Report for BAPSCAN

'I'm not making excuses...': Exploring Safeguarding Responses to Children Involved in Forced Marriage

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1. Introduction

This project evolved from discussions concerning the lack of information available about forced marriage and child safeguarding services responses to children and young people affected by this. Anecdotal evidence from the research partners' practice and teaching experience indicates varied levels of awareness and service responses. A research partnership bid was made to BAPSCAN; this was between Anna Gupta and Sukey Tarr (from Royal Holloway, University of London) and Zee Khan who was working as a social work practitioner in a London borough. The project sought to explore the responses of child safeguarding services to children where there are concerns about forced marriage.

The overall aim of the study was to improve understanding of how child protection services respond to children involved in forced marriages.

In order to achieve this we sought to:

- Ascertain and analyse data on the extent and nature of forced marriage involving children referred to Children's Services.

- Explore the ways in which these children are dealt with by the child protection system.

- Examine factors that may be hindering social workers and other professionals from providing services that safeguard and promote the welfare of children affected by forced marriage.

- Explore ways of addressing these factors and promoting positive outcomes for the children.

- Identify and share best practice in work with children where there are concerns about forced marriage.

Details of the methodology used are provided in section 3 within the report.

2. Brief Literature Review

Policy and Legal Context

Over the past seventeen years there has been increasing attention paid to the problem of forced marriage in the UK. From a human rights perspective, forced marriage breaches a number of international human rights standards, including the Universal Declaration of Human Rights 1948 (UDHR) and, in relation to children, the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child 1989 (UNCRC) (Chantler et al, 2009). Forced marriage is seen as a form of child abuse (HM Government, 2015); a safeguarding issue that can involve physical, sexual and emotional abuse leading to significant harm. In this section the literature on forced marriage is explored, including reference to child protection policy and practice.

The guidance from the Forced Marriage Unit in the UK Foreign and Commonwealth Office (HM Government, 2014:1) defines forced marriage as being where '*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*'. The guidance states that forced marriage can never be justified on religious grounds and is condemned by every major faith.

The guidance also argues that there is a clear distinction between a forced marriage and an arranged marriage. It is suggested that in arranged marriages, families may take a leading role in arranging the marriage, but the prospective spouses decide whether or not to accept the arrangement (HM Government, 2014). Whilst it is important that FMU definition includes a broad range of coercive behaviours, a number of authors have challenged the binary proposed, suggesting a continuum or blurring between arranged and forced marriage. Phillips and Dustin (2004:11) argue that 'choice' is a variable that operates along a continuum, with an inevitable grey area between marriages imposed on individuals against their will and those arranged on their behalf with their consent. This is particularly in relation to subtle emotional pressures - with some young people not realizing they are being forced into marriage until after this has occurred (Anitha and Gill, 2009; Chantler et al., 2009). Khanum (2008) also identifies 'false marriage', where false information is given and a young person 'tricked' into consenting. An individual's ability to consent will be impacted by

power relationships, based on factors such as age and disability, as will be discussed later in this section.

Forced Marriage Legislation

Forced marriage first came to prominence in the United Kingdom as a result of activity at an international level, but also significantly from the experiences of South Asian women's organisations working in the domestic violence field. This included media attention surrounding forced marriage following high profile cases, including the murder of Rukhsana Naz by her family (Chantler, 2012). The Community Liaison Unit (CLU) was established in 2000 to respond to forced marriage. In 2005 a government consultation paper '*Forced Marriage: A Wrong not a Right'* (HM Government, 2005) was published and the CLU was renamed the Forced Marriage Unit (FMU). The FMU was established to provide assistance for those at risk of being forced into a marriage in the UK and overseas.

In 2008 the Forced Marriage Civil Protection Act (2007) came into force. It aims to provide civil protection to prevent a forced marriage from taking place as well as to help individuals (children and adults) to leave a forced marriage. The legislation enables the individuals or relevant third parties, including local authorities, to apply for a Forced Marriage Protection Order (FMPO). A FMPO allows the court to issue civil prohibitions, restrictions and requirements against those suspected of attempting to force someone to marry.

At the time of the development of the Forced Marriage Civil Protection Act (2007), consideration was given to introducing criminal legislation against forced marriage, on the basis that a criminal sanction would send a stronger message. However, this was rejected following concerns, being expressed by some professionals and organisations working with people facing forced marriage that creating a specific criminal offence would discourage reporting and alienate communities (Shariff, 2012). However in June 2012 the coalition Government reversed this decision. The Anti-social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act (2014) made it a criminal offence to force someone to marry, with a maximum prison sentence of 7 years. Breaching a FMPO also became a criminal offence.

Forced Marriage Practice Guidance

The Forced Marriage Unit has since published statutory guidance, *The Right to Choose* (HM Government, 2014), on how professionals should respond to actual or suspected cases of forced marriage. The guidance covers the safeguarding of both children and adults, stresses the importance of multi-agency responses, and is provided for a range of professionals. It highlights the importance of the 'one chance' rule, which is that professionals:

> *….may only have one opportunity to speak to a victims or potential victim and may possibly only have one chance to save a life. As a result, all professionals working within statutory agencies need to be aware of their responsibilities and obligations when they are faced with forced marriage cases. If the victim is allowed to leave without the appropriate support and advice being offered, that one chance might be wasted* (HM Government, 2014, p. 16).

The guidance covers procedures for handling cases of actual or suspected forced marriage both in the UK and in relation to British nationals who are abroad. It also states that professionals should not approach members of the family or community, share information without the victims expressed consent or attempt family mediation or counselling (HM Government, 2014, p. 20).

If a young person under the age of 18 years is suspected to be at risk of forced marriage, professionals are required to follow local child safeguarding procedures. In England this involves the adherence to *Working Together to Safeguard Children* (HM Government, 2015) within the framework of the Children Act (1989). There are, however, potential areas of conflict between these different frameworks, which illustrates the complexity of the work. *The Right to Choose* (HM Government, 2014) guidance cautions against discussion with the family or any type of family involvement in case this places the child or young person at greater risk of harm; yet involving parents and other family members in decision-making regarding their children is central to child safeguarding processes. Similarly in care proceedings, local authorities are required to consider family members and friends as potential carers; however, in cases of forced marriage, extreme care is recommended with kinship care placements (HM Government 2014, p. 19). The Government guidance

focuses particularly on rescue and regulation, however as discussed in the sections below, longer term issues of support and the promotion of well-being are often neglected.

Prevalence

The very nature of forced marriage means that people who have been or are at risk of forced marriage remain largely invisible. For some they may not recognise the 'forced' nature of the marriage at the time; others do not report the forced marriage to agencies such as the police, social work services or voluntary sector agencies; and as with other forms of abuse, they may find it difficult to speak out (Chantler et al, 2009). This makes it extremely problematic to develop accurate measures of the prevalence of forced marriages. The Forced Marriage Unit (FMU) collects data on referrals. In 2016 the FMU gave advice or support related to a possible forced marriage in 1428 cases. Characteristics of these cases include:

- Where the age was known, 220 (15%) cases involved children below 16 years of age and 371 cases (26%) involved under-18 year olds. The largest number, 497 (35%) involved young adults aged between 18-25 years of age.
- In terms of gender, 80% of cases involved females and 20% involved males.
- The FMU handled cases involving 90 different countries, with the majority concerning families from the Indian sub-continent, Pakistan (43%), Bangladesh (8%), India (6%), Somalia (3%), Afghanistan (3%) and Saudi Arabia (1%).
- Thirty cases (2%) involved people who identified themselves as lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender (LGBT), and 140 cases (10%) involved people who had a learning disability (FMU, 2017).

A small number of research studies have been conducted over the past decade that have explored the prevalence and characteristics of people who have experienced or are at risk of forced marriage. The National Centre for Social Research conducted a study on prevalence and service responses to forced marriage in England (Kazimirski et al, 2009). This study estimated that the number of actual or threatened forced marriage cases reported to community or statutory organisations in England is between 5000 and 8000, with potentially large numbers of cases going

unreported. Of the cases reported to the agencies surveyed, the majority (97%) involved young people whose families originated from the Indian sub-continent. Ninety-six percent of forced marriage cases reported to local organisations related to females, and 41% of reported cases concerned young people under the age of 18 (Kazimirski et al, 2009).

A study in Scotland (Chantler et al., 2017) that surveyed schools and community organisations found that between 2011 and 2014, there were 191 cases of forced marriage reported by survey respondents. Of the cases where age was known, the majority of young people were aged between 18-25, with under 18 year olds representing around a quarter of cases, and under 16 year olds around 1 in 10 of cases. The majority of were girls or young women from South Asia, primarily Pakistani backgrounds.

