

Forced marriage: the risk factors and the effect of raising the minimum age for a sponsor, and of leave to enter the UK as a spouse or fiancé(e)

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The views expressed in this report are those of the authors, not necessarily those of the Home Office (nor do they represent Government policy).

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Executive summary:

Forced marriage: the risk factors and the effect of raising the minimum age for a sponsor, and of leave to enter the UK as a spouse or fiancé(e)

This report presents the results, conclusions and policy recommendations of a research project commissioned by the Home Office, and carried out between March 2006 and February 2007. The research was conducted in the context of debates in the UK and in the European Union about the consequences of increasing the age for a sponsor or spouse or fiancé(e) as a measure to prevent cases of forced marriage. In April 2003, the Immigration Nationality Directorate (IND) raised the age at which a person could sponsor a partner to enter the UK for marriage from 16 to 18 years. In December 2004, as part of cross-governmental measures to tackle forced marriage, the age of spouses seeking entry to the UK was also increased to 18 years. The thought behind this was that it would give extra time for young people to mature which would help them to resist family pressure to marry.

Aims:

The research addressed four main issues:

1. The impact and outcome on forced marriages of the recent increase in the age of sponsorship and entry into the UK of a spouse or fiancé(e) from 16 to 18 years;
2. The benefits and risks of increasing the age of sponsorship or entry to 18, 21 and 24;
3. The range of communities in which forced marriage happens; and
4. The factors which are perceived to increase or decrease the risk of forced marriages.

Methodology

The research, was carried out in two separate phases. Phase one, the pilot stage, was conducted in Manchester and Tower Hamlets. This phase involved familiarisation interviews, interviews with stakeholders and survivors, and identification of databases that might provide useful sources for data on forced marriages. Phase two built on the successful methods used in phase one, and extended the research to include Birmingham. It involved further familiarisation, stakeholder and survivor interviews and further identification and exploration of existing databases. In addition, a mapping survey and focus groups were carried out. Overall familiarisation interviews were conducted with 13 organisations, including a range of government departments, statutory sector organisations and NGOs; stakeholder interviews with 45 organisations across Birmingham, Manchester, and Tower Hamlets; in-depth interviews with 38 survivors of forced marriage (33 women and 5 men), a mapping survey of 79 community organisations across Birmingham (n=25), Manchester (n=24), and Tower Hamlets (n=30); 28 departments/projects interviewed about the content and structure of their databases; and 15 focus groups carried out with a wide range of communities involving 97 individuals (82 women and 15 men) with ages ranging from 15 to 60. The methodology chosen generated rich data on issues related to forced marriage, and also examined the research questions from different angles and in relation to different communities. The variety of methods used provided a degree of triangulation, and also enough breadth to allow general patterns to emerge.

Findings

Raising the age: The research found no statistical or qualitative evidence that raising of the age of sponsorship or entry from 16 to 18 had any significant impact on the incidence of forced marriage cases. There was limited support for a wholehearted endorsement to raising of the age of sponsorship or entry further to either 21 or 24. The potential benefits of raising the entry age were seen as being the possibility of greater maturity, access to education and financial independence for young people, all of which could leave them in a stronger position to resist forced marriage. However, these benefits were also perceived as being largely outweighed by the risks.

Risks cited centred on three key themes: the increased and direct risks of physical and psychological harm to victims of forced marriage; the discriminatory nature of the proposed

increase in age, and the human rights implications. Increased risks to survivors included: young British women being taken abroad to marry and kept there forcibly until they could sponsor their spouses; entering the UK with false documentation; and implications for mental health, particularly attempted suicide and self-harm. The concern was that an increase in age could also prevent survivors from accessing potential sources of support, such as child protection legislation and education based counselling support. Other risks included concerns that the proposed entry was a measure to restrict immigration, that it would be discriminatory to impose a dual system of marriage ages within the UK, would impact on 'genuine' arranged or love marriages, and would have a disproportionate effect on minoritised communities.

Communities experiencing forced marriage: While forced marriage was often conceptualised as primarily affecting South Asian communities, the research indicated that it was an issue in a wide range of religious and other communities outside the South Asian Diaspora. These included orthodox/fundamental religious communities in the UK, Irish traveller women, Armenian, Turkish, and some mainland Chinese communities, Eastern European communities, African countries including Eritrea, Sudan, Sierra Leone and Mozambique, and African Caribbean communities.

The study also revealed that these different communities experienced a range of routes into forced marriage, including: poverty and bride price primarily in African communities; control over sexuality in South Asian, Middle Eastern, Chinese and African communities; immigration in South Asian, Middle Eastern, Chinese communities and African communities. A blurring between arranged and forced marriage, as well as distinctions between them, were highlighted in relation to most of these contexts.

Factors perceived to increase or decrease the risk of forced marriages Factors perceived to increase the risk of forced marriage included negative actions associated with an increase in the age of sponsorship or entry of a spouse to 21 or 24. Other factors included: overt coercion by family members, mental ill-health, death of a parent and 'unsuitable' sexual behaviour of potential spouses, and attempts to bypass certain immigration and asylum rules. Such risks were compounded by lack of appropriate services, no recourse to public funds², and wider socio-political processes leading to more traditional Muslim identities being adopted. Decreasing the risk of forced marriage was largely the reverse of factors that were thought to increase the risks. In large part, better support to victims (at home and overseas) as well as preventive work were thought to be crucial, as was increased resources for education and awareness for practitioners, young people, communities as well as academic/ vocational education for young people.

Recommendations

1. A further increase in the age of sponsorship or entry to 21 or 24 is unlikely to prevent forced marriage, given the range of communities and ages that are affected. Our research therefore does not support a change in policy to increase the age.
2. Forced marriage affects a range of communities, and there are a variety of routes into forced marriage. Any policies around forced marriage need to take this into account.
3. Increased funding and capacity is needed at a strategic, management and practitioner level for organisations charged with responsibilities for supporting victims of forced marriage.
4. Specifically targeted services are also needed including specialist refuge support and appropriate mental health support.
5. Forced marriage is already a form of domestic violence, and women subject to the two year rule should not be required to prove further domestic violence in order to be eligible for the domestic violence concession.

² Individuals who enter the UK as spouses or long-term partners of a British national or someone settled in this country are subject to a two year probationary period before they can apply for residency and have no recourse to public funds during that period. That is, are unable to access statutory help for housing or related public funds for housing costs or living expenses.

6. Community awareness and education initiatives regarding forced marriage as well as community development with parents and young people are vital.
7. Anti discriminatory practice is needed in generic and specialist agencies to improve access to services for survivors of forced marriage.
8. Improved services are needed internationally in cases of forced marriages, including establishment of women's groups, helplines and campaigns for women's rights as well as poverty alleviation programmes targeted at women.
9. There is a general paucity of statistical information required to monitor the effects of legislation in this field. Recommendations for possible improvements to the availability of data are included in the report.

