

Responding to Forced Marriage in Highland

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Policy Reference:	Date of Issue: February 2016		
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Lead Reviewer: Elaine Mead	Version: 1		
Authorised by: Highland Violence Against Women Partnership	Date: 19/02/2016		
Distribution			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Executive Directors, NESH • Associate Directors, NESH • Clinical Directors, NESH • Clinical Governance, NESH • Midwifery • Obstetrics and Gynaecology • Sexual Health • Child and Adult Protection • Third sector • Police Scotland • Chief Executive, THC • Elected Members • Director of Care & Learning, THC • Head of Housing, THC • Customer Services Manager, THC • Head of Corporate Governance, THC 			
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Warning – Document uncontrolled when printed

Version: 1	Page 1
Date of Issue: February 2016	Date of Review: February 2018

Responding to those at Risk of Forced Marriage in Highland

Introduction

A forced marriage is a marriage in which 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.

Forced marriage is a form of violence against women/gender based violence and, where children are involved, child abuse. Where adults are affected by disability, mental disorder, illness or physical or mental infirmity, forced marriage may also meet adult protection criteria. It is often associated with other forms of domestic abuse and 'honour based' violence.

Forced marriage is different from arranged marriage. In an arranged marriage, the families of both spouses take a leading role in arranging the marriage but the choice whether or not to accept the arrangement remains with the prospective spouses.

Detailed information for practitioners on how to respond is included in the Scottish Government's ["Responding to Forced Marriage: Multi-Agency Practice Guidance"](#). Further information on specific Forced Marriage Legislation is included in the Highland guidance ["Domestic Abuse and Forced Marriage – Legal Information Book"](#) which is available on NHS Highland and Highland Council intranets.

This protocol aims to give staff in Highland more confidence in the actual process of responding to a case or potential case of forced marriage.

Reasons why forced marriage occurs

There are many reasons why a forced marriage may occur. These can include:

- peer group or family pressure
- attempting to strengthen family links
- protecting perceived cultural and religious ideals (the motive often reported by parents who forced their children to marry)
- preventing what were regarded as unsuitable relationships (perceived to be the motive by many victims of forced marriage)
- family honour
- long-standing family commitments

Warning – Document uncontrolled when printed	
Version: 1	Page 2
Date of Issue: February 2016	Date of Review: February 2018

- controlling female behaviour and sexuality or even sexual orientation (thought to be a motive particularly by some women’s groups working with victims of forced marriage)
- a way of ensuring the long-term care of an adult with disability or incapacity

Impact of Forced Marriage

Impacts of experiencing a forced marriage or being threatened with a forced marriage may include:

- Feeling (or actually being physically) isolated from family and friends
- Threatened with or subject to physical harm
- Emotional impacts associated with stress or worry, e.g. anxiety, panic attacks, self harm
- Feeling suicidal
- Experiencing domestic abuse and/or sexual violence

Identifying Forced Marriage – Potential Indicators

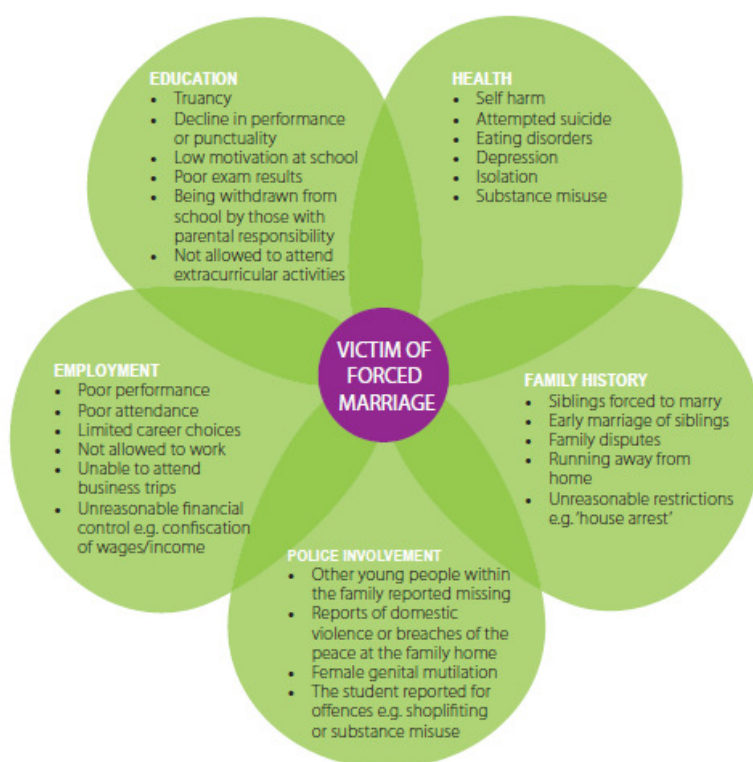


Diagram from the Scottish Government Guidance on Forced Marriage, 2014

Responding to Forced Marriage

Detailed information for practitioners on how to respond is included in the Scottish Government’s [“Responding to Forced Marriage: Multi-Agency Practice Guidance”](#). It

