

PRACTITIONER'S GUIDE



## SUPPORTING THOSE AT RISK OF Forced Marriage



“ JUST ONE CHANCE ”

**There is legislation which protects people from being forced into a marriage; in 2014 it became a criminal offence to force someone to marry. The Scottish Government recognises forced marriage to be a form of violence against women/gender based violence and, where children are victims of forced marriage, child abuse.**

This briefing is intended to clarify practitioners' roles and responsibilities. It should be read in conjunction with Scottish Government Multi-agency Practice Guidance which is available at:  
**Forced marriage: statutory guidance - gov.scot**

A forced marriage is where one or both spouses do not (or, in the case of children / young people / adults at risk, cannot) consent to the marriage and duress is involved. Duress can include physical, psychological, financial, sexual and emotional pressure, threatening conduct, harassment, threat of blackmail, use of deception and other means. It is also 'force' to knowingly take advantage of a person's incapacity to consent to, or understand the nature of, the marriage. Duress may be from parents, other family members and the wider Community.

## “ONE CHANCE” RULE



Forced Marriage is a cross cutting issue impacting on areas of community safety, gender-based violence, child protection, adult protection and MARAC. The Equality Act 2010 requires statutory agencies to have due regard to the need to eliminate discrimination which is unlawful under the Act, advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations.

Staff may only have **one chance** to speak to a potential victim and thus, have **one chance to save a life**.

**It is important that all professionals working within statutory agencies are aware of their responsibilities and obligations when they come across forced marriage cases. If the victim is allowed to walk out of the door without support, that one chance might be lost.**

Service Contacts who can provide practice guidance are as follows:

Agency	Name	E-Mail	Telephone
Police	Fife Child Abuse Investigation Unit	FifeChildAbuseInvestUnit@scotland.police.uk	101 & ask for PPU or 999 in an emergency
	Fife Public Protection Unit	FifeDAIU@Scotland.police.uk	
NHS (For Children And Young People)	NHS FIFE Lead Nurse for Child Protection & NHS Fife Child Protection Lead Paediatrician	fife.initialreferraldiscussion@nhs.scot	01592 648114
NHS (For Adult Victims)	Gender Based Violence Coordinator	fife.gbvteam@nhs.scot	01592 729258
Social Work – Children And Families	Team Manager, Social Work Contact Centre	sw.contactctr@fife.gov.uk	03451 551503
Adults Social Work	Team Manager, Social Work Contact Centre	sw.contactctr@fife.gov.uk	01383 602200
Education (Nursery, Primary, And Secondary)	Quality Improvement Officer – Child Protection	gavin.waterston@fife.gov.uk c.c. namedpersonservice@fife.gov.uk	Voip 430292
University Of St Andrews	Student Services	support.advice@st-andrews.ac.uk	01334 462020
Fife College	Safeguarding Team	wehearyou@fife.ac.uk	0344 248 0115
Housing	Lead Officer, Specific Needs	specific.needs@fife.gov.uk	03451 555555 Ext 480414

## PREVALENCE

In 2023, the FMU provided advice or support in 280 cases of forced marriage and 519 forced marriage enquiries. Of the 280 cases of forced marriage (and 3 of female genital mutilation) 2% of these were in Scotland.

However, the Scottish Government is aware that this data will not accurately reflect the number of instances of forced marriage in Scotland; Scottish victims often seek advice and support from organisations closer to home and the issue is generally under-reported as a result of a lack of public awareness of the issue, and of where to seek help and advice.

Between 2019 – 2022, Scotland’s Domestic Abuse and Forced Marriage Helpline handled 125 helpline contacts in relation to forced marriage. 115 were in relation to a woman or girl, 9 were in relation to a man or boy and in 1 the person’s gender was unknown.

In the same period:

- Shakti Women’s Aid supported 47 adult survivors, 162 adults who were married and did not realise their marriage was a forced marriage and 13 children and young people affected by (or victims of) forced marriage.
- Hemat Gryffe Women’s Aid supported 39 cases of forced marriage
- Amina MWRC has supported 79 cases of forced marriage

Since January 2022 Saheliyah supported 10 new cases of women affected by forced marriage whilst supporting 200+ migrant women who are living in or have experienced forced marriage prior to migration.