Chapter one

Introduction

Aims

The research outlined in this report set out to examine four main issues:

1. The impact and outcome on forced marriages of the recent increase in the age of sponsorship and entry to the UK of a spouse or fiancé(e) from 16 to 18 years;
2. The benefits and risks of increasing the age of sponsorship or entry to 18, 21 and 24;
3. The range of communities in which forced marriage happens; and
4. The factors which are perceived to increase or decrease the risk of forced marriages.

Background

The research was commissioned by the Home Office due to concerns about forced marriage, and discussions about raising of the minimum age of a sponsor or spouse entering the UK to 21 or 24 as part of the Government's measures to tackle this problem. The research was carried out between March 2006 and February 2007.

The Home Office defines forced marriage as occurring:

Where one or both parties are coerced into a marriage against their will and under duress. Duress includes either physical and/or emotional pressure. It is very different from arranged marriage, where both parties give their full and free consent to the marriage. The tradition of arranged marriages has operated successfully within many communities and many countries for a long time. (Home Office, 2006)

In April 2003, the Immigration Nationality Directorate (IND) raised the age at which a person could sponsor a partner to enter the UK for marriage from 16 to 18 years. In December 2004, as part of cross-governmental measures to tackle forced marriage, the age of spouses seeking entry to the UK was also increased to 18 years. The thought behind this was that it would give extra time for young people to mature, which would help them to resist family pressure to marry³. The Government has more recently proposed to further raise the age of entry, to 21, as an additional measure to combat forced marriage. This will apply to individuals from outside the European Economic Area, and those concerned may also have to pass an English language test (Hansard, 5 February 2007). These proposals will form part of a public consultation launched over the summer 2007. It is anticipated that the raising of the age will result in 3,000 fewer people entering Britain each year from outside Europe, although it is not clear what proportion might involve forced marriages (Times Online, 29 March 2007). Other recent initiatives include the establishment of the Commission for Integration and Cohesion, which has the aim of acting as a catalyst for the integration of existing and new migrants to the UK. There have also been guidelines for social workers about good practice in cases of forced marriage involving young people (FCO, 2003), for the police (Stabbard, 2002) and for the education sector (FCO, 2005).

Countries such as the Netherlands and Germany have recently raised the age to 21 for a sponsor or spouse entering the country, and Denmark has the highest minimum age in the European Union for a sponsor, at 24. In the Netherlands, the increase in age was accompanied by an income condition for the sponsor equivalent to at least 120 per cent of the statutory minimum wage. After implementation of the law in November 2004, there was a drop of 23 per cent in the first eight months of 2005 in the general number of applications requesting a temporary stay authorisation for family formation or family reunification compared to the same period for 2004. However, enlargement of the European Union also

³ Belgium, Sweden and Latvia also have 18 as the minimum age of a sponsor or spouse entering the country.

impacted on these figures as individuals from the ten new member states are no longer required to apply for such authorisation.

In Denmark the raising of the age to 24 was implemented in 2002 within a general tightening of immigration and asylum laws, and increasing emphasis on integration. The Danish family reunification law has an 'attachment requirement', where the couple has to prove that they have a higher attachment to Denmark than to any other country. To further integration policy aims, there has been a major investment in the levels of support for young people in Denmark who may face forced marriage, including dedicated refuges, hotlines and targeted funding from the Danish government for a variety of support including housing (Hvilshøj, 2006; Ny i Danmark, 2007⁴). While the increase in age appears to have had no direct impact on forced marriages, there has been an increase in the numbers of young immigrants pursuing further education, from 10 per cent of 20-24 year olds in 2000/2001 to 17 per cent in 2003/2004, and the age of marriage to someone residing outside the EU has increased from 20 to 25 years (Hvilshøj, 2006). One impact of the increase in age has been that some couples have been forced to emigrate to other European countries such as Sweden (Stollavistskaia and McElroy, 2006). Concerns have been raised by groups such as the Danish Institute for Human Rights that Danish family reunification laws are discriminatory, as they violate the right to family life guaranteed by the European Convention on Human Rights, that they discriminate against consensual marriages, and only apply to non EU citizens and to Danish citizens with other ethnic backgrounds (Stollavistskaia and McElroy, 2006).

Other European responses include specific measures to combat 'marriages of convenience' for visa purposes, which are often conflated with forced marriages. These measures are to extend the required period of proven cohabitation in UK, Denmark, France and Belgium and to give courts the power to decide whether a cohabitation requirement has been met in France and Belgium (Rude-Antoine, 2005).

There have also been debates in the UK and elsewhere on whether or not to criminalise forced marriage (FCO and HO, 2005), and as this report was being written a proposal for a civil law that would offer protection in cases of forced marriage was under consideration in the UK (Forced Marriage Bill 2006)⁵. A recent UK proposal to create a specific criminal offence of forced marriage included a national consultation on the issue, which concluded that a specific criminal offence should not be adopted. While there is no specific offence in the UK of 'forcing someone to marry' (FCO and HO, 2005: 8) it was felt that existing provisions within criminal and civil law would be able to deal with the range of offences committed during forced marriage. These include kidnapping, false imprisonment, assault, sexual offences, harassment, child cruelty and failing to ensure school attendance. The consultation document suggested that a specific criminal offence may have disadvantages such as having a disproportionate effect on the Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) populations, which could be interpreted as an attack on specific communities, potentially increasing the alienation of victims from their families. However, it was also thought to be beneficial in preventing forced marriage by having a deterrent effect and empowering young people.

Germany has introduced a law that makes forced marriage a particularly severe case of the criminal offence of 'coercion' (Berghahn and Rostock, 2006) and in Pakistan, there were, at the time of writing, discussions on pushing forward legislation aiming to outlaw forced marriage (news24, 2006). For the first time in legal history, forced marriage is being prosecuted as a 'crime against humanity' in Sierra Leone's post conflict Special Court (Park, 2006).

⁴ www.nyidanmark.dk/da-dk/integration/puljer/puljebeskrivelser/ofre_for_tvangsaegteskaber.htm accessed 15.02.2007. The Danish Government has committed DKr 5 million in social support per annum (equivalent to £5 million per annum in the UK when exchange rates and relative population sizes are taken into account).

⁵ The House of Commons debates on this matter also included suggestions that the age limit for sponsors be raised to 21 either through an addition to the bill or by secondary legislation.

Chapter two

Methodology

This chapter outlines the approach adopted for the research, including the challenges involved and the rationale for the methods employed. Please see Appendix Four for more detail on the methodology.

The research was carried out as two separate phases. Phase one acted as a pilot study and was located in Manchester and Tower Hamlets. It had the purpose of testing the methodology and developing the networks required for the larger study. Phase one involved familiarisation interviews, interviews with stakeholders and survivors, and identification of databases that might provide useful sources for data on forced marriages. Phase two built on the successful methods used in phase one, and extended the research to include Birmingham. It involved further familiarisation, stakeholder and survivor interviews and further identification and exploration of existing databases. In addition, a mapping survey and focus groups were carried out.