Warning – Document uncontrolled when printed	
Version: 1	Page 3
Date of Issue: February 2016	Date of Review: February 2018

is vital that staff remember that there may only be **one chance** to intervene and stop the forced marriage. The Scottish Government recommends:

- See the victim on her* own – even if she is accompanied by others
- See her immediately in a secure and private place where you will not be overheard
- Reassure her about confidentiality (in line with your organisation’s policy) and explain that you will not give information to her family/ friends or community
- Accept what she says
- Explain all the options to her and their possible outcomes
- Recognise and respect her wishes
- Assess the risk she faces by conducting an appropriate and thorough risk assessment
- Contact, as soon as possible, the lead worker responsible for forced marriage (If she is under 16, refer to child protection inter-agency guidance; If she is an adult at risk, discuss with your adult support and protection lead and refer to inter-agency guidance)
- Agree a way to contact her safely (for example agree a code word)
- Obtain full details to pass on to the lead worker and record these safely
- Give her (or help her 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 from being removed from the UK
- Do everything you can to keep her safe
- Get immediate advice if you are not sure what to do

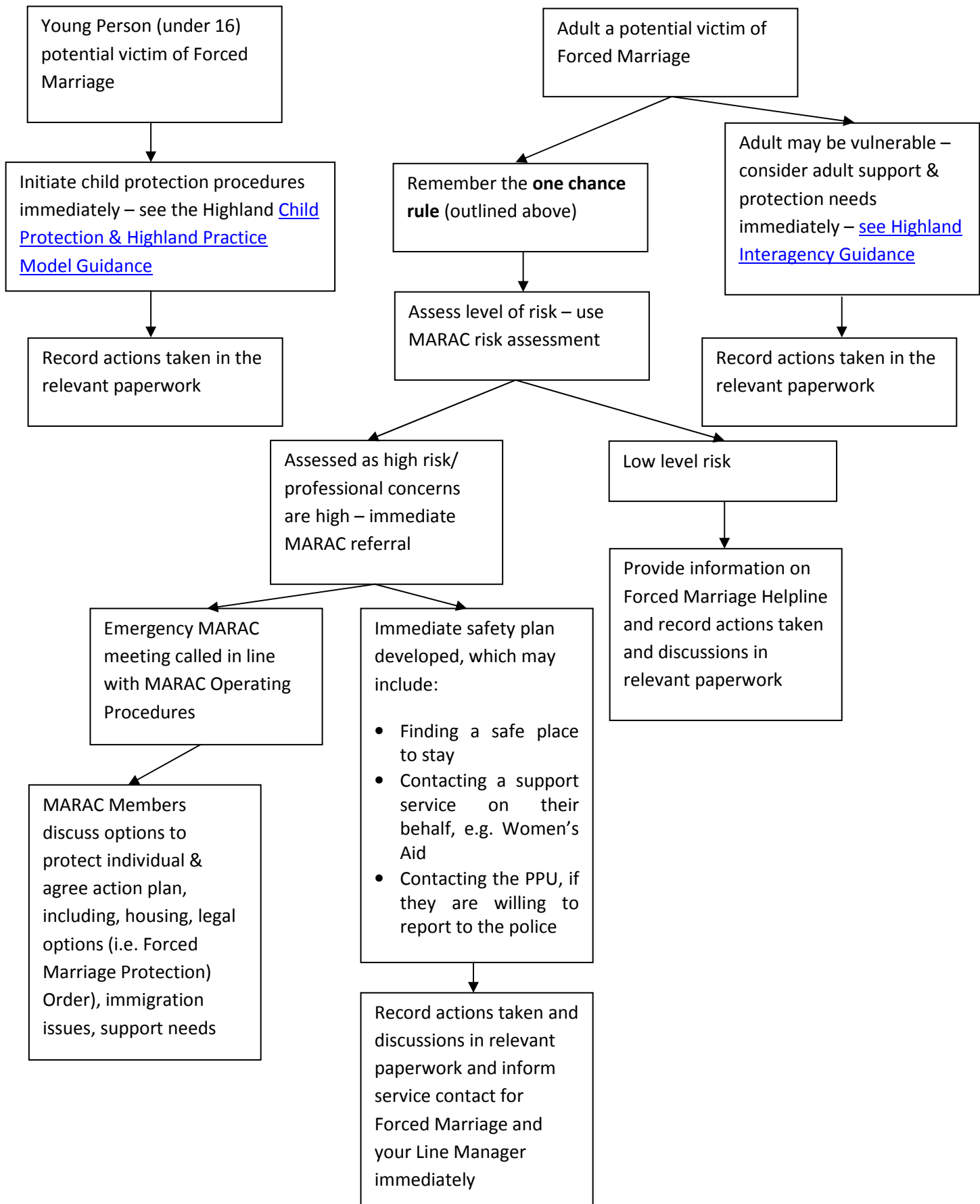
*Remember that there are male victims of forced marriage (gay men and men with learning disabilities may be at increased risk)

