicide Patterns and Trends in People of Indian Subcontinent and Caribbean Origins in England and Wales*
Veena Soni Raleigh (1996) *Ethnicity & Health*
- Asian Suicides*
J. Merrill, J. Owens, S. Wynne & R. Whittington (1990) *British Journal of Psychiatry*
- Ethnic difference in self-poisoning: a comparison of Asian and White Groups*
J. Merrill & J. Owens (1986) *British Journal of Psychiatry*

