



# My Marriage My Choice

Understanding Forced Marriage – A Guide for People with Learning Disabilities

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## **Introduction**

This work book will tell you what forced marriage is and tell you how to get help when there is a risk of forced marriage to you or someone you know.

You can watch a short film that tells you more about forced marriage by clicking on the link below.

**My Marriage My Choice project website:**

<http://www.nottingham.ac.uk/research/groups/mymarriagemychoice>

**Would you recognise 'forced marriage'?**

**You can look at part 1 of the film to learn more.**

In a forced marriage, one or both people getting married do not or cannot consent (agree) to the marriage. Forced marriage is against the law.

Some people cannot consent because they do not understand what they are agreeing to. Both people have to be able to consent to getting married and that means they need to understand what it means.

In some marriages the people getting married may not have all the information they need to make a real decision. They might not have met the person they are going to marry before the marriage ceremony.

It is against the law for someone to make you marry when you can't consent to it yourself.

It is also against the law for someone to force you to get married when you don't want to.

You cannot be forced to marry.

## **How is forced marriage different from an arranged marriage?**

A forced marriage and an arranged marriage are not the same.

In an arranged marriage, the people getting married are introduced to each other by their families, but it is still up to them if they get married or not. They are allowed to say no if they do not want to marry the person they are introduced to.

In a forced marriage one or both people getting married (the husband and wife) do not or cannot consent (agree) to the marriage.

A forced marriage is against the law. An arranged marriage is not against the law.

### **Question 1.**

Is a forced marriage the same as an arranged marriage?

Can you say one thing that is different?

### **Answer**

Forced marriage is different to an arranged marriage.

Some of the differences are:

- In an arranged marriage you can choose to get married or not
- Arranged marriage is not against the law
- In a forced marriage you cannot choose whether or not to get married
- In a forced marriage you cannot choose who to marry
- In a forced marriage you will be told to marry even if you don't want to.
- Forced marriage is against the law

Here is Madar's story, you can watch this on **part 1** of the film. When you have watched the film or read Madar's story answer the questions below.

### **Case study**

Madar lives with his elderly parents, Madar's parents want him to marry. Until now he did not think they meant it. Madar's key worker at the employment project has noticed that he is sad. When Madar is asked if he is worried, at first he does not say, but with reassurance he says that his parents have found him a woman to marry. Madar says that he does not want to get married and is very upset about leaving his job for the summer to go back to Somalia for the wedding. He says his mum told him she knows what was best for him and getting married is for his own good.

- Was it Madar's idea to get married?
- Did he make the decision to get married?
- Do we know if he wanted to get married?

### **Answer**

- **It was not Madar's idea to get married**
- Madar did not decide, his mum decided
- Madar did not agree to get married but he felt he should listen to his mum
- Madar was clear that he didn't want to get married.
- This is a forced marriage

## **Forced marriage is against the law**

It is against the law to force someone to marry. This law is called the Crime, Anti-social Behaviour and Policing Act 2014. It is against the law to:

- take someone out of the country to force them to marry
- make them get married in the UK
- make someone get married when they do not understand what marriage is all about

The law in this country can protect people who are at risk of being forced to marry. This law is called the Forced Marriage (Civil Protection) Act 2007 and allows somebody to be stopped from forcing another person into marriage.

You can also get help if you have already been forced to marry and want to get out of the situation (we will tell you how at the end of this work book).

### **Question 2.**

There are laws about forced marriage in this country – is this true or false?

### **Answer**

The answer is true.

### **It's your decision – you have rights**

It is up to you if you want to agree to get married. It is not up to anyone else.

**See part 4** of the film for what professionals and people with a learning disability say

**Question 3.**

Who decides if you can get married? You? Your family? Someone else?
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**Answer**

Only you have the right to decide if you want to get married.

Only you have the right to decide who to marry.

**Fear of upsetting family**

Even if you do not want to get married or do not understand what is happening you may not want to upset your family. Your mum or dad or other family members may often make decisions for you and most of the time this is fine – but only if you agree to it.

But if you do not understand what getting married is about or do not want to get married you need to say so. Getting married is more than a big party and living with another person.