The very nature of forced marriage means that individuals experiencing such marriages are a 'hard-to-reach' group, particularly for a Home Office funded project in the context of public debates around immigration control. This makes it extremely difficult to develop accurate measures of the prevalence of forced marriages or to obtain reliable quantitative information. The original methodology for phase two included a community survey of attitudes to explore the main research questions. However, the interviews with a wide range of community organisations and other stakeholders, carried out during phase one, made it clear that such a community survey would not be feasible within the timeframe of the research, and was in any case unlikely to provide reliable data. Also, the initial exploration of official and other databases indicated that there was no existing source providing sufficient quality or coverage to provide valid statistical data. Instead, it was decided to build on the approaches that had proved successful in phase one and to use a largely qualitative methodology, employing a variety of methods that would enable detailed exploration of the research aims.⁶

Overall, the research involved:

- Familiarisation interviews with 13 organisations, including a range of government departments, statutory sector organisations and NGOs.
- Stakeholder interviews with 45 organisations across Birmingham, Manchester, and Tower Hamlets.
- In-depth interviews with 38 survivors of forced marriage (33 women and 5 men).
- A mapping survey of 79 community organisations across Birmingham (n=25), Manchester (n=24), and Tower Hamlets (n=30).
- Twenty-eight departments/projects interviewed about the content and structure of their databases.
- Fifteen focus groups with a wide range of communities involving 97 individuals (82 women and 15 men) with ages ranging from 15 to 60.

This approach generated rich data on issues related to forced marriage, and also examined the research questions from different angles and in relation to different communities. The variety of methods used provided a degree of triangulation, and also enough breadth to allow general patterns to emerge.

Case study areas

Tower Hamlets, Birmingham and Manchester were selected as the three case study areas because of the high density of communities identified where forced marriage is an issue. Whilst forced marriage is not restricted to particular religions or nationalities, the majority of

⁶ Ethical approval for the research was received from the Universities of Bristol and Manchester.

reported cases have been from Pakistani and Bangladeshi communities. Twenty-four percent of the UK Bangladeshi diaspora live in Tower Hamlets and thirteen per cent of the UK Pakistani diaspora live in Birmingham (Census 2001). Manchester has one of the largest BME communities outside of London. Manchester's minority ethnic communities make up some nineteen per cent of the total population of the city. An informal study conducted by Sandhya Sharma in 2005 suggested there were 105 reported cases of forced marriages over the previous year just within the six central Manchester women's refuges and outreach services. There is no comparative data for the other two areas.

Methodological challenges

Forced marriage is a complex topic that can be difficult to define and involves popular understandings of communities that experience forced marriages. Moreover, the research was carried out in a context of intense political debate concerning immigration and racism. These issues created particular challenges in carrying out the research and added to the difficulties in accessing an already 'hard-to-reach' group.⁷ Each issue is dealt with in turn before detailing the specific methods that were used at each stage of the study.

Definitional Issues

As indicated by the definition of forced marriage outlined in chapter one, the Home Office considers there to be a clear distinction between forced and arranged marriages, based on whether consent has been given or not. However, definitional issues relating to calling marriages 'forced' was raised in the initial familiarisation visits, and was re-iterated in interviews conducted with stakeholders and with survivors in phase one of the study. As this problematic emerged fairly early on with the first group of interviews with key agencies, we responded to this by adopting an approach that would tease out the various components of what constitutes a forced marriage or the circumstances in which a forced marriage might occur. We sought to ensure that a wide range of experiences could be considered, that physical coercion and violence were not necessarily privileged over more subtle emotional pressure, and that responses from a range of communities, stakeholders and individuals would thus be maximised.

Instead of using the term 'forced marriage' the research team used the following phrase: 'We are studying different 'arrangements' of marriages in different communities, and examining how they might intersect with immigration policies and practices'. In particular, the term 'force' was not thought to adequately cover issues of subtle pressure where a young person may not realise what is taking place until it is too late, or may not themselves identify the marriage as 'forced' as no physical violence is involved. Normally a forced marriage is taken to mean a lack of consent at the point of entry into a marriage, but if the marriage arrangements are very rushed and the young person does not really understand what is happening, or does not have time to respond, or has been given inadequate information, then the notion of consent is questionable. In particular, there can be a 'slippage' or blurring between arranged and forced marriage, as the following focus group member pointed out:

They will arrange the marriage and if you reject the person they will force you to marry the person.

This also poses questions of *exit* options (particularly where consent has not been given or is questionable) and the pressure (emotional, physical, financial, cultural, immigration status and so on) that is put upon women and men to stay in a forced marriage. How services conceptualise forced marriage partly determines the types of responses offered (where services are offered at all). These issues are reflected to different degrees throughout the findings.

Definitional issues also presented challenges for agencies and organisations. For example, the issue was raised of when coercive or pressurising behaviour should be logged within a police database as a forced marriage. Should this happen at a point when a young person contacted them to say they were very worried that they were on the brink of being forced into marriage? Or alternatively should it be logged once the person had already been forced to

⁷ It should be noted that while survivors and focus group participants were reimbursed their travel costs, no financial incentive was given for participation in the study.

marry? Moreover, should this be logged as a forced marriage or for example, abduction or rape where these were elements of the forced marriage? This type of issue was one of the difficulties associated with compiling or comparing datasets on forced marriage (where these existed).

Popular understandings

Closely related to the definitional problems discussed above is the popular construction of forced marriages as only occurring in South Asian communities. The strength of this construction was apparent throughout the study and repeated to us on many occasions. Although altering the phrasing to 'marriage practices' and teasing out elements of a forced marriage facilitated access to specific communities which may otherwise have been difficult, it is also likely that the construction of forced marriages as only occurring in South Asian communities was difficult for others to overcome. This may have placed some constraints on our sampling.

Political debate concerning immigration and racism

The key aim of the study was about investigating the impact of the age policy as a potentially preventative intervention for forced marriages rather than a focus on methods of immigration control. However, the use of immigration policy in relation to forced marriage, and the wider perception of recent immigration policy as increasingly restrictive (Cohen, 2005; Humphries, 2004), posed particular methodological issues. There was the possibility that minoritised participants (stakeholders, community organisations for the mapping survey, survivors) might perceive the study as instrumental in further restricting immigration and in potentially interfering with cultural practices around arranged marriages. This had the potential of creating distrustful and suspicious research relationships right from the outset, and of creating a sampling bias in favour of organisations and individuals who did not have a critical or radical perspective on the issues being explored. We sought to overcome this problem by ensuring inclusion of a wide range of organisations from overtly feminist and anti-racist organisations to an Imam at a mosque.