A study by Hester et al. (2007) found that there was no coherent database of forced marriage and concluded that although the primary focus of policy and research attention in the UK has been on South Asian communities, forced marriage occurs in a range of other communities. These include: orthodox/fundamental religious communities in the UK; Irish traveller women; Armenian, Turkish and some mainland Chinese communities; Eastern European communities; African communities (such as Eritrean, Sudanese, Sierra Leonean and Mozambiquean); and African Caribbean communities. Brandon and Hafez (2008) also found evidence of forced marriage referrals from Africa and Eastern European Communities and reported that forced marriage occurs in the Turkish and Kurdish communities, where women are forced to marry extended family members in order to reinforce kinship networks, financial ties and tribal alliances. Khanum's (2008) study in Luton came to a similar conclusion that forced marriage occurs in South Asian and non-South Asian communities. This wider range of communities is also consistent with global statistics on child and forced marriages (Chantler, 2012).

In summary, from the available information it can be concluded that forced marriage can happen to both males and females, although most of the reported cases involve young women and girls aged between 16 and 25. Whilst most reported cases involve young people from the Indian sub-continent, there is evidence to suggest forced marriages occur in a range of other communities. The focus on Pakistani, Indian and

Bangladeshi communities is in part due to demographics, as these South Asian communities together make up the largest group of minority ethnic communities in the UK. In addition, historically, there been very articulate and powerful South Asian feminist groups that have challenged gender related issues within these communities, including forced marriage and honour-based violence (Chantler, 2012; Gangoli et al., 2006). Despite evidence suggesting that forced marriage is happening in a wide range of communities, there is a dearth of research on women's experiences outside of South Asian communities.

Dynamics of Forced Marriage

The reasons why young people are forced into marriage by their families or others in their community are complex, varied and context-bound. The research literature primarily explores the dynamics in South Asian communities, and forced marriage is often discussed as being a form of 'honour-based violence'. The term 'honour-based violence' (HBV) refers to crimes of violence (mainly but not exclusively against women) where people are punished for actually or allegedly undermining what the family or community believes to be the correct code of behaviour. In transgressing the 'honour' code, the person is perceived to have brought 'shame' to the family, where concepts of 'honour' or 'izzat' are important. Brandon and Hafez (2008) argue that forced marriage should be conceptualized as honour-based violence and that 'forced marriages can occur in almost any community governed by honour, pride and shame' (p.9). The powerful writings of Jasvinder Sanghera (2007; 2009; 2011) detail how issues of 'honour' and 'shame' impact on the dynamics involved in forced marriages and the disownment by families following resistance to a forced marriage, particularly young women and men from South Asian and Middle-Eastern communities.

Whilst these issues are clearly of relevance to many at risk or experiencing forced marriage, restricting understanding of forced marriage to the primary domain of culture has been challenged by a number of authors (Hester et al. 2007; Khanum, 2008). It is argued that a narrow perspective ignores the dynamic relationship between culture and structural factors such as poverty and gender, as well as pathologising certain communities and rendering invisible the needs of young people from other communities who are at risk of forced marriage (Chantler et al., 2009).

Chantler et al. (2009) found in their study that the issue of poverty and hardship was a key factor in some accounts and was also explicitly mentioned as a route into forced marriage by two of the African women; *'a simple reason your father is poor and he wants money [bride price]…you have to please your family can't just do it for yourself.* (Chantler et al., 2009: 601). This study also noted that Chinese women of different ages mentioned financial pressures on young women to marry. Kazimirski et al. (2009) similarly suggest that forced marriage can be a means of alleviating poverty or repaying a debt.

Kazimirski et al. (2009: 16) give examples of forced marriage being used to prevent 'unsuitable' relationships (e.g. relationships outside ethnic, cultural, religious or caste groups) or to control unwanted behaviour and sexuality, particularly of young women. Chantler et al. (2009) similarly identify an insistence on sexual propriety for females as reason for forced marriage. In their study of South Asian young women and girls in the UK, Gangoli et al. (2006) conclude that taboos around premarital sexuality, loss of virginity and fears of young women being 'corrupted' by western values can lead to forced marriage as a way to prevent or end perceived transgressive sexual behaviour, linked often to the concepts of 'honour' and 'izzat'.

Participants from a number of cultural backgrounds raised compulsory heterosexuality as a reason for a forced marriage in Chantler et al.'s (2009) study. For example a gay Indian man was pressurised to marry despite his parents knowing that he was gay; a lesbian woman from Sierra Leone spoke of being forced to marry her aunt's son; and two women were brought to the UK to be married to men whom they later discovered were homosexual (Chantler, 2009: 604).

Of the cases referred to the FMU, 10% involved a learning disabled person. A reason for forced marriage can be the family's desire to ensure their disabled child will be cared for by their spouse in the long term (Kazimirski et al, 2009). Eversley and Khanom (2002) suggest that young people who are perceived to have poorer marriage prospects are more likely to face forced marriages, and this includes young people with physical, sensory or learning difficulties.

The issue of child marriage is clearly linked to forced marriage. Child marriage is conceptualized as a form of child abuse and treated as forced marriage, due to the

absence of free and full consent. In Chantler et al's (2009) study, African focus group respondents reported on international marriages involving very young brides from Uganda married to much older men living in the UK: *A man who is forty-five, marrying a sixteen year or seventeen year old, is not marrying a wife. He's marrying a . . . slave. Someone he can control. Someone he can tell to do what he wants to do when.... You know it's just a way of, child abuse* (Chantler et al., 2009: 605). Kurdish women participating in this study also reported on early marriages of girls before the age of 16, and participants in the Chinese focus groups were also aware of cases of kidnapping and trafficking of young girls from rural areas of China for marriage to men within China and possibly abroad. Child trafficking for forced marriage has been identified as a form of trafficking and is not restricted to particular nationalities or countries, nor is it condoned by any religion. However there is little data on this aspect of trafficking internationally or within the UK (Bokhari 2009).

Immigration and asylum issues can also feature in forced marriages. Chantler et al. (2009) identify two types of situation: people of other nationalities who were forced to marry to improve their own career and life chances by coming to the UK or UK nationals who were under obligation to improve the life chances of relatives from outside the EU. This latter reason could be linked a long-standing family commitment or a way of ensuring land, property and wealth remain within a family - reasons that are noted by Kazimirski et al (2009). For some families bringing spouses from their country of origin is perceived as rejuvenating or compensating for loss of culture in the UK (Samad and Eade, 2003).

Issues of coercion and consent are central to identifying forced marriage, but are context-bound and influenced by structural factors limiting individuals' agency to consent. Anitha and Gill (2009) highlight the need to conceptualize coercion and consent within a continuum that shows awareness of the socio-historical, political and cultural context of people's lives. And their location at the intersection of various forms of oppression, especially gendered power imbalances, but also age, race, disability, class and sexuality. They caution against isolating 'culture' as an explanatory factor as these do not offer adequate explanations. Forced marriage occurs in a wide range of communities, is complex and multi-layered depending

upon the community, the culture within the community, the family situation and notions of tradition within the family.

Impact of Forced Marriage

Young people faced with the pressure of a forced marriage may experience physical violence that can, on rare occasions, include murder; often referred to as 'honour killings'. Shafilea Ahmed was a 17 year old girl reported missing to police by a teacher in September 2003. Shafilea had previously seriously injured herself by drinking bleach in Pakistan when she feared being forced into marriage. At home in the UK, she was subject to bullying, intimidation and physical abuse within the family home. Shafilea continued to fear her parents were going to marry her to a suitor in Pakistan against her will. Ten years later her parents were convicted of her murder. Threats of or actual imprisonment are also forms of coercion used. Some family members take their daughters or sons to their country of origin on the pretence of a holiday then confiscate their passport, refusing to return it unless they agree to the marriage   (Kazimirski et al., 2009). Within a forced marriage, young people may endure repeated rape and domestic violence. For young women the resulting pregnancy and childbirth may make them feel unable to leave the marriage (Chantler et al., 2017).

The pressure on young people to get married does not necessarily involve physical violence; some parents and other family members use emotional blackmail and psychological abuse to force their child into marriage (Brandon and Hafez, 2008). Some young people reported that guilt, shame, embarrassment and helplessness were worse than physical abuse (Anitha and Gill, 2009). Social isolation can be experienced by many young people at risk of or in a forced marriage. Young people are often withdrawn from education, restricting their educational and personal development and their choices, so that often they go through with the marriage as the only option. Survivors in Chantler et al's (2017) study recognised the links between education and empowerment, or lack of empowerment where educational opportunities were denied.

Mental health problems have been identified in a number of studies. In Chantler et al (2017) all the survivors discussed the impact of experiencing forced marriage on

their mental health. For some the trauma led to quite serious mental distress, and even where the forced marriage experience had occurred many years in the past. Kazimirski et al. (2009) study concluded that forced marriage is often hidden behind other presenting issues, such as eating disorders and self-harm. Attempted suicide and self-harm are also documented amongst survivors of forced marriage in Chantler's (2003) and Hester et al. (2007) studies.

