



Forced marriage: an information sheet for LSE staff

Staff in the School may occasionally be consulted by individuals who are either victims of forced marriage, or who may fear that they are going to be forced into marriage at some time in the future. This sheet aims to give staff brief information, indicate key points of contact in the School, highlight the issue of student confidentiality and provide a list of external contacts and links, for staff who may encounter students concerned about forced marriage.

What is forced marriage?

Forced marriage is primarily, but not exclusively, an issue of violence against women. Forced marriage should be regarded as a form of domestic abuse and, under the age of 18, child abuse. Most cases involve young women and girls aged between ten and thirty, although victims of forced marriage can also be men.

A clear distinction must be made between a **forced marriage** and an **arranged marriage**. In *arranged marriages*, the families of both spouses take a leading role in arranging the marriage but the choice of whether or not to accept the arrangement remains with the young people. In *forced marriage*, one or both partners do not consent to the marriage and some form of coercion, whether physical, emotional or a combination of both is used.

Staff may become aware that a student might be a victim of forced marriage from the victim, the spouse, a friend or an acquaintance. The family of the victim's spouse can also be abusive. The victim may therefore present to a member of staff with direct signs of physical or psychological abuse that has been perpetrated by others. The victim may also present with psychological or emotional problems, such as depression or self-harm. Isolation is one of the biggest problems facing women trapped in, or under threat of, a forced marriage. They may feel they have no one to speak to about their situation. These may result either from being in a forced marriage, or from fear of an impending forced marriage. Non-consensual sex within marriage is rape, and staff may also be consulted by individuals who disclose circumstances of forced intercourse, sexual assault or rape.

Whilst it is important to have an understanding of the motives that drive parents to force their children to marry, these motives should not be accepted as justification for denying them the right to choose a marriage partner and enter freely into marriage. Forced marriage should be recognised as a **human rights abuse**.

Victims of forced marriage are a particularly vulnerable group whose needs must be addressed with particular sensitivity and urgency. If needed, please reassure students that the School will seek to provide as much support as possible and help with issues of seeking immediate accommodation, short and long-term financial help, protection of the student's anonymity, personal security and counselling.

Who in the School can offer support?

First points of contacts:

- **Student Services Centre – Advice Manager**, Mr Gavin Eves: g.eves@lse.ac.uk, ext. 7139
- **LSE Student Counselling Service**: student.counselling@lse.ac.uk, ext. 3627
- **Adviser to Women Students**, Dr Shani Orgad: s.s.orgad@lse.ac.uk, ext. 6493

- **Adviser to Male Students**, Dr Jonathan Hopkin: j.r.hopkin@lse.ac.uk, ext. 6535
- **Dean of Undergraduate Studies**, Dr Jan Stockdale: j.stockdale@lse.ac.uk, ext. 7058
- **Dean of Graduate Studies**, Dr Sunil Kumar: s.kumar@lse.ac.uk, ext. 6195

Other useful contacts in the School:

- **Head of Security**, Mr Paul Thornbury: p.c.thornbury@lse.ac.uk, ext. 6055. Head of Security can advise students on their safety and facilitate referral to appropriate police department.
- **Mental Health and Well-being Advisor**, Ms Jane Sedgwick: j.sedgwick@lse.ac.uk, ext. 6523
- **Equality and Diversity Adviser**, Ms Carolyn Solomon-Pryce: c.solomon-pryce@lse.ac.uk, ext. 6171
- **Wardens and/or Sub-Wardens in School Halls of Residence** (where relevant)

Student confidentiality

Victims, or potential victims, of forced marriages who disclose their circumstances are potentially exposing themselves to serious harm and even death. As such, it is absolutely essential that the highest possible respect for confidentiality is maintained. In many cases, students may ask you to keep the matter confidential, or implicitly expect confidentiality, on the basis of trust. Where this occurs, you may need to explain to the student that there are some things you will need to disclose to others, and ideally seek their consent to do so. What is important is that a student's private business should be treated with discretion, that any information passed is on a 'need to know' basis, and that any written/electronic records are kept appropriately, with due regard to the Data Protection Act.

Where an individual consents to the disclosure, there is less likely to be a problem, although **the consequences of disclosure must be carefully thought through**. Disclosure without consent requires a careful weighing of factors, including the risk to the individual and third parties, the extent to which a disclosure can lessen the relevant risks, and the impact of disclosure on trust. It is vitally important that students are involved in all stages of the decision-making process and that they retain as much control as possible over disclosures of information.

If in any doubt, talk to someone else about your concerns, rather than keeping them to yourself. This can easily be done on a 'no names' basis. Seek advice from staff with professional training and/or from more experienced colleagues (e.g. Dean, Student Service Centre, Adviser to Women students, Adviser to Male Students). Whilst communication with appropriate colleagues within the School is important, the Data Protection Act prohibits staff from the disclosure of any information about registered students to third parties (**including parents and sponsors**). There are a few specific exceptions – primarily statutory authorities (please refer to 'Disclosure to third parties' in Data Protection).

For further guidance you may also wish to refer to the LSE Student Counselling Service Confidentiality Policy: lse.ac.uk/counselling/Documents/ConfidentialityPolicy.pdf

Useful external contacts and links

Emergency contacts

In case of an emergency, please use one of the following numbers:

Police: 999

Forced Marriage Unit: 020 7008 0151

Forced Marriage Unit

<http://www.fco.gov.uk/en/travel-and-living-abroad/when-things-go-wrong/forced-marriage/>

Karma Nirvana

www.karmanirvana.org.uk

Southall Black Sisters

Southall Black Sisters is a not-for-profit organisation established to meet the needs of black (Asian and African-Caribbean) women. It provides information, advice, advocacy, practical help, counselling and support to women and children experiencing domestic and sexual abuse (including forced marriage and 'honour' crimes).

www.southallblacksisters.org.uk

Forced Marriage

This website provides advice, information and essential contacts to help people out of a forced marriage.

<http://www.forcedmarriage.net/>

Ashiana

Ashiana is an Asian women's refuge, located in South Yorkshire.

www.ashianahelp.org.uk

National Domestic Abuse Helpline

Women and children: 0808 2000 247

Men's advice line: 0808 801 0327

Women's Aid

Women's Aid is the national domestic abuse charity that helps thousands of women and children every year.

www.womensaid.org.uk

Ask the Police

<https://www.askthe.police.uk/Content/Default.mth>

The Site

This website puts you in direct contact with expert advisors on forced marriage.

<http://www.thesite.org/homelawandmoney/law/victims/forcedmarriages>