Given that the research was commissioned by the Immigration Nationality Directive (IND) now Border and Immigration Agency, we also had to be prepared to work with the anger, frustration or disappointment regarding current policies that we might encounter in negotiations and discussions with participants. We developed good support systems that would enable us to deal with this and to reflect on the process of the research, which also helped to enhance the rigour of the study (see Cabinet Office, 2003; Parker, 2005; Wilkinson, 1998).

Methods

These methodological challenges shaped the way the project was undertaken. In the remainder of this chapter we briefly outline each aspect of the study. The rationale for the various methods used, how these were operationalised and how the material was analysed are discussed further in Appendix Four.

Familiarisation Visits (phase one)

Familiarisation visit interviews was the first piece of fieldwork to be conducted. Thirteen government departments, statutory and voluntary sector agencies were identified by the research team in consultation with the Home Office as possible sources of detailed and/or systematic data on forced marriages (see Appendix One for list). Representatives of these organisations were asked about their work on forced marriage, whether they followed a particular definition of forced marriage; the perceived and actual links between forced marriage and immigration; the potential impact of raising the minimum age for sponsors and spouses for policy and practice; and the issues that this work raised for them (see Appendix Two for interview schedule).

The aim was to explore the range of communities in which forced marriages occurs, to broaden the level of engagement and to facilitate access to relevant stakeholder organisations in the case-study areas and thus also to potential survivors. Consequently, organisations from Jewish, African and South Asian communities were included at this early stage, and an interview was also conducted with an academic working with the traveller

communities.

Stakeholder Interviews (phases one and two)

Forty-five interviews were conducted with stakeholders. Of these twenty-three were conducted in phase one (acting as a pilot) and the remainder were carried out in phase two (see Appendix One for list). Similar organisations were included in each of the three case-study areas (such as the police, women's aid organisations, larger community and voluntary organisations, refugee organisations), as well as organisations specific to each of the areas.

A combination of telephone and face-to-face interviews were conducted with participants using a semi structured interview schedule (see Appendix Two). The interview asked about the organisation's work on forced marriages; the communities that in their view experience forced marriage; the impact of the proposed increase in minimum age; the potential risks of the legislation; and potential safeguards against the risks and their views on other options aimed at preventing forced marriages (other than the proposed legislative change).

Database Exploration (phases one and two)

As part of the familiarisation and stakeholder interviews, agencies were also asked to provide preliminary information regarding data collected by their organisation on forced marriages. It was understood that there is no national large scale dataset on forced marriage, therefore the aim was to identify existing and potential sources of information and statistical data relating to forced marriages at a local or organisational level and to assess their potential use in identifying the impact of the raising of the minimum age. Twenty-eight government departments, statutory and voluntary sector agencies were asked initial exploratory questions about the data they collect, and eighteen were asked for more detailed information about the scope, coverage, content and accessibility of these databases by phone, email and/or in person. The most detailed interviews were held in person with the Forced Marriage Unit (twice) and with the West Yorkshire Police. A questionnaire (see Appendix Two) was used in email, telephone and face-to-face interviews to collect the information on the structure and content of the relevant databases.

It should be noted that none of the sources were able to provide non-confidential data of sufficient detailed or coverage for the purposes of this research project. Despite the lack of adequate sources for statistical analysis, a general scoping exercise of available data was carried out with recommendations for further developments and possible impact measures (see Appendix Four for details of methodology and Appendix Three for findings).

Survivor Interviews (phases one and two)

In total, thirty-eight interviews with victims/survivors of forced marriages were conducted concurrently with the stakeholder interviews. Eight of these were in phase one and the remaining thirty in phase two. Within the timescale of the project and for a qualitative study, this was a major accomplishment with such a hard to reach group. (See Appendix One, tables A1.1 to A1.6)

Purposive sampling, involving networking and snowballing, were used to develop the survivor sample. The interviews were based on protocols that were already developed by the team in different research projects on forced marriage and domestic violence among minoritised communities (Batsleer et al., 2002; Gangoli et al., 2006; Gangoli et al., 2005; Wigglesworth et al.; 2003; Chantler et al., 2001); domestic violence among young people (Hester and Gangoli, 2005; McCarry, 2005) and same sex relationships (Donovan and Hester, 2007).

Interviews lasted between forty-five minutes and two hours and were based on a semi structured interview schedule (see Appendix Two). Questions were open ended, and asked about circumstances leading to marriage, expectations of marriage and how much choice was involved, views about the proposed legislation and potential benefits and risks of raising the age as well as their views on what would increase/decrease the likelihood of forced marriages taking place.

Mapping of services and attitudes (phase two)

One of the research questions asked about the range of communities in which forced marriages might occur. It was decided to carry out a mapping survey of organisations in the

three locations to ascertain the extent to which different organisations/agencies were working with individuals experiencing forced marriage, and to obtain wider views regarding the research questions. The possibility of carrying out a questionnaire with people who had recently been granted leave to enter on a marriage visa was also considered as a way of examining the range of communities in which forced marriages occur. However, it was decided that the mapping survey was a better approach because it would be less intrusive to participants, less likely to aggravate any existing domestic violence, and avoided individualisation of forced marriages by engaging at a community level. It had the added advantage of contributing to heightening awareness of forced marriage.

The mapping survey method enabled access to a far wider range of community organisations than had been possible through the stakeholder interviews, from diverse BME communities many of which were not frequently involved in consultations. This approach helped to broaden the base of the study by seeking the views regarding forced marriage and marriage practices of smaller minority organisations. The mapping survey was also used to identify further key stakeholders, who were then included in the stakeholder interview sample.

From an initial sample of 143 agencies, telephone interviews were conducted with seventy-nine (55.2%)⁸ using a structured questionnaire (see Appendix Two). Sixty-three agencies did not respond as they no longer existed or had moved, because they did not think that forced marriage was an issue in their community, or did not have the time or the relevant person available for interview (see Appendix One, tables A1.8 and A1.9 and Appendix Four, table A4.9). Most were voluntary sector agencies (n=56, 70.9%), with significant representation from the statutory sector (n=13, 16.5%). (See Appendix One, table A1.7).

Focus Groups (phase two)

The phase one pilot study indicated that focus groups would be the most appropriate method of obtaining in depth information regarding the practice and perceptions of forced marriage from a wider range of communities than might be obtained via a survey, especially given the challenges described earlier regarding the definition of forced marriage.

Sampling was influenced by the need to: fill a gap in terms of ages covered, especially regarding younger people (16 -18 years) and older generations (parents of young people and grandparents); the need for diversity; and the recognition from phase one that issues of asylum and immigration might act as triggers into forced marriage, as might homosexuality. A combination of strategies were used to create potential focus groups, including contact with relevant minority organisations, building on stakeholder interviews or mapping survey, working with sixth form colleges – where students might have direct or indirect experience of a forced marriage situation, and use of snowballing.