The dynamics and impacts of forced marriage can make accessing support to prevent or leave a forced marriage difficult. The Refuge (2010:12) study identified a number of barriers hat deterred people from accessing help. These included: bringing 'shame' on the family for involving outsiders; not wanting to upset family and/or get them into trouble (e.g. with the police or immigration authorities); concerns for their physical safety; mistrust of outside agencies and worrying and being scared that involving an outside agency would make things worse; family members threatening to send them back 'home' if they tried to access help; and not knowing that support existed.

Research on Service Responses

There are a limited number of studies on the responses of statutory and community services to young people affected by forced marriage, especially in relation to children. In a review of the six published empirical studies in the UK between 2006–2010 Chantler (2012) concluded that despite the studies having different aims and methodological limitations, some themes were evident. These included: lack of adequate recording of incidents of forced marriage; limited professional knowledge and anxiety about intervening; difficulties conceptualising forced marriage, including issues of coercion, and the tension between cultural/gender-based violence explanations; the need to recognise forced marriage occurs in a variety of communities; the focus on consent to enter a marriage obscuring the need for policies and support services to help people exit forced marriages and promote the emotional well-being and physical safety once the initial protective action has been taken (Chantler, 2012: 179).

The Forced Marriage Unit (2012) undertook a review of the implementation of the Statutory Guidance on forced marriage across public agencies in England and

Wales. The study concluded that forced marriage was better understood now than several years ago, with frontline professionals more aware of the particular dangers facing people at risk of or in a forced marriage. However the researchers also found that there was:

- A lack of commitment within agencies to address the issue of forced marriage.
- An inconsistent approach to training with few agencies routinely and regularly training their staff to respond to cases of forced marriage efficiently and effectively.
- A disparity in the way different agencies and individual departments within those agencies handle and monitor cases of forced marriage (FMU, 2012: 4).

A Parliamentary Home Affairs Committee inquiry into forced marriages (Home Affairs Committee, 2011) found that 293 Forced Marriage Protection Orders were made during the two years and four months following the enactment of the legislation. The review highlighted inadequacies in the monitoring of compliance with FMPOs and a lack of effective action in cases of breach.

Kazimirski et al.'s (2009) study looked specifically at responses to children under 18 years of age. They identified three framings of responses to forced marriage: a domestic violence framing from primarily the police and domestic violence services; a human rights framing predominantly carried out by Black and minority ethnic community organisations; and a child protection framing, involving the response of schools and Children's Services. This child protection response was found to be less effective, less co-ordinated, and less clearly articulated (Kazimirski et al, 2009). Of particular concern was the reluctance of Children's Services to get involved in forced marriage cases involving 16 and 17-year olds and the lack of effective case responses for this age group. The study also noted a tendency not to intervene in cases because of a perception of forced marriage as a 'cultural issue' or as a legitimate response to a young person's 'bad behaviour'. Threats of forced marriage without associated physical abuse tended to be seen as lower priority (Kazimirski et al, 2009).

The study by Kazimirski and colleagues (2009) also highlights the diversity of circumstances of young people where there are concerns about forced marriage. Knowing how to pitch the level of response emerged as a challenge for agencies. Where there was no imminent risk, some agencies, especially voluntary and community organisations, worked with young people (e.g. safety planning) and sometimes their parents whilst they remained at home, contrary to the advice of the Forced Marriage Unit. On the other hand there was a tendency, especially among statutory services, to interpret 'taking a case seriously' as going to court to remove the young child through care proceedings or applying for a FMPO. The authors argue for careful risk assessments of the forced marriage threat, which might not involve an order but might nevertheless require a whole range of other service responses, including family work. This is particularly so for young people who are reluctant to leave their families, but do not want to be forced into marriage (Kazimirski et al, 2009).

A more recent study in Scotland (Chantler et al, 2017) that looked at responses to children and adults found that currently a range of interventions are offered to support people affected by forced marriage, including risk assessment, one-to-one support and, in some cases, mediation. The study concluded that those with direct experience of supporting victims of forced marriage had a deeper and more insightful understanding of forced marriage as a process rather than an 'event'. The reported barriers to responding effectively to forced marriage included lack of understanding of forced marriage and a lack of training or engagement to address this; a need for more robust local authority procedures for supporting victims of forced marriage; difficulties in multi-agency working, including concern that some cases might fall between cracks of adult and child protection; and anxiety about dealing with issues of race and culture, for fear of being labelled racist or culturally insensitive (Chantler et al, 2017). A crucial message was the need for more nuanced perspectives to deepen understanding of forced marriage, and that intervention strategies need to engage with forced marriage as a process at both entry and exit points.

Similar themes have arisen in the literature regarding service responses to forced marriage. These highlight the complexities and various contexts in which forced marriage occurs and; the need for greater public and professional awareness-raising; deeper understanding of forced marriage, including seeing it as a process

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not event; more collaborative and coherent multi-agency working; and individualized, on-going support provision for survivors.

3. Methodology

The design of the study was founded on the assumption that there is a very low level of knowledge (amongst relevant professionals and academics) and understanding concerning how child safeguarding processes work in response to children and young people at risk of forced marriage and honour-based violence (HBV). This small-scale exploratory study seeks to examine these processes; what happens, who is involved, what is it like for practitioners, where is good practice happening and how can we improve our responses?

The research activity involved three strands:

a. Questionnaires to a sample of LSCB (Local Safeguarding Children Boards)
b. Semi-structured interviews with relevant professionals
c. Focus groups with stakeholders

Initially a short survey was developed and emailed to a sample of 60 Local Safeguarding Children Boards. The strategy for sampling involved targeting geographical areas (in England) that were likely to have had experience of working with children and young people in situations of forced marriage and honour-based violence; in particular urban areas where there were ethnically diverse populations including South Asian, Middle Eastern and African. This was to include communities that have been notably present in the forced marriage statistics according to the Forced Marriage Unit. The 60 local authorities were each sent the survey and given a four week response deadline. Where there was no response after four weeks a follow up email/telephone call was used as a prompt. If no response was given after a further two weeks no further action was taken by the researcher. The aim of this was to identify numbers of children referred, types of responses from professionals including services offered and outcomes for the child and family.

The second stage involved semi-structured interviews (appendix i) with a sample of stakeholders. These were;

- social workers with experience of forced marriage within their case load
- other professionals who work with forced marriage in a range of capacities in the statutory and voluntary sector e.g. school child protection professionals, project workers, police and criminal justice system professionals.

The purpose of these was to explore; the roles of professionals and processes followed; gaps and difficulties in service provision and evidence/examples of effective practice.

The final stage of the research activity involved conducting two focus groups in two regions where there was a good level of experience amongst the professional community about working with forced marriage and HBV. Participants came from a range of relevant voluntary and statutory services (e.g. health, education, legal and social services). Again those with direct experience of working with families where forced marriage was an issue were targeted. The focus groups were used to further explore some of the ideas and concepts that had arisen in the one-to-one interviews, and served as a means of verifying earlier findings.

The interviews and focus groups participants were identified using convenience sampling, this included; respondents to the survey, targeted contacts/organisations known to be experts in the field and the snowballing of contacts developed through initial sampling. Interviews were conducted either face-to-face or via the telephone. Interviews and focus groups were audio recorded and transcribed.

Ethical approval for this study was obtained in accordance with Royal Holloway University of London procedures through the Department of Social Work Research Ethics Committee. All interviews are conducted with professionals, whose co-operation is entirely voluntary and who will not be named in any reports or publications. No identifying information has been sought about children and families and the participating organisations are not identified in any reports or publications.

4. Results

a) Survey

The survey received very few returns despite follow up emails therefore data gathered was minimal and is not recorded in this report.

b) Key Professionals' Interviews

Participants were interviewed individually using a semi-structured interview schedule (appendix i). Within the interview participants were asked to;

   i.   explore the key challenges for them when working with forced marriage and to identify what resources were required;
   ii. identify effective practice;
   iii. share experiences and examples from their own practice.