**In 2023, 75% of victims (212 cases) were British nationals, including dual nationals, 6% (18 cases) were EU nationals and 16% of victims (46 cases) were non-British nationals. The nationality of the individual was unknown in 2% of cases (7 cases).**

Although this is a VAWG issue and predominantly affects women more, Forced Marriage can also happen to men and boys. Should you suspect this is the case then you should follow the same guidance, and cases should be dealt with in the same way as it would for women and girls.

Forced marriage also affects people with learning and other disabilities, and evidence suggests that for people with learning disabilities, forced marriage may occur at a similar rate for men and women.

It is also important to be aware of 'Arranged Marriage' and that this is not being used to hide the process of a forced marriage or someone is not being forced or coerced into entering an arranged marriage. An arranged marriage is one in which the families of both spouses are primarily responsible for choosing a marriage partner for their child or relative, but the final decision as to whether or not to accept the arrangement lies with the potential spouses: both spouses give their full and free consent. The tradition of arranged marriage has operated successfully within many communities for generations

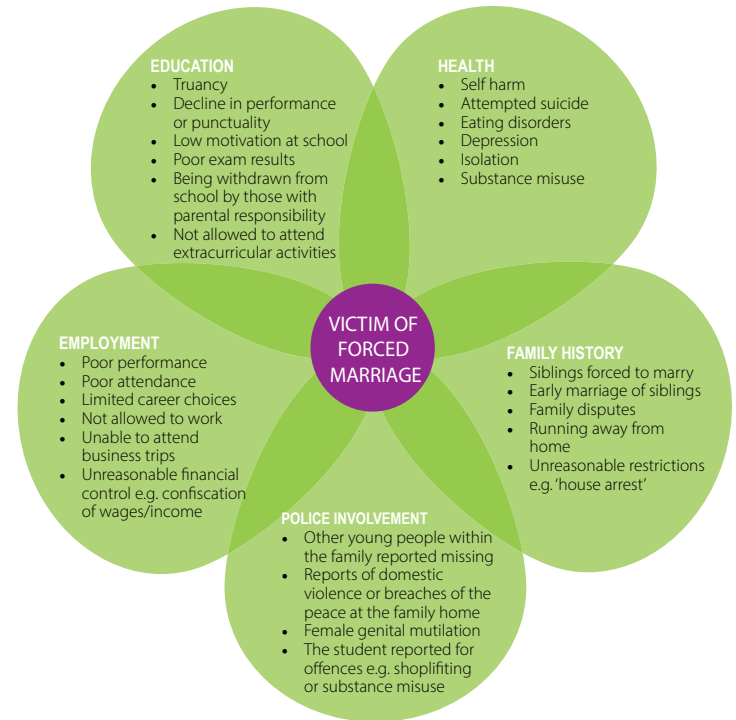
# WARNING SIGNS

There are a range of reasons that victims can come to the attention of practitioners. The following are possible warning signs - they are neither conclusive nor comprehensive but are a useful check.

If you suspect forced marriage follow the **Scottish Government Multi-agency Practice Guidance** and “**One Chance Checklist**” at the back of this guide.

Particular care must be taken around **confidentiality**; it can be dangerous to involve families, friends or community leaders in any capacity.

**It is not appropriate to attempt family counselling, mediation, arbitration or reconciliation.**





The Forced Marriage etc (Protection and Jurisdiction) (Scotland) Act 2011 legislated for **Forced Marriage Protection Orders (FMPO)** which can be granted in the civil courts in Scotland to protect both adults and children at risk. In 2014 the Anti-social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014 made forcing someone into marriage a criminal offence in Scotland.

The provision is designed to enable the courts to tailor the terms of an FMPO to protect and meet the specific needs of victims of forced marriage or potential forced marriage. For example it might state that:

- the protected person must be taken to a place of safety designated in the order,
- or that the protected person be brought to a court at such time and place as the court specifies
- any violent, threatening or intimidating conduct be stopped

Any person, with leave of the court, can apply for an FMPO. However, the victim, a local authority, the Lord Advocate and any other person specified by order may apply without leave.