In total, fifteen focus groups were carried out with ninety-seven individuals (82 women and 15 men) from a range of South Asian, Chinese, African, and Middle Eastern communities (Table A1.10, Appendix One). The groups included a range of religious communities: Hindu, Christian, Sikh and Muslim, with a minority of respondents identifying themselves as atheists or non believers. Also included was one lesbian group. Ages ranged from 15 to 60 and participants were from different social classes. Where respondents were not British, they had a variety of immigration statuses, including indefinite leave to remain, refugee, work permit, dependent visa and student visa. Demographic information was obtained via a voluntary self-completed questionnaire at the beginning of the focus group.

Vignettes (case-studies) were used to aid the focus group discussions. Twelve vignettes were compiled using composites from other parts of the study, centred around a common theme but varied to reflect specific community experiences (see Appendix Two for vignettes). In addition specific questions were asked relating to raising the age of entry (see Appendix Two for schedule).

Analysis

⁸ Of the 63 agencies that did not respond, some had the wrong addresses listed, some no longer existed, some refused to participate because they did not think that forced marriage was an issue in their community, and others gave lack of time or the relevant person not being available to speak as the reason not to participate (see Appendix One, tables A1.8 and A1.9).

The qualitative data from familiarisation visit interviews, stakeholder and survivor interviews as well as focus groups, were analysed using a thematic approach. A careful reading of transcripts or detailed notes of the interviews formed the basis for development of the thematic framework, and framework grids were used to aid the analysis (Ritchie & Lewis, 2003). With regard to data base exploration, 'pen pictures' of each database were prepared and a comparative analysis carried out. The quantitative mapping survey data was loaded into an SPSS database for analysis, involving largely frequencies and cross-tabulations. (See Appendix Four for details).

Chapter Three

Increasing the age of sponsorship and entry of a spouse to 18, 21 or 24 years

Two of the research questions were concerned with the impact of the recent increase in the age of sponsorship or entry from 16 to 18 years and the potential impact of increasing the age further to either 21 or 24. In this chapter we explore these two questions, drawing on the findings from across the research samples.

Tackling forced marriage via a change in the age of entry also links to some of the general themes in the literature on forced marriage. Scholars have pointed out that in the UK public debates on forced marriage are mostly addressed in terms of immigration (Hossain, nd.), and the 'overseas dimensions' of forced marriage, leading to policies such as increase in sponsorship and entry age (Phillips and Dustin, 2004). It is suggested that such policies sometimes confuse policy and practice on 'false marriage', alluding to marriages of convenience contracted for the exclusive purpose of immigration and could be consensual, and 'forced marriage', where marriages are contracted using coercion, and where the purpose may or may not be immigration (Phillips and Dustin, 2004: 535). Debates also examine the specific gendered and racialised nature of immigration law, based on images of the passive and dependent Asian women, and notions of South Asian families following patrilocality, that is the norm that women follow their male kin after marriage. Such ideas disadvantage both women migrating from abroad and women of South Asian origin who sponsor a spouse from abroad (Hall, 2000). Some scholars address the ways in which some related immigration laws can encourage forced marriage such as the dual nationality provision in some cases (Hall, 2000; An- Na'im, nd.). It is suggested that some UK initiatives have a 'civilising' tone in the way that immigrants are expected to be 'British', referring to proposals to introduce English proficiency tests for applicants (Razack, 2004: 154) and that policies on forced marriage have created fears in some members of the 'ethnic community' that the government is using its campaign against forced marriage to tighten immigration rules (Skalbergs and Gulicova, 2004). As will be indicated below, these issues and concerns were reflected to various degrees and in a variety of ways by the participants in our research.

As outlined in Chapter Two, the research team also identified official and other datasets that might possibly relate to forced marriage. However, none of the sources were able to provide data of sufficient detail or coverage to measure the impact of policy changes. In the majority of cases, there was no historical dataset before the early years of this decade (2000s). Where a time series existed, the data were often of little detail and dubious quality. In addition, the absence of a commonly used and harmonised definition meant that any data that were collected were not comparable between datasets (see Appendix Three for details of findings).

The impact and outcome of the recent increase in the age of sponsorship and entry into the UK of a spouse or fiancé(e) from 16 to 18 years

One of the research questions concerned the impact of the recent increase in the age of sponsorship or entry from 16 to 18 years. This question was asked across the different samples, including familiarisation visits, stakeholder and survivor interviews, and focus groups.

There was a general perception by agencies and organisations who might work with forced marriage that the age increase had not made a noticeable difference. Just over half of respondents to the mapping survey indicated that they did not think that the raising of the age to 18 had made a difference to the number of forced marriages in the communities they worked with (n=40, 51%), and over a third were not aware that it had had any impact (n=30, 38%). Only a few individuals thought that there had been a noticeable impact (n=5, 6.3%). This was reflected even more so in relation to the stakeholder interviews, where none of the stakeholder agencies interviewed reported noticing any difference in their work around forced marriages since the increase in age for sponsorship or entry from 16 to 18. Some stakeholders did not know that the age had been raised and others did not in any case work

with under-18 year olds. These findings are not surprising. In 2003 and 2004 passengers under the age of 18, given leave to enter the UK from outside the EU as a husband, wife, or for marriage, only accounted for 0.5% of the overall number of passengers given leave to enter. Therefore it is unlikely that the change in age legislation will have made a big difference (HO statistics 2006).

The benefits and risks of increasing the age of sponsorship or entry to 21 or 24

The benefits and risks of increasing the age of sponsorship or entry to 21 or 24 was included as a question and was asked across the different samples, including familiarisation visits, stakeholder and survivor interviews, focus groups and the mapping survey.

Three main views regarding the raising of the age of sponsorship or entry to 21 or 24 were discernable across the research:

- that raising the age might be beneficial in allowing the individuals concerned to attain education and maturity;
- that age is not the main issue and is largely irrelevant and that forced marriages may take place at a wide range of ages. Raising the age would therefore have no impact on numbers but could be perceived as discriminatory in a variety of ways; and
- that raising the age beyond 18 would increase the risk of the individuals concerned being taken abroad or in other ways being hidden.

Generally, respondents from the different aspects of the research tended to see a rise in age to 21 or 24 as a potentially negative step. None of the organisations interviewed for the familiarisation visits wholeheartedly endorsed an increase to either 21 or even partially to 24 years. Only four out of forty-five (8.9%) stakeholder organisations interviewed wholeheartedly endorsed an age increase to 21 and only three (6.7%) wholeheartedly supported an increase to 24 years. (See table 3.1 below). Benefits associated with greater maturity and access to education and potential financial independence were most frequently cited, but these were perceived as largely outweighed by the risks. Risks included young people being taken abroad to marry, the discriminatory nature of the proposals as largely to do with immigration, breaching of human rights, and not actually tackling forced marriages taking place between individuals within the UK or the EU.