The following sections illustrate the findings concerning these topics.

i.Key Professionals Challenges and Resources

Table 1. Individual Interviews (n=10)

Designation/Role	Key Challenges	Resources Needed
Social Worker 1 (senior practitioner)	Bureaucracy of the processes stifle young person's voice Inter-agency working practices Understanding ever-changing societies	• More specialist services • Research to gain better understanding • Better training and creative ways to get professionals engaged with this
Social Worker 2 (specialist in police unit)	Uncertainty about whether child is at risk of forced marriage	• Mental health services • Multi-agency training input
Social Worker 3 (case worker)	Professionals' lack of confidence, fear of being culturally relativist or oppressive Young people not being taken seriously - dismissed as 'arranged' marriage	• Expertise and specialist services
Social Worker 4 (case worker)	If too many professionals are involved who do not know procedures. Keeping young people safe when they have easy access to communication with family	• Accommodation for young people • Specialist therapeutic input

	Dominance of parent's voice at meetings	• Good recording systems to identify how many cases etc • On university syllabus for SW
Social Worker 5 (case worker)	Lack of knowledge and awareness of professionals When children want to remain in the family Age range means not always seen as in need of protection Dilemmas for the child	• Specialist knowledge or designated person • Specialist therapeutic input (counselling)
Social Worker 6 (case worker)	Schools concerned about upsetting parents Professionals concerned about being racist Lack of recognition by social workers	• More information to all child welfare services
School 1 (secondary) safeguarding officer	Parents resisted the proactive stance of the school Social care response is not quick enough Time taken to build up relationships with young people	• Training at local community level • Accommodation • Financial support for young people
School 2 (secondary) children's trust practitioner	Lack of training and understanding by social care Professionals saying it's a 'cultural' thing	• Experienced and specialist workers • Tight systems and monitoring • Foster care accommodation • Funding for voluntary organisations
Solicitor - legal representative	Response times of children's services too slow Politically sensitive so people do not speak out	• Foster care for u18s
Voluntary Organisation (case worker)	Frontline workers lack of understanding and uncertainty Schools can be very resistant Hard to get social care involved in 16-18 age range	• Follow-up support • Counselling services • Specialist refuges or supported housing

One of the key areas explored during interviews with key professionals was how to deliver effective practice and what this might include. The results were analysed and sorted into four key themes; relationships with the young person; responding in practice; staff skills and knowledge; policy issues. The table presents direct quotes from participating respondents (Table 2).

ii Effective Practice

Table 2 – Individual Interviews (n=10)

Relationships with Young Person	Responding in Practice	Staff Skills and Knowledge	Policy Issues
Being proactive not expecting young people to come and talk to you.

Keep the door open - always.

Young people don't want agencies to contact the family without discussion with them first.

Keep information flowing and up-to-date in dialogue with the young person.

You learn so much from just speaking to, and asking, the young person themselves.

Focus on the child's own understanding of life and the relationships they're in.

Intensive work with young person - *they* determine level of risk.

Always leave the door open; always provide a service even if it is just information and sign-posting.

Actively maintaining contact with young people when they leave (specialist | Young people want more practical support especially if starting a new life – more ways to connect with others if they are leaving their family.

Safety planning without the family knowing is required.

Assessment focus on the child - not involving the parents automatically.

Working closely with the police.

Systems that are tight e.g. if a young person doesn't come back on first day after holiday we knock on their door.

Responding with urgency.

Have a school-based police officer.

Always work as a team making decisions together.

Acting very quickly.

We (school) keep tables on anyone going overseas so see return flight ticket and copy of passport etc. | Championed by senior manager.

All managers and practitioners should attend mandatory training and have a champion in the LA for advice/support.

Experienced workers needed who can challenge and advocate with confidence.

Being non-white might help perhaps able to push it more not at risk of the 'race card'.

Have a robust specialist team dealing with culturally sensitive issues.

Importance of building relationships between agencies and knowing people.

Positive working relationships with other organisations e.g. policy in particular.

Not being isolated so that you all have knowledge and can share ideas and experience. | In schools the PSHE days should include Forced Marriage and Domestic Violence.

LCSBs to take the lead on this issue.

Training compulsory and updated regularly – include teachers

Use of PSHE curriculum to raise awareness amongst young people.

Use Forced Marriage guidelines and address structural issues in local authorities.

Using local guidance and models.

Use of voluntary organisations for aftercare such as 'Asiana' and 'Roshni'.

Research - so we gain better understanding of society and communities where they live.

Have regular SAP meetings (Safer Academy Partnership) to discuss those at risk or on FMO, multi- |

services do this well). Need to include the child's wishes and tell them what you are doing step-by-step. Very difficult when agencies all withdraw and young person is left alone	We (school) do not authorise any extended leave and prosecute if it is under 90%. 100% support from manager. Close involvement of police in the safety plan; passport number logged, code word decided etc Working with the PPU – ring it through and within a day they would be here to take a full statement, fingerprints, DN etc and offered FMO. They will organise a trip to solicitor then within 48 hours it's all done and the passport is taken and order served.	Clear understanding of family and culture, not pigeon- holing people. Make Forced Marriage everybody's business	agency support and we invite social care. Need training and support at a local community level, and opportunities to make disclosure in the community - like at school.

iii. Experiences and Examples from Practice

During the interview process participants were invited to share their practice and case examples. From this emerged a picture of the experiences of children and young people that was immensely diverse, and of professionals finding ways to meet needs with great tenacity in a challenging environment. The data was explored thoroughly and 4 dominant themes were identified:

- Dilemma of relationships with parent/s and communities
- Vulnerability/intersectionality
- Range of professional knowledge, experience and roles
- Specific cultural and religious knowledge versus child focussed approach

Dilemma of Relationships with Parent/s and Communities

Most of the respondents did not mention relationships with the family or community and from this it may be concluded that this is not considered part of their role, and is not a dominant aspect of their working practice. It is also clear that practitioners experience discrepancy between the need to try and involve families and the need to minimise risk to children and young people; this was particularly so in interviews with education personnel. For some workers this is clear cut and for others it is more complex and murky. This theme is further explored in the focus group data analysis. The following extracts illustrate this theme.

> 'I'm not making any excuses we're not here to support or denigrate a community we're here for the protection of these young women.' (school)

> 'The family will ask us what is happening and we are advised by PPU (Police Protection Unit), usually to say that the police will be in touch and that it's confidential. It is clearly states it in our safeguarding policy.' (school)

> 'One young woman returned home over the summer holidays, we involved Roshni (local voluntary organisation). We tried to work with the parents - mum was saying she can't control her daughter and she's bringing shame on the family. We tried to give it a positive slant and rebuild the relationship. The parent's often blame the teacher/school and will sit outside the school watching! Often the mums/aunties are pushing for it (forced marriage), especially if the wife's family are more powerful; also because women are the most at risk of being ostracised and shunned – and fear this.' (school)

> 'The parents were informed of what was legally acceptable – so no FMO (Forced Marriage Order) was required.' (solicitor)

> 'For example, a 16 year old was removed from home and we tried to work with the family but unsuccessfully. The child returned home but then the social worker had no access as there was no order put in place. It was left to the police.' (school)

Vulnerability/intersectionality

Although this 'theme' may appear self-evident - all children in this situation are vulnerable; many participants discussed this in their stories of how they intervened. What comes across in the extracts is the exceptional and multi-level vulnerability of the young people they are working with: we can define this as intersectionality. The combined discrimination and sense of oppression based on gender, age, ethnicity and religion appears to have isolated and disempowered this group of young people. In addition, sexuality, learning difficulties, experience of domestic abuse and physical abuse emerge as further isolating factors and increase the complexity for those working with young people. The following extracts illustrate this further.

'This is a 16 year old with undiagnosed learning difficulties. There is a violent father who didn't approve of her boyfriend so arranged a marriage, she fled. The father, very violent - she is very scared of. Social Services were involved but they wanted the father to be able to communicate with her! But the order was NO communication. She's now pregnant to a much older man, as a result of grooming.' (solicitor)

'One example - a 15 year old Iranian girl, her dad tried to strangle her. She had a Bengali boyfriend, her mum wanted her to marry a cousin in Iran but she wanted to do Law at university. She was put in foster care; the parents were not co-operative and refused to give up the paperwork (passports etc). Then the girl went to 'independent living'. She was followed by the family so we took her to Birmingham, but she didn't want to leave her school - which was difficult as her siblings were there. It's difficult to keep things confidential and you're managing a high level of risk. She ended up at a refuge in Birmingham. It was difficult to get help but it needed me being persistent and determined – I'm still in touch and down as her 'next of kin'.' (social worker)

'There was a Yemeni family, the mum was illiterate, the father was 80 with 5 wives. The 13 year old (daughter) was going to be taken to Yemen to be married. A FMPO was taken out; she cannot be removed from the UK, they have to surrender all passports, and cannot engage in the process of

matrimony, he cannot harass the children. The mum is now in a refuge with the kids - one of them is in care. Very vulnerable.' (solicitor)

'I have some experiences of working with girls aged 15-16; usually they're referred through school to the referral and assessment team. Outcomes vary – one child did not return home after disclosing and the family would not work with professionals. Another did not want to leave - she went to live with her aunt; another did not want her parents involved or the forced marriage but she got scared and stopped talking. I visited a girl in intensive care after overdosing because of the threat of forced marriage.' (Social Services)

'My personal experience was being 'forced' to marry (parental pressure) to an old man – they threatened to marry him to my younger sister if I didn't. There was violence, I had difficulties having any freedom, my parents did not listen and were unsympathetic to my complaints and distress - 'just have to put up with it' they said.' (social worker and survivor)

