



Forced into a Marriage

Forced marriage is a form of gender-related violence and you are entitled to the same protection as any other victim of domestic violence.

In the UK

If you are being forced into a marriage in this country you can follow the advice given in the rest of this section on what to do in an emergency.

If you fear being taken abroad

If you suspect that you are being taken abroad to be forced into a marriage you can call Southall Black Sisters for advice on what to do to protect yourself or follow the advice in this section.

Under new legislation that came into force in 2007 -The Forced Marriage (Civil Protection) Act, it is now possible to go to court to get a protection order to prevent the person who is trying to force you into a marriage from doing so. You do not have to apply for this on your own behalf. The police or social services can apply or a relevant third party, like a trusted friend or a women's organisation, can also get leave from the court to apply on your behalf.

If you cannot leave home or cannot avoid going abroad leave the following information and items with someone you trust and if possible an agency that could help you with returning to the UK:

- Copies of your passport, and details page with passport number, place and date of issue and date of birth;
- Recent photograph of yourself;
- Parents' names and their address and telephone number in the UK;
- The names and addresses of relatives you are likely to be staying with abroad;
- Date you are expected to return to the UK;
- Your mobile phone number;
- A letter authorising someone you trust or an organisation that can help you to contact the police and/or Foreign and Commonwealth Office on your behalf.

Before you go abroad make sure you have the following information/items with you:

- Copies of your passport, and details page with passport number, place and date of issue and date of birth;
- The address and telephone number of the British High Commission/ Consulate in the country you are visiting which you can find by calling the Forced Marriage Unit (FMU) based at the Foreign and Commonwealth Office on Telephone: **020 7008 0151** (or **0044 20 7008 0151** if you are overseas) or see the [Forced Marriage Unit website](#);
- If at all possible take some money with you and a mobile telephone if you have one;
- The contact details of the person or organisation you have left your details with.

At the airport

Once at the airport if you have any opportunity to speak to any airline staff or police or security personnel, make them aware that you are being taken abroad against your will and being forced into a marriage.



What is Domestic Violence?

Domestic violence is physical, psychological (emotional), sexual or financial abuse that takes place within an intimate or family type relationship and usually forms a pattern of coercive and controlling behaviour.

Approximately 95% of the victims of domestic violence are women and the perpetrator is usually male. Whilst most people normally think of domestic violence as being something one partner does to another, abuse by your own family or your partner/ spouse's family is also domestic violence.

You can use this list* to help you recognise if you or someone you know is in an abusive relationship.

Forced marriage: family members, including extended family members, who use physical violence or emotional pressure to make you to marry someone, without your free and full consent;

Threats regarding 'honour': immediate and extended family members, partners and ex-partners justifying a range of abusive and violent behaviour (listed below) in the name of 'honour'. For example, using violence to prevent you from bringing dishonour or shame upon yourself or them.

Destructive criticism and verbal abuse: shouting/mockng/humiliating/accusing/name calling/verbally threatening;

Pressure tactics: sulking; threatening to withhold money, disconnect the telephone, take the car away, commit suicide, take the children away, report you to welfare agencies unless you comply with his demands regarding bringing up the children; lying to your friends and family about you; telling you that you have no choice in any decisions, demanding more dowry;

Disrespect and humiliation: persistently putting you down in front of other people; not listening or responding when you talk; interrupting your telephone calls; taking money from your purse without asking; refusing to help with childcare or housework;

Breaking trust: lying to you; withholding information from you; being jealous; having other relationships; breaking promises and shared agreements;

Isolation: monitoring or blocking your telephone calls; telling you where you can and cannot go; preventing you from contacting friends and relatives; accompanying you wherever you go.

Harassment: following you; checking up on you; opening your mail; repeatedly checking to see who has telephoned you; embarrassing you in public;

Threats: making angry gestures; using physical size to intimidate; shouting you down; destroying your possessions; breaking things; punching walls; wielding a knife or a gun;

Sexual violence: using force, threats or intimidation to make you perform sexual acts; having sex with you when you don't want to have sex; any degrading treatment based on your sexual orientation;

Physical violence: punching; slapping; hitting; biting; pinching; kicking; pulling hair out; pushing; shoving; burning; strangling; raping;

Denial: saying the abuse doesn't happen; saying you caused the abusive behaviour; being publicly gentle and patient; crying and begging for forgiveness; saying it will never happen again;

Suicide: acting in ways which make you feel suicidal or encouraging you to contemplate or commit suicide.

* This list borrows in part from the list of abusive behaviours provided by the Women's Aid Federation on their website.

National and Regional Helplines:

- Contact the freephone 24 hour [National Domestic Violence Helpline](#) run in partnership between Women's Aid and Refuge: **0808 2000 247** (with a minicom service and language-line facility)
- Refuge Crisis Line (London wide): **0870 599 5443**.
- [BAWSO](#) (For black women in Wales who are victims of domestic abuse) Free 24hr helpline: **0800 7318147**
- [Scottish Women's Aid](#) Domestic Abuse Helpline **0800 027 1234** (24 hours)
- [Shakti Women's Aid](#) (For black/minority ethnic women in Scotland who are victims of domestic abuse) **0131 475 2399**
- [Victim Support](#) call **0845 30 30 900**
- [Shelter](#), for housing advice: **0808 800 4444**
- [Samaritans](#): **08457 909090** – The Samaritans are a nationwide charity which provides 24-hour confidential emotional support for anyone in crisis.
- [National Child Protection Helpline](#) (NSPCC): **0800 8005000** – This is a free, confidential service for anyone concerned about children at risk, including children themselves. The service offers counselling, information and advice.
- Your local Social Services Emergency Duty Team.
- Your local Homeless Persons After Hours Unit Team.
- [Forced Marriage Unit](#) (FMU), Foreign Commonwealth Office Advice on forced marriages: **020 7008 0151**.



Who to contact in an emergency

Southall Black Sisters do not provide a 24 hour emergency service. If you need help out of hours (9-5pm) we advise you to contact the police on **999** or one of the emergency helplines listed below.

If you are using our services and have a case with us we will continue to work with you out-of-hours if necessary, to ensure your safety.

Calling the Police

Domestic violence is a crime. If there has been an incidence of violence or harassment or a threat of violence or harm made against you or someone you know, dial **999** (minicom **0800 112 999**).

In an emergency a police officer or officers should come to you immediately. In non-emergency situations, depending on the circumstances, a male or female officer may come to see you initially. Most forces have specially trained police officers attached to a specialised Domestic Violence Unit or Community Safety Unit. You should ask the officer for his or her name and badge number. Once the initial risk to your safety is over, if you prefer, you can ask to speak to a female officer. The police should also provide you with an interpreter if necessary.

If there is no immediate threat but you wish to report a crime of violence, we can help you contact the police and we may be able to go with you to the police station to report the incident or advise on the matter.

Once you have reported a violent or threatening incident to the police, a full statement will be taken and the police will investigate the matter and gather all the information in order for the Crown Prosecution Service to decide whether there is enough evidence to prosecute the person who abused/harassed you. Often the police will ask you if you agree to support a criminal prosecution (pressing charges). If you don't want the police to press charges they usually won't but you should think about this carefully and obtain more advice before making a decision.

For more information on being a witness in a criminal prosecution, you can contact the police officer dealing with the case. You can also contact us or your local Domestic Violence or Community Safety Unit or your local Victim Support Group.