Where survivors were concerned, the largest group (n=11⁹, 31.4%) did not agree with any age increase at all because they considered such a change discriminatory on racial and ethnic grounds, and in relation to arranged and love marriages. It was also suggested that increasing the age further could increase risks of forced marriage and could increase, rather than decrease, violence against women. A further increase to 21 was seen as potentially useful in preventing forced marriage by eight (22.8%) of the thirty-five respondents, but six of these also cited substantial risks. Slightly fewer saw the raising of the age to 24 as a useful step in preventing forced marriage (n=6, 17.1%), with four (11.4%) supporting such a change wholeheartedly. (See table 3.1).

Table 3.1 – summary of views relating to raising of the age of entry

Key	Policy Option	Familiarisation visits (n=12) ¹⁰		Stakeholders (n=45)		Survivors (n=35) ¹¹	
		N	%	N	%	N	%
A	No benefits to increase in age to 18, 21 or 24	6	50	17	37.8	11	31.4
B	Benefit only to 18	2	16.7	6	13.3	7	20.0
C	Wholehearted endorsement to 21	0	0	4	8.9	2	5.7
D	Some benefits to 21 (but with substantial risks)	4	33.3	10	22.2	6	17.1
E	Some benefits to 24 (but with substantial risk)	0	0	5	11.1	2	5.7

⁹ 35 of the 38 survivors interviewed answered this question.

¹⁰ Twelve of the 13 organisations taking part in familiarisation interviews answered these questions.

¹¹ 35 of the 38 survivors interviewed answered these questions.

F	Whole hearted endorsement to 24	0	0	3	6.7	4	11.4
G	Increase age for all UK population	0	0	17 ¹²	37.8	3	8.5

There was little support across the focus groups for raising the age to 21 or 24, except among the young Bangladeshi girls and older Chinese women. Bangladeshi girls supported the increase as they felt under threat of forced marriage, while older Chinese women belonged to a context where later marriages were seen as beneficial for women and the family. There was strong opposition to a further rise in the age from eight of the focus groups, with a perception that the step would be counterproductive and discriminatory to some communities and individuals¹³. The remaining five focus groups provided mixed responses to the age increase to 21 or 24¹⁴.

Perceived benefits of raising the age

Generally, benefits of increasing the age of sponsorship to 18 and beyond were seen as related to increased maturity, an opportunity to complete education and be financially independent. These were the issues focused on to varying degrees by stakeholders, focus group participants, and survivors.

Some stakeholder organisations reported that if the age was raised, women in their twenties would be less likely to be considered as potential wives as they would be 'too old' within some cultural contexts. All these factors were considered to promote resilience and might prevent forced marriages - however most of these organisations also cited substantial and serious risks associated with an increase in age (see section on risks below).

The main perceived benefit cited by survivors interviewed was increased maturity. Seven (20%) participants agreed with the increase in age to 18, with most of these commenting that raising the age from 16 to 18 was beneficial in giving some young people more choices, although it had not specifically impacted on any of them. One believed that older women and men were more likely to be

...mature, and that will make their marriage work better...

Another woman felt that the increase might allow some women more time to pursue their education or career, but felt that this would only be valid in the context of young people who performed well in their education or careers. A Pakistani born woman commented:

I have worked in the factory as well and there were some girls there who were working with me who were British born and they were told to work immediately because they had to work in order to bring their husbands over from Pakistan. If the age is increased from eighteen to twenty one they can gain a chance to study further rather than pull them out of education and make them work in order to call their husbands over.

Despite this, she later commented that increasing the age to 21 would make girls too old for marriage

Some focus group respondents supported an increase to 21 also based on ideas of increased maturity, access to education and professional training:

I think the benefits that you might have, might have been able to go through some sort of training, some sort of higher education, so you might have that under your belt which might give you more options.

The two focus groups that unanimously supported the increase in age to 24, the Bangladeshi

¹² We did not ask this specific question, however, 17 organisations volunteered this response.

¹³ The following focus groups held this view: African, Kurdish, Bangladeshi boys, Bangladeshi older women, African /African-Caribbean women, Chinese women, Lesbian women, and Indian Sikh women.

¹⁴ These focus groups were: Iranian group, South Asian young men, South Asian young women, South Asian women's group and Middle Eastern/North African women.

girls and Chinese older women, both argued that raising the age would provide time for girls to complete their education, and to become more independent, which would give them the ability to resist being forced into marriage. For instance, the Bangladeshi girls pointed out:

You know what you're doing at that age and you kind of listen

In control and independent. You're much more confident [with] your Mom and Dad if you disagree with them because you're like, I'm old like I said I'm older now. If you're sixteen you wouldn't disagree with your Mom and Dad... take them for the best. But if you're older you might have...more confidence.

The Bangladeshi girls also expressed the view that increasing the age to 24 would discourage men from Bangladesh to enter into marriages primarily for immigration. This was because the men would have to marry older women, which was seen as unacceptable, or if the marriage was contracted at an earlier age, would not be able to immigrate until the woman turned 24.

Age as immaterial

A significant minority of organisations who took part in stakeholder and familiarisation interviews (37.8% of stakeholders and 50% of familiarisation visit participants) opposed any increase as they all considered age to be an irrelevant variable in forced marriage for a range of reasons, including: they had come across very few cases of forced marriage at an early age and five thought that forced marriage would take place at any age. These were all voluntary and statutory organisations with substantial face-to-face experience of working with victims of forced marriage, including women's organisations and the police.

Some focus group respondents believed that the age at marriage was irrelevant because parents and communities would force women and in some cases men from marrying no matter what the age.

I do not think it would make any difference. Those who want to do it they will do it.

The interviews with survivors also indicated that the age for entry into marriage may have a much wider range, than tends to be conceptualised in official and policy discourses around forced marriage. Seven of the 38 interviewees talked about this aspect. This included an 'older' woman being forced into marriage at age 31 because of concerns about reduced chances for marriage, and the pressure to marry regardless of age where a man was gay. For younger women, one survivor was married at 13 even though the age for marriage/sponsorship was 16 in the UK at the time and early engagements occurred in some instances at an age below the age limit (either between UK citizens or involving one or both partners outside the EU).

it [age] doesn't really matter because they'll do it anyway, it will happen.

I think if some parents are going to do it they can force you at twenty one as well, they don't care how old you are, my dad didn't care how old I was.

Risks of increasing the age of sponsorship or entry

Three common themes could be identified across the research regarding the risks associated with increasing the age of sponsorship or entry:

- increased risks to potential victims, including potential psychological and physical impacts;
- the discriminatory nature of the proposed increase in age; and
- human rights implications.

Increased risks to potential victims

Many participants were concerned that parents could keep young people out of the country for up to 8 years if the age of sponsorship or entry increased to 21 or 24 years. For instance an Imam pointed out that:

If parents are going to emotionally blackmail their child, then they will do it anyway, they will take their children abroad and keep them until they are 21 or 24.