**In part 1** of the film you can watch Shazia’s story, you will hear how Shazia’s sister does not agree with her mum about her sister being forced to marry and is worried about the plans that are being made. Shazia’s sister tells her mum about the risks and thinks Shazia’s care manager should be told.

#### **Question 4.**

If you get married will you

- Share a house and a bedroom with the person?
- Have a sexual relationship?
- Maybe have children?
- Share your money and your life with them?

#### **Answer**

You will possibly do all of the above.

Getting married is a big decision that only you and your partner can make.

#### **Question 5.**

Should you get married if *someone else* tells you to?

What if it was your Mum and Dad telling you to – should you do it then?

Should you marry if someone else you know well wants you to get married?

#### **Answer**

You may ask your family or friends for help with lots of decisions. Getting married is different, no one but you can make this decision. You can only make this decision if you fully understand all that getting married would mean.

#### **If you are worried about forced marriage you should:**

Ask for help and support.

Have a think for a few minutes about who you may tell and what you could do?

Here are some ideas;

- If you cannot speak to your family about this you can speak to a teacher, social worker, doctor, brother, sister or another person you trust.
- Tell someone as soon as possible.
- Make sure you keep safe, if you think your family are planning your marriage, tell someone quickly.
- Remember there are people who can help you, you do not have to face this alone.
- You can ring the police on 999 if you feel in immediate danger.

**Key message: ASK FOR HELP**

## Quiz

**Answer these questions to see how much you have learnt**

1. If you are worried you will be forced to marry you should
  - a. Do what your family want
  - b. Keep your worries a secret
  - c. Tell someone
  
2. Getting married means
  - a. Just having a big party
  - b. Being told you are going on holiday and then finding out you will be getting married
  - c. Choosing to get married and being involved in making decisions together with your husband or wife
  
3. It is okay to get married if
  - a. You don't really want to but someone tells you it's for the best
  - b. You understand and it's your choice
  - c. Your family tell you they can't look after you anymore

## **Quiz answers**

1- c. Tell someone

2- c. Choosing to get married and being involved in making decisions together with your husband or wife

3 - b. You understand and it's your choice

## **If you are worried about any of the things we have talked about here**

### **ASK FOR HELP**

If you feel that you or someone else is in danger phone 101

If someone is in immediate or urgent danger phone 999

You can also ask for help from your GP or from social services

You can also contact the Forced Marriage Unit for advice and guidance

### **Useful contact numbers**

#### Ann Craft Trust

The Ann Craft Trust (ACT) is committed to safeguarding disabled young people and adults at risk.

Telephone: 0115 9515400 Email: [ann-craft-trust@nottingham.ac.uk](mailto:ann-craft-trust@nottingham.ac.uk)

#### Childline

Childline is a service provided by NSPCC. Call free on 0800 1111

#### Forced Marriage Unit

The Forced Marriage Unit (FMU) is a joint Foreign and Commonwealth Office and Home Office unit. The FMU operates a public helpline to provide advice and support to victims of forced marriage.

Telephone: +44 (0) 20 7008 0151 Email: [fmu@fco.gov.uk](mailto:fmu@fco.gov.uk)

## Karma Nirvana

Karma Nirvana is a British human rights charity supporting victims of honour based abuse and forced marriage.

They have a helpline – 0800 599 9247 Email on [info@karmanirvana.org.uk](mailto:info@karmanirvana.org.uk)

## Respond

Respond exists in order to lessen the effect of trauma and abuse on people with learning disabilities their families and supporters.

Telephone: 0207 383 0700 Email: [admin@respond.org.uk](mailto:admin@respond.org.uk)

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Summary of Findings ([full](#), [short](#) and [easy read](#) versions)

[Case Studies Collection](#) (real life experiences and challenges)

[Films](#) to raise awareness of the issues (in English, Hindi, Urdu and Sylheti)

[Toolkit](#) (guidance to support assessment of capacity to consent to marry)

[Workbook for families](#) to raise awareness of the issues

[Workbook for people with learning disabilities](#) to raise awareness of the issues

Available free at

<https://www.nottingham.ac.uk/research/groups/mymarriagemychoice/>

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