'There was one family where the mum – the dad left her when the girl was 8 but moved back with the mother when the girl was 12 - the mum actually assaulted her daughter and said *'If you think I've just built myself back up in this community for your dad to come home, if you think… (you can choose not to get married).'* The mother was shunned for years because she was a single mother with these two children, and the girl told me that at primary school, she was bullied all the way through because of her dad leaving her mum, and that was even from adult members of the community! And now they've sort of got themselves back on track and she was *'If you think you're doing this to me – I'll kill you first'.* It was the mother and the mother's fear of being shunned again, that she would have killed her daughter.' (school)

'They need to know how to be independent and to protect themselves, usually there is a high level of vulnerability.' (social worker)

'One experience that comes to mind – a young girl wanted to be with her boyfriend; the girl was 15, she disclosed physical abuse then forced marriage emerged as concern. Lots of links to other forms of abuse.' (social worker)

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'A 15 year old Bengali Muslim child who came from an affluent, well-educated family. The child was 'playing up' and challenging boundaries. As a way of managing this they took her to Bangladesh for a 'holiday'. When there she found out (she was to be married) and texted her friends. She did not know what to do. Initially she refused – her relatives took away her passport and phone and beat her. She was told if she got married she could get her passport back.' (social worker)

'There was a 12 year old girl – domestic violence in the family. She was physically abused and kept prisoner in the family for 3 years. The school said they were 'very strict' due to their culture. There was an incident when she was 15 - the father beat her and threatened to kill her. Her friend contacted social services and she was placed in foster care but they had no knowledge or understanding of forced marriage. There was a FMPO (Forced Marriage Protection Order) in place but her family broke the order and harassed her via the phone. There was no follow-up on the breaches or any monitoring. The girl had had a very protected life and had difficulties with personal boundaries – she was targeted for sexual exploitation and began using drugs. She's now disengaged and the social worker wants to return her to family.' (voluntary organisation)

This final example could be used as an example of the importance of professional experience or cultural and religious knowledge.

Range of Professional Knowledge, Experience and Roles
To some extent this has been covered in the 'themes' table above (Staff Skills and Knowledge), however this section comes directly from stories and experiences rather than the more structured questions from the interviews, so it is important to include this as a recurring theme. What is evident is the high level of expertise in some geographical areas amongst some professionals and at the other end there is a real lack of experience and knowledge that can hinder a proactive stance. The importance of close working relationships between professionals and of trust and immediacy are clear.

'I work very closely with the police, I don't work very closely with social services, they're more reactive than proactive. The police support is excellent - they are always there within the hour.' (school)

'I've dealt with 7 cases in the last 3 years; I use the Local Authority Safeguarding Policy plus our own systems in school. The involvement of the PPU (Public Protection Unit) is very helpful and of social services was not (with the first case). Social services care about keeping families together, whereas specific guidance on forced marriage tells you to stay as far away as possible. They are under pressure to get them home. Social care – I've made a complaint as they close cases early and talk to families about disclosures. I have a couple of case where the children were put back in families and they said *'there is nowhere for you to go'!'* (School)

'The girl spoke about the issues and a teacher overheard and she came to me with a child protection referral. I spoke to the young people and a friend encouraged her to tell me. They've got to know me now as someone who can help you. This makes me nervous as in this area there is a very high Asian population and they all know. I let young people know that I won't pass information to their family members or others if it would increase risk. Before, I would ring it through to social services - but now I wouldn't I'd call the PPU (Public Protection Unit) because they are used to it and are remarkable in their support to young women.' (school)

'In one case the social worker read a letter from family to the young person - kind of emotional blackmail. You should never put emotional pressure on the young person.' (school)

'It's not really my job to risk assess, but I feel that I need to as I don't trust that it's done. I am a trusted person to young people so pupils speak to me candidly. I will make sure it is recorded with a chronology, flagged up and I alert everyone who is relevant.' (school)

'I feel like I'm being really negative about social care but I have to be honest it's my major barrier, that is my major barrier - I hate involving them. I think it needs to be more of a specialist area and I think they need to take that on

board, I really do. I really can't stress that enough. I mean the social workers that have come along and have dealt with them, haven't ever dealt with anything like it before. I mean if I've never dealt with it before and I'm relying on you - the social worker, who's never dealt with it before... we're not going to get very far.' (school)

Specific Cultural and Religious Knowledge versus Child Focussed

Some of the respondents referred to the importance of being able to challenge and to question across cultures and religions as well as to notice/perceive the child's world when very different from your own. This is not necessarily a knowledge base (though this is useful) but includes an attitude and value system that puts the child at the centre and the confidence to assert this.

'Being non-white might help. They (white workers) don't want to be offensive so they don't push the boundaries.' (school)

'A 14 year old Pakistani Muslim boy was married in Pakistan. The girl was to be brought back later. The family were known re domestic abuse. The boy had told the social worker but they had not believed him - because he was a Muslim man? Then the new social worker addressed the issue with the mum who was supportive. The police informed and it was flagged on their system. An Islamic divorce was obtained. It was difficult as boy was very loyal to his father but it was also clear that the marriage was forced and illegal. It was dishonourable in the eyes of the father as he had given his word and he threatened violence to the mum and son. The social worker highlighted that it was illegal due to him being underage - it was very sensitive - the law enabled it to be taken out of boy's control which was helpful. It was minimised in mainstream children's services and school were not aware. Cases where honour of family is at stake, the children do not want to get parents into trouble.' (social worker)

'A 16 year old girl who was looked after but they did not secure orders due to her age. They had an ICPC (initial child protection conference) but no plan as there was a LAC (looked after child) plan. The young person eventually went

home due to pressure and the case was closed. The long-term team did not accept it as they did not want to monitor the case.' (social worker)

'This was a 17 year old girl – Pakistani. She was engaged to her cousin and kept off school so she ran away. The social worker didn't believe her and thought she just wanted more freedom – and thought that forced marriage was normal in her culture. There was domestic violence in the family so it was high risk. Eventually (she was) placed in foster care but little follow-up support.' (voluntary sector)

c) Focus Groups (2 groups, total of 13 respondents)

Two focus groups were convened and the participants were asked to contribute their ideas and share their experiences of working with Forced Marriage and HBV. The participants were guided to talk about; challenges faced, effective practice and resources.

Table 3 - Professionals involved with the focus groups

Focus Group 1 (n=5)	Focus Group 2 (n=8)
Social worker Independent Reviewing Office Solicitor Survivor (and local councillor) Outreach worker (volorg)	Community health worker and named nurse for safeguarding Domestic abuse leader at women's hospital Community development worker at PCT Volunteer in PCT group and survivor Co-ordinator of domestic abuse CPS worker with responsibility for equality and diversity Outreach worker for council Public Protection Unit worker

The Challenges

From reading the transcripts from the two focus groups many challenges for practitioners emerged. These were divided into the following categories:

a) Who and Where
b) Social Services Involvement

c) Dilemmas for Young People

d) Weighing up Risks

e) Getting the Message Across

f) Processes

a) Who and Where

This theme related to discussions amongst participants that related to the populations and individuals they were working with and the challenges that arose because of this. There was strong acknowledgement that forced marriage was an issue across a wide range of communities and this made it difficult to target a particular segment of the population. Comments about different communities included a growing awareness by professionals and communities themselves.

> "… the perception that forced marriage is related to specific ethnic minorities, they're usually Muslim, Pakistani. When I was growing up, if you got pregnant you got married – that was it; and that effectively is a forced marriage. I think working with the Irish Traveller community for the last 8 and a half years – I've never come across a forced marriage but you just know deep-down, instinctively, it's there. (Focus Group 2)

> "Although the issue of domestic abuse is coming to the fore now in this community (Irish Traveller), with the community openly speaking about it, forced marriage is still a taboo subject – like homosexuality or drug issues, it's like *'Oooh no that doesn't go on in our community'*." (Focus Group 2)

> "I grew up in the Chinese community and I always knew that parents introduced kids to each other as part of their business interests, and sometimes those people didn't want to marry each other." (Focus Group 2)

Participants commented that individuals caught up in forced marriage or the risk of this did not conform to a stereotype but were often in a state of dependency or vulnerability within their family or community.

There was agreement that some of the reasons why forced marriage occurred related to family honour or avoiding dishonour. Several participants agreed that for some families there was a fear of the 'westernisation' of their daughters.

> "At one time to see a girl in a hijab would be quite unusual but now there might be 10 girls walking up our road all in hijab. And I think that the westernisation of girls is the big fear, it came out in our research that '*we don't want our girls to be like your girls*". (Focus Group 2)

Some participants commented on the links between physical abuse, domestic abuse and forced marriage. There was an agreement that this often came to light first and the risk of forced marriage then became apparent.

One of the focus group participants identified herself as a survivor of forced marriage she raised the point that there is an assumption made about women who are subject to forced marriage.