A range of stakeholder organisations pointed out that the (legal) marriage age would be lower

in some countries, so raising the age in the UK would not prevent a forced marriage abroad involving a British national. During this time the victim may have borne children (possibly under pressure) as children often have a positive impact for immigration purposes. Increased personal costs to the person and exacerbating the trauma were also cited as the victim may have been subject to regular abuse during this period without access to support services. Furthermore, the young person could be kept in a monitored environment overseas for a longer period than if they were in the UK.

Eight survivors who were interviewed also felt that the policy would increase, rather than decrease, violence against women as young women would potentially be kept under surveillance for a longer period by families. Moreover, increasing the age to 21 or 24 would lead to later marriages, which could contribute to 'immorality' as sexuality would not be contained within marriage.

One counselling service interviewed, reported that increasing the age could lead to an increase in self-harming amongst potential victims as they would have to spend a longer time being in a controlling environment even within the UK. In Chantler et al. (2001), forced marriage alongside other forms of domestic violence was a major precursor to attempted suicide and self-harm. Other stakeholders also commented on the detrimental features of mental ill-health linked to age. Suicide attempts were similarly a feature in the survivor narratives.

Concerns about the discriminatory nature of the proposals

Ten stakeholders expressed concerns that raising the age of sponsorship or entry was not about tackling forced marriage and protecting women, but about the underpinning subtext of immigration control. Thus the:

...agenda of the governments is not to protect women but to keep people out [of the UK]

This view was expressed by stakeholders from a range of voluntary and government agencies and different religious communities across the three sites:

Communities will view it as the Government only looking at it as an immigration issue particularly when there is little other work/funding and will see this as the government killing two birds with one stone and stopping certain groups from entering the UK. Immigration is at the root rather than preventing forced marriage. It does not prevent marriage, just prevents the couple being in the UK if one party is from overseas.

The age question does not address the issue of forced marriage but it does allow for unfair immigration controls to be imposed on specific groups within the population.

...making immigration procedure more restrictive and less transparent is nothing other than racist and discriminatory.

This links to the concerns and evidence from Denmark which suggest that increasing the age has had a disproportionate effect on minoritised communities and has increased racial tension (Phillips and Dustin 2004; Madsen 2003).

Over a third of the survivors interviewed (n=11, 31.4%) did not agree with any age increase at all, seeing it as discriminatory:

You're saying we should not get married because the state says so, that it would be better for us. Sorry it's completely discriminatory and it's completely going to back fire, in a big way.

Such a policy would be contentious in relation to race equality, social cohesion and civil rights

Three respondents from one focus group thought that young people would feel that not only was a distinction being made between different communities, but that the state was trying to control them as 'parents':

yeah you're [British state] imposing rules on people and that's exactly what the parents are doing. ... They've [minoritised communities] been told this is the law, but that law doesn't go, it doesn't match the law of the land, it doesn't match the law of

their beliefs and cultures, so they're going to weigh up which one they would rather adhere to. Their own law which they've eaten and drank and lived on for their whole lives and in generation after generation, or this new fancy law that's come along saying that we have to wait till they're 21, how dare you.

Eleven survivors also believed that different BME communities would see any increase in age as being discriminatory, and therefore that the general response to such a change would be negative.

Human rights implications

Three themes were identified by stakeholders with regard to human rights implications of raising the age. First, participants from government and voluntary sector agencies and institutions were concerned about the disparity in age of marriage between those who married a UK/EU national compared to UK nationals marrying a foreign national. Second, as increasing the age of sponsorship or entry would also affect arranged and love marriages, this was seen as 'stamping out cultures and customs' and as a 'sledgehammer' approach. Third, some agencies commented that it was contradictory for people to be regarded as adults at 18, but not to be able to marry until they were 21 or 24 of age.

In terms of protecting young people: 18 is reasonable, 21 is difficult [to justify] and 24 is impossible [to justify].

It will also discriminate against arranged marriages (as opposed to forced marriages).

The issue of human rights, and the right to a family life was raised across different focus groups; including South Asian, Chinese, Iranian and African/African-Caribbean. Generally any increase beyond 18 was perceived as discriminatory, as it would only apply to only some communities, and some nationalities. As the following Bangladeshi and African/African-Caribbean focus group participants pointed out:

Are they just raising it because they want to stop Bangladeshi people coming into this country?

... if the EU was included I would feel absolutely differently, then I would struggle to justify my saying I think it's racist, but because the EU is excluded...

Negative effect on 'genuine' marriages

Several survivors interviewed felt that raising the age to 21 or 24 would also discriminate against genuine marriages, as young people who wanted to live together would be forced to stay apart for financial and immigration reasons. One Indian woman, who had been forced in marriage to a British man, and had since escaped her marriage to live with her partner, spoke about the effect the separation from her partner had on her:

[Name of partner] and I were kept apart for 5 years, which we could have enjoyed together. Two people who love each other should not be kept apart for any reason, whether by family or law or immigration.

It was also seen as discriminating against marriages based on consent, and this view was held by some focus group respondents who otherwise believed that increasing the age might prevent forced marriage:

There may be genuine cases of people that want to get married and then they will have to wait until they are 21 or 24.

Similarly a Bangladeshi British woman who had sponsored her husband from Bangladesh was concerned about the effect that the increase would have on international marriages:

The wait to sponsor [a spouse] is already traumatic. It took me a year before [name of husband] could come here, and I had to go to Bangladesh thrice to see him that year, I got into debt and had problems in my work...there is [also] the likelihood that the relationship will break down if they are apart at the start of the marriage.

Counterproductive effects

Nine of the survivors, men and women, felt that the increase in age would not prevent forced marriages, as women in particular would be taken abroad earlier. One of the respondents

who had come into the UK at the age of 17 felt that it would have been more difficult to assimilate into the country if she had had to stay away until she was older. Another who had been taken abroad to be married at 18 also believed that the change to 21 or 24 would have had a negative effect, as she would have been kept abroad for a longer time, and would have been totally dependent on her husband and parents in law.

Focus group respondents echoed these views with some respondents suggesting that rather than preventing forced marriage, increasing the age of sponsorship or entry would lead to increased pressure on British young people to marry overseas. They would be taken abroad, and kept there for a longer period, where the victim would have fewer resources:

Say the girl is in England and the person is abroad and they want them to get married, even by raising the age they might then take her abroad, she might not want to go abroad and it might be worse for her.

Among the Kurdish respondents, there were concerns that the woman would be forced to marry and not be brought back at all, if she was unable to bring her husband back to the UK for a long time.

But you know we have another issue. You know, forcing their daughter to go back to their country and never come back. And they told them to marry there. That is another issue. How they prevent it.