## ■ BREACH OF A FORCED MARRIAGE PROTECTION ORDER

is a criminal offence and is punishable by imprisonment for up to 2 years and/or a fine. The police may arrest without warrant any person they reasonably believe is committing or has committed a breach of a FMPO. As with any other civil order, the applicant or the protected person would be the person who would either go to court or report the breach to the police. However, any person including, for example, a friend or relative of the protected person (even if not directly affected by the order) could report a breach of a FMPO to the police for investigation.

**However, the Guidance encourages the use of existing legislation and multi-agency guidance depending on circumstances these include:**

- Immigration legislation
- Sexual Offences (Scotland) Act 2009
- Domestic Abuse (Scotland) Act 2018
- Prohibition of Female Genital Mutilation (Scotland) Act 2005
- Criminal Justice and Licensing (Scotland) Act 2010
- Adult Support and Protection (Scotland) Act 2007
- Adults with Incapacity (Scotland) Act 2000 and Mental Health (Care and Treatment) (Scotland) Act 2003
- National Guidance for Child Protection in Scotland (2021)
- Forced Marriage etc (Protection and Jurisdiction) (Scotland) Act 2011
- Protection from Abuse (Scotland) Act 2001
- Anti-Social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014
- Children's Hearing (Scotland) Act 2011
- United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (Incorporation) (Scotland) Act 2024

## IMMEDIATE PROTECTION

There may be a need for immediate protection and emergency action, including for other siblings. Effective inter-agency working and information sharing is critical. The alleged perpetrator, extended family and wider community may all present risk to the victim.

If a Forced Marriage Protection Order is breached the police must be informed as soon as possible.

**Call 101.** Guidance may be sought from the public protection unit in the first instance.

**Dial 999 in an emergency or if there is an immediate risk**

## ONE CHANCE CHECKLIST

### DO:

- ✓ See the victim on her/his own – even if she/he is accompanied by others
- ✓ See her/him immediately in a secure and private place where you will not be overheard
- ✓ Reassure her/him about confidentiality (in line with your organisation’s policy) and explain that you will not give information to her/his family/friends or community
- ✓ Accept what she/he says
- ✓ Explain all the options to her/him and their possible outcomes
- ✓ Recognise and respect her/his wishes
- ✓ Assess the risk she/he faces by conducting an appropriate and thorough risk assessment
- ✓ Contact, as soon as possible, the lead worker responsible for forced marriage (if she/he is under 18, refer to **Fife Multi Agency Overarching Child Protection Guidance 2025**; if she/he is an adult at risk, discuss with your adult support and protection lead and refer to **inter-agency guidance**)

## ONE CHANCE CHECKLIST

✓ Ensure an independent translator is obtained or a communication specialist is used for a person who is deaf or has learning disabilities etc. (There are risks in using anyone to translate for the person so care must be taken to ensure they are professional, independent and have no links with the community or the person's family. Make sure they understand their role - to translate verbatim and not "interpret" the message or censor/omit any of the information)

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✓ Obtain full details to pass on to the lead worker and record these safely

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✓ Give her/him (or help her/him memorise) your contact details and/or those of a support agency such as Women's Aid

✓ Consider the need for immediate police involvement, protection and placement away from the family and arrange this if necessary; this includes any action to stop her/him from being removed from the UK

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✓ Do everything you can to keep her/him safe

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✓ Get immediate advice if you are not sure what to do

## ONE CHANCE CHECKLIST

### DO NOT:

- X** Send her/him away or let her leave without a safety plan and follow up arrangements
- X** Approach her/his friends/family or community unless she/he asks you to do so
- X** Approach community leaders for advice
- X** Attempt to mediate with the family
- X** Share information with anyone else other than making a referral or reporting harm, unless the person permits that. Information should always be shared with social work if the adult is considered to potentially be at risk of harm. Practitioners should also be mindful of any risks to children and/or household members and the wider family and again information should always be shared with social work if this is the case.