Do not:

- Send her away or let her leave without a safety plan and follow up arrangements
- Approach her friends/family or community unless she asks you to do so
- Approach community leaders for advice
- Share information with anyone without her express consent (unless there is a risk of immediate harm to her or any children or she lacks capacity to give consent or she is unable to give informed consent)
- Attempt to mediate with the family

Warning – Document uncontrolled when printed	
Version: 1	Page 4
Date of Issue: February 2016	Date of Review: February 2018

Responding to a potential Forced Marriage in Highland



Further Information, Support & Advice

Other Useful Guidance for Staff

[Responding to Forced Marriage: Multi-Agency Practice Guidance, Scottish Government](#)

[Domestic Abuse and Forced Marriage – Legal Information Book, Highland Violence Against Women Partnership](#)

[Highland Multi-Agency Guidance – Violence Against Women, 2014](#)

[Highland Child Protection Interagency Guidelines, January 2016](#)

[Highland Practice Guidance, June 2015](#)

[Highland Interagency Adult Support & Protection Procedures, 2013](#)

Support Services for Forced Marriage

Hematt Gryffe & Shakti Women's Aid

- Experienced in dealing with forced marriage within a Scottish context
- Offer holistic support responding to long & short term needs of victims in a culturally sensitive manner.
- Understand family / community structures and the risks they may present.
- Have well-established connections with other professionals and agencies vital to supporting victims of forced marriage.
- Can link to other specialist organisations listed in the multi-agency guidelines
- Are aware of potential service-generated risks and work together with professionals
- Can provide support to professionals to assist in developing their own understanding of the situation.

Hemat Gryffe Women's Aid

T: 0141 0141 353 0859 womensaid@hemat.gryffe.org.uk

Shakti Women's Aid

T: 0131 475 2399 info@shaktiedinburgh.co.uk www.shaktiedinburgh.co.uk

Warning – Document uncontrolled when printed	
Version: 1	Page 6
Date of Issue: February 2016	Date of Review: February 2018

Forced Marriage Unit

- If victim is abroad or is at risk of being taken abroad, contact the Forced Marriage Unit.
- The Forced Marriage Unit will usually assist in contacting and if necessary repatriating British victims of forced marriage.
- Still advisable to seek advice for victims who are not British or have dual nationality.

Available 24 hours on

- Telephone: +44 (0) 20 7008 0151
- Email: fmufco.gov.uk

Email for outreach work: fmuoutreach@fco.gov.uk

Highland Violence Against Women Partnership

For information and advice on policy, strategy and training for Forced Marriage in Highland, contact, the Highland Violence Against Women Development & Training Manager on 01463 704724

Police Scotland

Detective Inspector, Domestic Abuse Investigation Unit

Telephone: 101

The Highland Council

Care & Learning, Practice Leads Care and Protection

Telephone: 01955 609611 (Caithness)

01408 635360 (Sutherland)

01478 612943 (Skye & Lochalsh)

01397 707025 (Lochaber)

01463 883795 (Inverness West, including Drumnadrochit & Beaully)

Warning – Document uncontrolled when printed	
Version: 1	Page 7
Date of Issue: February 2016	Date of Review: February 2018

01667 453951 (Inverness East & Nairnshire)

01463 252999 (Inverness Central and Badenoch & Strathspey)

01862 893021 (Ross-shire)

01349 886909 (Ross-shire)

Housing, Housing Policy Officer

Telephone: 01463 702037

Legal Services

Telephone: 01463 702259

Email – legal.hq@highland.gov.uk

NHS Highland

North and West Operational Unit

Lead Social Worker

Telephone: 01349 869 217 or 07919 166 040

South & Mid Operational Unit

Lead Social Worker

Telephone: 01463 706947 or 07805 162 345

Warning – Document uncontrolled when printed	
Version: 1	Page 8
Date of Issue: February 2016	Date of Review: February 2018