

Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent Safeguarding Children Boards Briefing (19)

Announcement on the new legislation on Forced Marriage in England and Wales

June 2014

What's happening and when?

From 16 June 2014, forcing someone to marry will be a criminal offence in England and Wales under [The Anti-social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014](#). It could result in a sentence of up to 7 years in prison.

In a forced marriage, 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 some cases, where vulnerable adults lack capacity to consent, coercion is not required for a marriage to be forced¹.

It can happen to both women and men, although many of the cases reported involve young girls aged between 16 and 25 and on occasion some have been as young as 6 years of age. This is a form of child abuse.

In 2013 the governments Forced Marriage Unit (FMU) received calls in relation to 1300 possible cases of forced marriage and as a result they have revised the multi-agency statutory guidelines² to reflect the new legislation and to strengthen the ways in which agencies work together to tackle the issue. This can be found on the following web site: www.gov.uk/forced-marriage

How can we help to identify victims of forced marriage?

Across Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent there is a multi-agency policy and procedure that will provide advice and guidance for front line practitioners who encounter a forced marriage. This document can be found on the LSCB web pages. Staffordshire: www.staffsscb.org.uk or Stoke: www.safeguardingchildren.stoke.gov.uk

National organisations such as ChildLine, in conjunction with the Government's Forced Marriage Unit, have produced a short animation to help children and young people understand the change in the law and how it might affect them.

[Your tomorrow: Layla's forced marriage story - ChildLine YouTube video](#)

The Freedom Charity provides a range of resources to support practitioners who are working with victims of forced marriage: 0845 607 01330/ www.freedomcharity.org.uk/

Local agencies that support victims of forced marriage include:

Savana: www.savana.org.uk/ 01782 221000 (24 hour message line)

Karma Nirvana (Stoke-on-Trent): www.karmanirvana.org.uk/ 0800 5999247

¹ Source: Part 10 of the [The Anti-social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014](#)
<http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2014/12/part/10/enacted>

² The Right to Choose: Multi-agency statutory guidance for dealing with forced marriage. June 2014
Source: <https://www.gov.uk/forced-marriage>