Child protection processes are considered for cases of forced marriage where the individual is under 18 years, and if so, an Interagency Referral Discussion (IRD) held

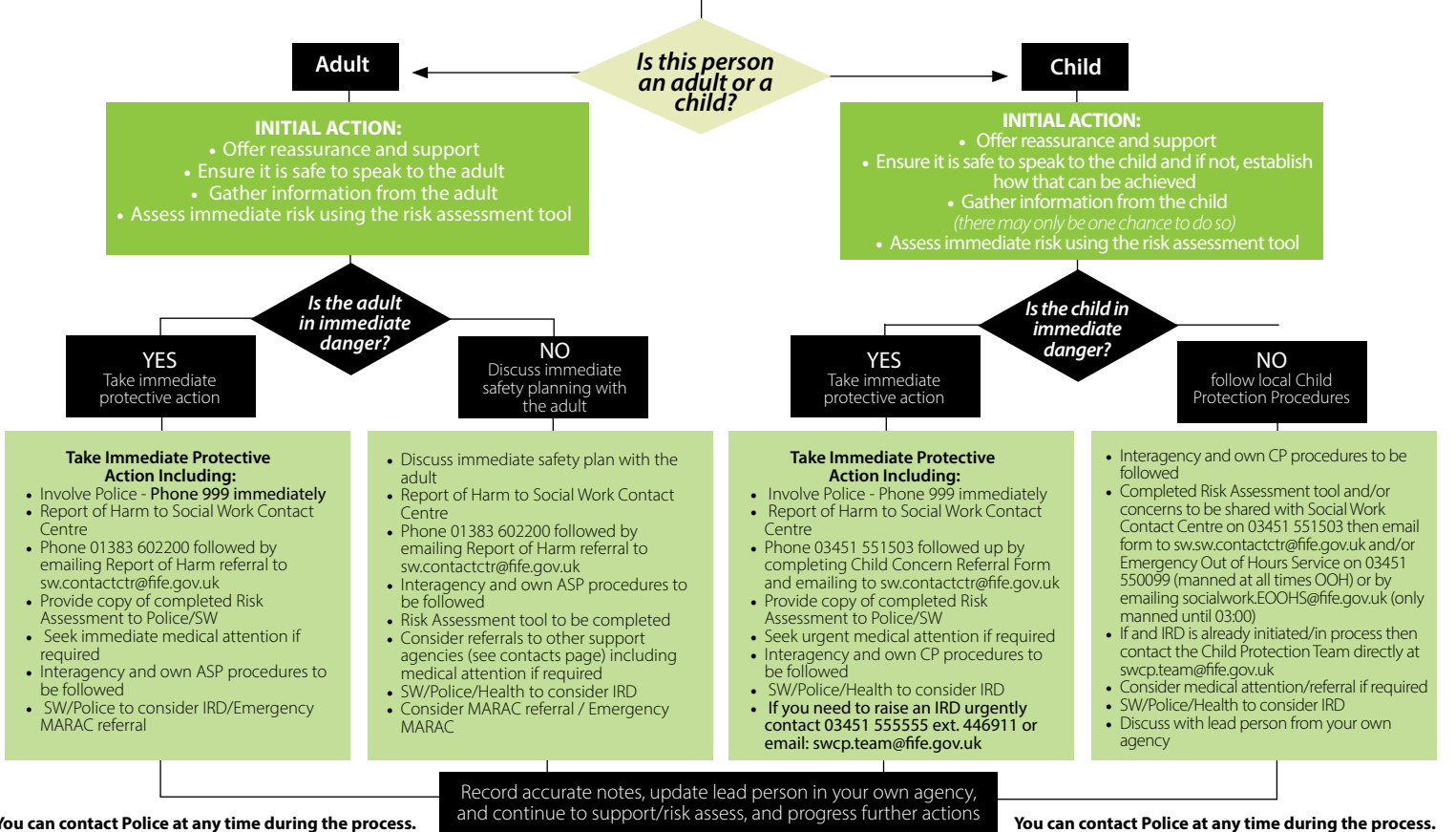
- Staff should share information promptly when a child or young person is at risk of forced marriage;
- Staff should provide information to the Forced Marriage Unit, especially if there is a risk of the victim being taken out of the country; and
- Staff are able to understand the difference between breaking confidence (involving the child or young person's family without consent), and sharing information with, or without, consent with other appropriate professionals, to prevent the child or young person being at risk of significant harm.