> "When I tell them it's happened to me (forced marriage) they think *'oh my god, you seem so normal!* Some people say *'how can it happen to you when you're so open and talkative?'* I think that's challenging their perceptions " (Focus Group 2)

b) Role of Children's Services

It is somewhat illuminating that within the focus groups children's social services were seen as one of the challenges to effective practice. Across the focus groups there was one social worker and one independent reviewing officer. Children's social services representatives were invited to both of the focus groups.

There were several challenges that emerged related to working with children's social services; such as the lack of involvement that social services staff had in managing cases of forced marriage (under 18s). Further to this, participants commented that the level of knowledge and understanding was low. One of the social worker

participants acknowledged this and expressed her own dilemmas in dealing with this issue - in particular managing limited information relating to risk assessment. However there was a level of optimism in the groups about how social service responses were improving.

"I had no real knowledge of it other than news or the media, so you're sort of distanced from that. In a way it doesn't – it hasn't affected children's services at this point, you know, but that's the sort of job we work in. When it does come your way it's quite a shock and it's well how do we deal with it, who do we speak to, where are the support services for everybody?" (Focus Group 1 – Children's Services)

"I think there are problems when these girls are 16, 17 years old, social services will be involved and put them in a homeless hostel. I've been on the phone complaining about it. I'm always going to see women there and it's just not appropriate." (Focus Group 1)

"…children's services may not have had a heightened awareness of forced marriage…. If we do receive a referral and if it goes to 'contact and referral (children's services)' how they respond to it (is a risk) - what you wouldn't want is for them to suddenly go straight out and start a core assessment and say (to the family) *'yeah we've had this referral'* which would be your worst case scenario." (Focus Group 2)

"Certainly in the past social services have been very slow (I don't mean much criticism) – slow in arranging strategy meetings and there have been a few occasions where we've lost girls abroad. But I think things are improving. I did a case yesterday, on the Friday - where the strategy meeting was within an hour!" (Focus Group 1)

c) Dilemmas for Young People

Across both of the focus groups practitioners discussed the challenge of working with such a vulnerable group of children and young people. The two key issues that emerged for the young people they spoke of were; the tension between protecting

themselves and harming their family, and the uncertainty of their situation. The uncertainty arose from difficulties knowing if a forced marriage was indeed a significant risk and not knowing the implications of disclosure for themselves and their family.

"Just going back to the referral process, it' such a sensitive issue isn't it when children don't really want their family involved, they're not sure this is going to happen – they don't know what's going to happen next and it is about guidance and advice and what their options are." (Focus Group 1)

"And I don't think anybody really understands unless you're in it – that you lose absolutely everything, and to have to start all over again as a child is huge. So it doesn't surprise me that young people stay where they know, rather than the unknown. Who's going to care for them? Their family's ties are gone, they have got a huge family network as well and they lose it all. It's very difficult" (Focus Group 1)

"..the danger of being ostracised by your own community as well, which is horrendous. So once you've left, some women cannot go back, there's just no way because they are like 'the whore of Babylon'. You know what I mean they really are dirt!" (Focus Group 2)

"They come from an isolated background and so agencies presume that once their safe they're able to look after themselves, they know what they're doing. I think it's not acknowledged as much that their families made sure that they were so dependent on them that they were not able to leave." (Focus Group 2)

"I think for the young person, if they are placed out of the area they're being taken away, so they're being placed somewhere safe and away from people who could potentially harm them, but they're also away from their school, their friends, everything that's familiar to them." (Focus Group 2)

"People make such difficult decisions don't they? Like *'if I disclose this it's the end of my family life, I'm going to be taken away, moved from my family, my friends'* (Focus Group 2)

"… sometimes they don't want to go ahead with it. When they say that there are more people involved now, more professionals involved it kind of scares them - *'what's going to happen next?'* - you know. It's almost too much for them to handle sometimes I think" (Focus Group 1)

"Her response to that at the time was that she didn't really want her family to know that she was anxious. Because she was unsure if this was going to happen, it was just a feeling of anxiety or unsureness for herself." (Focus Group 1)

"In the short time that I've been there I've usually had calls from the victims themselves, sort of umm-ing and ah-ing about what they should do, *'just need to talk to someone', 'I'm not too sure', 'don't want to put my family to shame'.*" (Focus Group 1)

d) Weighing-up Risks/Risk Assessment

For all those involved with assessment there were dilemmas concerning how, when and whether they intervened. Frequently the dilemmas concerned the limited evidence on which to base life-changing decisions, and professional uncertainty about professional duty and thresholds. As previously mentioned in the one-to-one interviews, it can be difficult for professionals to asses risk when the young person is unsure.

"A friend of the young person went to head teacher to say she was worried about her friend – this was then referred via the contact centre and a written referral made. School were very open and honest with the young person about their concerns. She didn't want her family to know as she was unsure. It was difficult to weigh-up the risks, the evidence. At that stage we got the police involved to 'flag' it. Had to deal with it very sensitively and involved PPIU and had a strategy discussion…….That was then obviously looked at

and then allocated and it's quite difficult because you have to weigh the balance – this person's not sure, but there could be a possibility, she's definitely going to Pakistan for a wedding, she's not sure what's going to happen. What do we do with it? Really – where's our evidence of any child protection here – this somebody who's saying *'I'm just not sure'*." (Focus Group 1)

"We always come up against the barrier for children in terms of *'I think it's going to happen, but I'm not sure it's going to happen, but I don't want you to do anything about it'* – and that's the difficulty for us really." (Focus Group 1)

The participants discussed the importance of assessing whether you are sure that child is safe in the home.

"One of my considerations really is if we get an order for that child to remain in the home, is that child going to be safe? And I would be looking at perhaps previous convictions, because a lot of the families I deal with, the male members of the family are quite active criminals and violent people. If that's the case then you can't possibly keep the child in the home, you'd increase the risk. A lot of the families are law-abiding people and you sort of think well they probably will stick to the terms of an order and that child can remain at the property. It's a balancing act, I'd also discuss with police and social services whether it's safe for that child to remain but, and generally if there's been violence in the home and that's the case then it's not appropriate for the child to stay in that house." (Focus Group 1)

"And when they make that disclosure a lot of agencies think *'I've got to act now'*. And it's that assessment of risks, *'how long can we work with this young person on their terms and at their pace?'* And what is the risk to having to work urgently. So complicated isn't it, for a young person and all the agencies working with them." (Focus Group 2)

"…that again is another difficulty for practitioners to assess – the urgency and what the urgent family needs are, are they being significantly harmed right

now or is there an element of being able to take time, gather that intelligence, gather that multi-agency working, and I think professionals will always do that and weigh that up very carefully, that's the dilemma." (Focus Group 2)

e) Getting the Message Across

In the focus groups there were repeated discussions concerning how to target and support vulnerable or 'at risk' young people. This was sometimes identified as a particular issue in certain communities due to their isolation or difficulties engaging with universal or focused services. For many of the focus group participants schools and educational services were key; the direct route to raising awareness with young people and changing from the inside out.

There was some discussion regarding how communities engaged with the justice services.

> "One of the issues for us is that we are only able to prosecute offences which have a victim who comes forward to the police. So really we need people to have the confidence and the trust in the criminal justice system as a whole before they will come forward. I think forced marriage and HBV issues aside, we know and we acknowledge that there are certain communities who do have lower levels of confidence in criminal justice system historically." (Focus Group 2)

> "….the women said that they would never go to the police and the men said they weren't frightened of the law. What they were frightened of was their religion and culture. They had no regard for the UK law whatsoever. But their big respect was only for their cultural leader." (Focus Group 2)

> "I think there are certain communities that don't have the same levels of trust and confidence as others and within those marginalised communities reaching vulnerable people (young women) is even more of a challenge." (Focus Group 2)

Further discussion followed regarding access and information within particular communities or in particular settings.

"One of the other big challenges…… - children who aren't in education, so if they've decided to be educated at home by family members. The difficulty assessing, well actually being aware, is those children being educated at home. They'll be registered with the education services as being registered at home but there's no requirement to actually go and see them at home." (Focus Group 2)

"We need to reach more small community groups so they are talking about these issues; like there's the Somali women's group near my house – I went in once, and wanted to find out what goes on there, but they didn't seem to want to let me know what they were doing. In the nicest possible way they shut the door in my face." (Focus Group 2)

"…but the school are in a very difficult position I think, because they have to work with parents. If they do work around forced marriage and it does get back to the parents, it does cause problems. So.. schools generally are reluctant but I'd like to see a lot more work done in schools." (Focus Group 1)

"That's our challenge - engaging with schools, very small numbers of schools are happy to engage with us, the rest don't. We've done some sessions with school co-ordinators, safeguarding co-ordinators etc and their response, their knowledge of forced marriage is zero. The difference between a forced marriage and an arranged marriage, you know. I literally walked out, so frustrated - feeling really angry about it. This is meant to save our children; they have roles and responsibility. If their level is so below zero, what are the others who haven't got that responsibility like?" (Focus Group 2)

There were comments about the slowly changing level of awareness too. As well as the difficulties accessing communities and developing greater understanding of forced marriage.

"What worries me is that the young people in that situation don't know where to go with it, or actually don't know that this is going to happen – so it is the unknown for them. And as you say it's about making THEM aware, and for them to see the signs in their own home." (Focus Group 1)

"I was just reflecting on – I left home three years ago, I used to live in London, I was just reflecting on attitudes and awareness to forced marriage. When I first went to the police, they weren't aware of what a forced marriage is and didn't feel that it was such a big issue. He said *'why can't you just tell your parents that you don't want to do that?'* But almost four years on I feel that a lot more people are aware of forced marriage - I talk to somebody in bus about it – they may not know exactly what it is but they may have the concept of it." (Focus Group 2)

"I had no real knowledge of it other than news or the media, so you're sort of distanced from that in a way it doesn't – it hasn't affected children's services at this point, you know, but that's the sort of job we work in. When it does come your way it's quite a shock" (Focus Group 1)

"It's trying to keep it on the agenda and make sure that people see the links with other areas of their work and how it links to the wider violence against women and girls agenda. For us in the CPS... you know, it's about helping people see the wider link. And the other thing I was going to say was it's about practitioners not seeing themselves as...as being their responsibility" (Focus Group 2)

"We've taken a three tier approach in this city; educate the people who are in contact with young people, educate the young people themselves and educate the communities in which it's happening. We're sort of on the third tier at the moment – that it's the hardest." (Focus Group 1)

"We actually do run a group ourselves on a Wednesday evening after school, which has been quite successful. It's just a bit like what you were saying; although our group is kind of raising awareness of forced marriages we don't out rightly say that this is what it is because parents would be reluctant to send their children" (Focus Group 1)

To some extent, the raising awareness starts with an ability to define or explain forced marriage and arranged marriage to both professionals and the public.

"I would say that 90% of the women I work with – and I work with victims of domestic violence as well – 90% of the women I work with who have been through an arranged marriage. When I speak to them they haven't actually consented to that marriage at all .They're usually children or they usually have no choice whatsoever – so yes I think there's an extremely large grey area between what's 'arranged' and what's 'forced'" (Focus Group 1)

"Educational awareness, there's not enough of it because people often mix arranged marriage with forced marriage; they think it only happens to one community, we know that it doesn't - it happens to many different communities." (Focus Group 1)

f) Processes

Across the two focus groups, there were different teams, structures and processes that responded to safeguarding children at risk of forced marriage. In both focus groups the police (in a number of different formats) were seen as the lead agency in terms of responding; and did so very effectively on the whole. There were many different police teams that dealt with forced marriage in just these two locations, they were: the PPIU (Police Protection Investigation Unit), the Protect Team, the Child Sexual Exploitation Team, and the Family Crime Investigation Unit. This variety was accepted by participants but it was not entirely clear how roles overlapped, integrated or complimented one another.

"There's two teams set up in this city, there's a Child Sexual Exploitation Team which is the Protect Team and they may have information around forced marriage and the rest of it, but we have a PPIU (Police Protection Investigation Unit) and they primarily deal with physical, sexual, forced marriage or whatever." (Focus Group 1)

Clarity of role and taking a pro-active stance was commented upon.

"I find that if there's a really good police domestic violence unit they get things done. ….and they can co-ordinate, call and bring them into safety. But where they don't have that they're um-ing and ah-ing and thinking is it our issue or is

it somebody else's? And we lose so many young people like that. (Focus Group 1)

There was some confusion evident in Focus Group 2 about the age at which processes changed in the transition from child to adult status.

"One of the major areas of confusion has been at what age they can be referred to the MARAC. Sixteen is now ok, but because the girls (especially the ones they work with) they're 15, 16, - the MARAC that's also safeguarding, you'd take that away from the MARAC – but it needs to go to the MARAC."

"We always advise (if schools contact us for example) that straight away it's to social care – it's safeguarding. If you're under 16 then it has to go to there. I think when it becomes an adult – that's quite ....

INTERRUPTED BY ANOTHER PARTICIPANT

"I was under the impression it was under 18?"

"But if they are over 16 but under 18 they have a choice, it is their informed decision" (Focus Group 2)

One of the voluntary sector participants highlighted the difficulty getting hold of potential victims post referral and the risk that this may entail, particularly if the young person is not clear that they have made a referral.

"I guess any barriers to that would probably be sometimes I have had where there's been referrals from professionals trying to get hold of the victims themselves. It could be that they've agreed to the support services but didn't know they were making a referral etc then trying to get hold of them, calling them – when's the right time to call them? Sometimes they've got secret phones – they can't speak." (Focus Group 1)

A key issue is post-removal support and appropriate accommodation. Although this is a resource issue it also affects the processes that young people go through and the time taken to respond effectively.

> "I think it's great when we rescue these young people I think we've got everything in place up til then. But you know 15, 16, 17 year olds where do they go after that? And that's where there still is a huge gap. There are very limited support services out there for them, like you said they leave everything." (Focus Group 1)

> "If that child is going to be at risk from wider family members where do you place them? It depends on the judgement that you make in terms of where you keep children, whether it is in Manchester, Greater Manchester or even further afield. And you're guided really by the history of the involvement with the police - in terms of if they've got intelligence on the family and they're linked to another part of the family in a different area. Then you're guided by the young person themselves" (Focus Group 1)

> "Another challenge I think is it's great once you've helped a victim and they've been relocated…, but how do you continue to support them? My experience was *'your safe now, here's your new house, it was great helping you',* and that was it. That was it. I had no idea what I was doing in that house, no idea of bills, no idea! Just the personal development side isn't as much reinforced or encouraged. So I just felt that after that I just wanted to go back home because ... I had no idea." (survivor and professional from Focus Group 2)

Children's social services responses can be unhelpful.

Interviewer: "For under 18s are children's services routinely involved?"

> "They are but sometimes they get it wrong, because it takes so much red tape to actually put that young person somewhere. Like if you get someone on a week-end what do you do - because children's services are not open? If you

get that call at 11 o'clock at night you have to go to the police, they are really good at what they do where they have had the training." (Focus Group 1)

Effective Practice

Several readings of the transcripts from the two focus groups provided a cluster of discussions around what helped or supported effective practice. The most common and strongly identified themes were as follows.

- Role of schools
- Raising the profile of Forced Marriage
- Relationship with child/young person
- Multi-agency working
- Engaging with families and communities
- Proactive and confident workers

See Table 4 below for a summary of these themes. Many reiterate the experiences and thoughts of the individual professionals interviewed.

Table 4 - Effective Practice (focus group responses)

Role of Schools	Raising Profile of Forced Marriage	Relationship with Child/Young Person,	Multi-Agency Working	Engaging with Communities and Families	Proactive and Confident Workers
Trying to use the community support officers to do some of the work in schools and information sharing in schools – useful link for getting in as they already visit schools etc.	Importance of having a national standard for training around forced marriage – Forced Marriage Training Standard needs to be used. Guidance states do not mediate with the family	Importance of the voice of the child and unpicking their understanding of the situation	Good multi-agency working locally. You need to have network of strong professional relationships with core people in the area	Families can change attitudes and values	Important for professionals to acknowledge that they don't know it all and they need to keep on learning
Education is key especially with young people driving it	Important to keep it on the agenda and link this to wider violence against women and girls.	Useful to have good role models who can support young people who have been there and done that.	Importance of a joined-up approach; it makes a big difference	Importance of continuing to build links and building trust in communities particularly the marginalised ones	Really good police domestic violence unit to get things done – if not then lots of hesitation and uncertainty and girls are lost
I think from children's services point of view it's extremely important because I know that the cases I've dealt with, it has been school that has referred to the local authority. So the more schools that	CPS system now flagged for Forced Marriage and Honour Based crime so we can monitor type and number of offences.	Usually young person themselves will be unsure about what to do - torn between family and rights. Talk through their options with them.	Forced marriage and honour based crime does have a flag on our computer system so we can monitor around the country – the numbers and the types of offences that are being prosecuted. So	We need to reach out to the small community groups to talk about this issue	In terms of referral it makes a lot of difference if someone is prepared to stick their neck out – key people are important.