**Remember risk is fluid, and just because the victim has been supported and the risk of forced marriage is mitigated, does not mean the victim is now safe. Consider consequences of engagement with services and further risks to the victim including other types of “honour based abuse” due to their disclosure. This must not deter services from intervening but alert them to further safety planning needs.**

- Complete the Referral Form for the Social Work Service for concerns about a child and email to [SW.contactctr@fife.gov.uk](mailto:SW.contactctr@fife.gov.uk)
- Adult Report of Harm form can be accessed **HERE** and e-mailed to: [SW.contactctr@fife.gov.uk](mailto:SW.contactctr@fife.gov.uk)

*The following page includes a flow chart. Please do not use this flowchart in isolation as it should be considered alongside the rest of the guidance document, as well as your single agency and inter-agency guidance.*

## Responding to Forced Marriage Concerns



- *If in any cases there is an Unborn Baby Involved then please also report to Social Work Contact Centre and/or if SW/Police/Health consider raising an IRD for UBB if person at risk is pregnant - Contact NHS Fife Midwifery Team*
- *If the person is a young person aged 16-17 then also consider the Vulnerable Young Person's (VYP) Protocol.*

## USEFUL LINKS

RESPONDING TO FORCED MARRIAGE - MULTI-AGENCY PRACTICE GUIDELINES  
SUMMARY GUIDELINES, SCOTTISH GOVERNMENT  
[www.scotland.gov.uk](http://www.scotland.gov.uk)

SERVICE SPECIFIC GUIDANCE  
[forced-marriage-statutory-guidance.pdf](#)

CHILD PROTECTION IN FIFE  
[www.fifechildprotection.org.uk](http://www.fifechildprotection.org.uk)

FIFE VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN PARTNERSHIP WEB PAGES  
[Violence against women | Fife Council](#)

FIFE ADULT PROTECTION AND SUPPORT:  
[Tell us about someone who is at risk of harm, abuse or neglect | Fife Council](#)

SCOTLAND'S DOMESTIC ABUSE AND FORCED MARRIAGE HELPLINE  
Phone: 0800 027 1234 Email: [helpline@sdafmh.org.uk](mailto:helpline@sdafmh.org.uk)  
Web chat: [www.sdafmh.org.uk](http://www.sdafmh.org.uk)

SHAKTI WOMEN'S AID  
Phone: 0131 475 2399 Email: [info@shaktiedinburgh.co.uk](mailto:info@shaktiedinburgh.co.uk)  
Website: [Shakti Women's Aid](#)

AMINA – MUSLIM WOMEN'S RESOURCE CENTRE  
Phone: 0808 801 0301 Website: [mwrc.org.uk](http://mwrc.org.uk)

HEMAT GRYFFE WOMEN'S AID (GLASGOW BASED):  
Phone: 0141 353 0859 Email: [womensaid@hematgryffe.org.uk](mailto:womensaid@hematgryffe.org.uk)  
Website: [www.hematgryffe.org.uk](http://www.hematgryffe.org.uk)

SCOTTISH WOMEN'S RIGHT CENTRE  
Phone: 08088 010 789  
Website: [scottishwomensrightscentre.org.uk](http://scottishwomensrightscentre.org.uk)

FIFE INTERNATIONAL FORUM  
[Fife International Forum | Migrants and Refugee Charity](#)  
Phone: 01592 642927  
Email: [info@fifeinternational.uk](mailto:info@fifeinternational.uk)

FIFE CENTRE FOR EQUALITIES  
[Support, guidance, referral and general equality training](#)  
Phone: 01592 645 310  
[www.centreforequalities.org.uk](http://www.centreforequalities.org.uk)