are aware and understand what forced marriage is and arranged marriage and can differentiate between the two – then that's better for us really.			that's been a step forward in the past few years, linking into the forced marriage and honour based violence steering group is beneficial for us because we've been able to raise awareness for prosecutors		
I think for the young person, if they are placed out of the area they're being taken away, so they're being place somewhere safe and away from people who could potentially harm them, but they're also away from their school, their friends everything that's familiar to them. And I do think that it's friends who people .. victims.. young victims confide in. And that's why I think teachers, mentors, school-based staff can play	Awareness raising is good and needs to continue	That's why engagement with people who've gone through that whole process is so crucial. They (professionals) need to know what worked for them, what didn't work, what was the wrong thing to do, what young people can tell us.	Key professionals working in the family environment, and just getting that feel about what's happening within families – linking in with the school health support and in particular GPs as well – another key professional that can pick up on some of the emotional health issues that generalise with this issue and are able to perhaps spend a bit more time teasing out what the background to that is	So it's really vital that we are at community level, seen at community forums, we're visible within communities. So that people know that when they go to the police they will be listened to, if they choose to take it to court or support a prosecution	Having confidence in the subject and being unafraid

really important roles. Not just in terms of the safeguarding co-ordinators and making sure that they take on board information they receive, but raising the profile within schools in PSHE or whichever lesson it might be, so that friends can recognise the signs as well within their peers.					
I think schools could do more by working with children and young people on building self-esteem, their knowledge about what are healthy relationships and what aren't, and having aspirations.	…it's better, if we can - as we learn more and communities are more open, we don't want emergency situations where we go in grabbing young children in the night and saying 'oooh no' and placing them out of area. It doesn't help anybody.		We have a database set up so we're able to track (in the PPU where I work) what's happening with every single one of those cases. We recognise that there's no quick fix, and that those cases in some instances – we track them for however many years that they're there		Importance of being proactive

5. Analysis and Discussion

This report has presented as much direct evidence as possible in terms of the experiences, opinions and ideas of the research participants. This discussion aims to pull together the overriding issues related to safeguarding children/young people at risk of, or involved in, forced marriage. We will end the report with a number of key practice recommendations.

Many of the themes that arose echoed those identified in other research studies discussed in the literature review including: lack of adequate recording of incidents; limited professional knowledge; varied professional interventions; anxieties about 'race' issues; and limited support following initial protective action. In particular this study identified a number of key issues for practice, these were related to:

- Systems and processes
- Knowledge, understanding and roles
- Complexity, Intersectionality and Power

a) Systems and Processes

Essentially there remains confusion surrounding how we work effectively with this particular child safeguarding issue. A number of dilemmas were exposed during the research interviews.

The first difficulty is the lack of coherent recording systems concerning cases of forced marriage. Our study failed to find relevant local authority data relating to the number of cases and how these fared. In some local authorities this may be due to no cases of forced marriage within that area. However in many regions this is not the case. In order to safeguard children affected by forced marriage we need to know where they are and how many.

There are difficulties for practitioners in deciding how to make an initial response and which guidance to use in forming their response. Safeguarding processes urge professionals to inform and involve the family where possible (e.g. *Working Together to Safeguard Children*, 2015; Children Act, 1989) whereas statutory guidance from the Forced Marriage Unit (Forced Marriage Unit, 2014) warns against this

specifically. The use of the MARAC is also confusing to many; is this the best place to plan for families affected by forced marriage? How is forced marriage like or unlike domestic abuse? At what age do young people get referred to this body? How does the MARAC relate to and communicate with the LSCB?

In relation to this practitioners struggled to clarify at what age children's safeguarding services were appropriate. Although it may be clear in legislation (Children Act, 1989) who is a child; this is less clear when it comes to prioritising and allocating resources on a day to day basis. There are apparent issues gaining an effective response to children in the 16+ age group from children's safeguarding services. This is particularly true with respect to ongoing practical support, accommodation and access to mental health services.

Many examples of good quality practice involving the police were cited. It is evident that in some parts of the country police services are effectively and appropriately intervening where there are risks of forced marriage. A number of schools had excellent working relationships with the police teams that enabled swift, focused and effective action to be taken at the point of referral. There were a number of comments alluding to the expertise and clear role of the police teams. What was less evident was reports of effective responses by children's social care professionals. Responses at the point of referral were not always seen as helpful by other agencies (e.g. schools). The unhelpful element was usually related to response times to referrals or lack of knowledge and understanding of the issues involved. In addition, there were problems concerning sufficient funding/resources for older adolescent placements. Further clarification is needed concerning the referral and assessment processes within children's social care services and the specific procedures for working with children affected by forced marriage.

Inadequate ongoing work with children who were at risk of or who had experienced a forced marriage was seen as a weakness by many of the participants. Although there were examples of quick and effective responses to referrals, once the child had been made safe services often withdrew. A number of respondents commented on the very limited aftercare and support provided to such children. The key issue appeared to be resources; lack of foster care placements, supported housing, mental

health provision and support with daily living skills. On the whole voluntary organisations were seen as attempting to deliver this ongoing support, in addition individual professionals made heroic efforts to support individual children once they had been removed from their families. The lack of ongoing support appears to play a significant role in children returning to their families in risky ways, or being vulnerable to other risk taking behaviour such as being groomed, drug and alcohol misuse etc.

b) Knowledge, Understanding and Roles

The role of 'champions' was surprisingly significant in the context of forced marriage, and this is not something that is already noted in the research literature. In this particular study, there were several examples of professionals going above and beyond the call of duty to ensure the immediate and ongoing safety of individual children. What the champions had in common was a knowledge and ability to use and develop local networks and resources in relation to forced marriage risks; as well as professional confidence and a substantial amount of experience in this field. We found schools where forced marriage was a high priority issue had a key member of staff who had a proactive role in supporting young people affected by forced marriage. Again, it was unexpected that schools were so key in the responses to forced marriage. Voluntary sector individuals were also well represented in this category.

There are arguments both for and against the development of experts and/or champions. It is clear that they worked effectively at responding to young people, developing awareness of the issues and influencing opinion amongst professionals and communities. However there are risks of giving the responsibility for working with forced marriage to a few specialist individuals when, like safeguarding children more generally, it is 'everybody's business'. It would be useful to look at models of specialism versus a generic approach in other related issues such as domestic abuse and FGM (female genital mutilation) to explore appropriate solutions.

c) Complexity, Intersectional and Power

Consistent with other studies reviewed above, the young people who were affected by forced marriage who were discussed in this study came from a range of different

ethnicities and cultural backgrounds. Many of the families originated from the Indian sub-continent but also from countries such as Iran and Yemen. The children and young people were of different ages, abilities and included boys and girls. The young people's lives were framed by different intersecting power relationships that highlighted the need for nuanced and individualised professional responses. The young people faced emotional and sometimes physical abuse at home, but also had highly precarious futures if removed from home and left without support. Similarly the context for the forced marriage varied across the case studies mentioned, with evidence given of differences also within family networks, including potentially protective family members. Whilst examples were given of the FMU guidance being followed, there was also a sense that it did not encompass the diversity of circumstances that child welfare professionals come across, and also that the focus was too much on the 'event' rather than seeing forced marriage as a process with longer term consequences.

Professionals working with young people affected by forced marriage need to be aware of how their own identities and values influence their responses, and also the impact of organisational contexts and cultures. A culturally relativist approach was identified by some respondents as impeding effective responses, with professionals being anxious about being seen as culturally insensitive. Some BME respondents felt it was easier for them to challenge the practice within their community, and protect children without stigmatising communities. An overly cultural focus risks failing to act on occasions because forced marriage is narrowly viewed as being only part of certain (mainly South Asian) communities. However it can also homogenise 'culture' and pathologise communities and cultures, thereby potentially denying young people access to protective aspects of both. It is important for professionals within and across agencies to have opportunities for critical reflection and dialogue with each other about what are sensitive and complex issues linked to personal, professional and political values.

6. Recommendations for Policy and Effective Practice

1. **Better data collection and record keeping -** Local Safeguarding Children Boards should undertake an audit of cases of children affected by forced marriage across their agencies and establish systems for on-going data collection. This should also involve periodic reviews of the process and outcomes for these children, with the aim of learning lessons and improving practice.

2. **Increased awareness-raising and training –** The development of programmes for raising awareness amongst the general public, including targeted programmes for young people from all ethnic backgrounds, and widening training for professionals, including multi-agency training around the dynamics of working together.

3. **Guidance for social workers and other professionals undertaking assessments and developing plans –** The development of further guidance for professionals on assessing the risks and dynamics of forced marriage for any child under the age of 18. This to include the development of plans that incorporate a individualised and contextualised analysis of possible responses to preventing entry into a forced marriage, or exiting if the marriage has already happened, as well as the child/young person's support needs.

4. **Provision of on-going support needs –** Greater attention to the longer term support services required for young people affected by forced marriage, both children who remain at home or those who are placed elsewhere is required. The vulnerability of young people removed from home and then left socially isolated and with limited support requires particular attention.

5. **Spaces for critical reflection and dialogue –** Organisations ensuring social workers and other professionals have opportunities for supervision that helps them critically reflect on their values and assumptions and how these may

influence their practice. As well, space needs to be created where workers within and across agencies have the opportunity to discuss power dynamics and ethical issues that arise in working with children affected by forced marriage.

6. **Further research –** this should include studies ascertaining the views of survivors of forced marriage, as well as family members to better understand the values and motivations and impact of professional interventions.

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