Further risks

False documents

A number of agencies expressed a concern that raising the minimum age would lead to an increase in falsification of documents to circumvent any legislative changes, and that this would also have wider implications for the survivor of forced marriage, who might not even know that the basis on which they were in the UK was illegal. Focus group participants from the Indian Sikh and Bangladeshi communities argued similarly that it would be easy to get falsified age certificates in different non-western countries, including South Asia, Middle Eastern and African countries, and therefore a change in the law would not be effective.

Several survivors interviewed pointed out that the increase in age would easily be circumvented by South Asians, and one of the respondents originally from Bangladesh had had his real age increased in his passport, as his wife was older than him because:

...there is a cultural expectation ...that the man should be older than the wife.

Reducing Child Protection

Organisations working specifically with young people were concerned about the potential impact on child protection of raising the age of sponsorship or entry. In the context of social services, in theory 16 year olds would (or should) be offered protection under child protection legislation. Increasing the age to 18, would remove young people from this safety net. Several participants also mentioned the increase in age as excluding young people from support via educational establishments as they would probably be out of education by 21 or 24.

Domestic/EU Forced Marriages

Many organisations were concerned that increasing the age of sponsorship or entry would not tackle the issue of domestic or EU-based forced marriages and were thus not convinced that the increase in age was intended to prevent forced marriage. This was echoed by survivors who pointed out that increasing the age would not prevent forced marriages, where both partners were British or EU citizens:

[...] they are linking forced marriage to immigration, which is a nonsense. What forced marriage is about is about choice and I wasn't forced married from abroad I was force married here to a person with British citizenship.

Summary

- Little or no impact was found with regard to the raising of the age of sponsorship or entry from 16 to 18.
- Very limited support was offered for a wholehearted endorsement to raising of the

age of sponsorship or entry to either 21 or 24. The predominant view across the research was that a further increase in the age of sponsorship/entry, to 21 or 24, would be detrimental.

- The most frequently cited benefits of raising of the age of entry, voiced by participants across the three research sites and from the different components of the study, was greater maturity and access to education as well as potential financial independence. However, these were also perceived as largely outweighed by the risks.
- Risks related to an increase in the age to either 21 or 24 centred on three key themes: the direct risks to victims of forced marriage, including potential psychological and physical impacts; the discriminatory nature of the proposed increase in age, and the human rights implications.
- Increased risks to survivors included: being taken abroad to marry and 'wait' until they were the right age to return to the UK; entering the UK (unknowingly) with false documentation; concerns that an increase in age might lead to longer periods of coercive restriction or incarceration (either within the UK or abroad) with implications for mental health, particularly attempted suicide and self-harm. A further risk to survivors was removing potential sources of support with progressive increases in age, such as child protection legislation and education based counselling support.
- There was a strong sense among participants that using the age of entry was not about tackling forced marriages, but about the underpinning sub-text of immigration control. The focus on sponsorship/entry for 'overseas' forced marriages, with no strategies or interventions suggested for tackling UK/EU forced marriages, further compounded this view.
- A deep discomfort, and even anger, was voiced by participants about imposing a dual system of marriage ages within the UK. This was perceived as being particularly punitive and as unfairly targeting minoritised communities, and as interfering with 'genuine' arranged or love marriages where one of the parties was from outside the EU.

Chapter Four

The range of communities in which forced marriage happens

One aim of the research was to ascertain the range of communities in which forced marriage happens. This chapter examines the range of communities in which forced marriage may occur, according to the research findings. In particular the findings from the focus groups are discussed, where different marriage practices indicate that forced marriage might be linked to poverty and economics, control of sexuality, and immigration.

Forced marriage both in the UK and in Europe has at times been constructed as a pathology within some cultures, specifically South Asian and/or Muslim communities (Samad and Eade, 2002; Razack, 2004) and Romani communities (Oprea, 2005). Interventions and approaches tend to be steeped in cultural assumptions about different communities (Phillips and Dustin, 2004). Other literature suggests that forced marriage and child marriage are 'harmful cultural' practices (Interights, 2000: 21) and therefore, there needs to be an assessment of 'traditional laws' and customs that involves 'women and girls who are affected by these laws' (Outtarra, 1998). Some literature grapples with the issue of how to avoid feeding into a celebration of European superiority or national identity while confronting and naming violent practices within minoritised communities, and notes the ways in which 'culture clash' works into strengthening racial stereotypes (Volpp, 2000; Razack, 2004: 154; Madsen, 2003), while multicultural acceptance of cultural practices is identified as encouraging forced marriage (Razack, 2004). It has also been suggested that forced marriage is a product of immigration rather than a 'tradition' exported from the country of origin (Phillips and Dustin, 2004: 543). There is also literature addressing how forced marriage is against the tenets of different religions including Islam (Carroll, 1998) and a misinterpretation of culture (Gangoli et al., 2006). By looking across a range of communities involving different minority ethnic groups and different religions, the current study was able to examine some of these issues, as discussed below.

While forced marriage has in recent years been considered mainly in the context of South Asian communities, and this is also echoed by our findings, analysis of case law in the UK between 1950 to the present reveals the much wider range of ethnic and religious communities that may be affected by forced marriage. Until the 1990s, forced marriage cases included women and men of many different ethnic and religious communities including Hungarian (*H v. H* 1953); Polish (*Scechter v Scechter* 1971); 'majority white' (*McLarnon v. McLarnon* 1968; *Harper v Harper* 1981) and South Asian (*Singh v. Singh* 1971). However, more recent cases have been focused on issues of forced marriage primarily among South Asian communities (for example: *Sohrab v. Khan* 2002; *P v. R* 2003; *KR* 1999), and while judges have supported victims of forced marriage in the main, they have sometimes conceptualised forced marriage as a form of clash between eastern and western cultures (*M Minors* 2003; *Sohrab v. Khan* 2002; *KR* 1999). In some cases judges have commented on the issue of 'consent' as essentially contested and the legitimacy of parental pressure in some contexts and cases (*Mahmood v. Mahmood* 1993). Forced marriage has also been successfully used as one of the grounds for appeal in asylum cases for leave to remain in the UK (*Afghanistan CG* 2004 UKIAT 00328).

Communities where forced marriage occurs

The mapping survey asked respondents whether forced marriage happened in the communities covered by their work. While the number of respondents working with any one particular community was small, especially where the Chinese and Latin American communities were concerned, the findings none the less suggest that forced marriage is an issue across a wide range of communities. At least two-thirds of respondents thought that forced marriage took place in the communities with which they worked. Given the South Asian focus of the organisations surveyed, it is not surprising that most participants saw forced marriage as taking place in such communities (n=43, 54.4%). It is important to recognise, however, that a wide range of other minority ethnic, religious as well as majority communities were also named, including African (n=39, 49.4%), Middle Eastern (n=17, 21.5%), Latin

American (n=7, 8.9%), 'white' (n=12, 15.2%), and Muslim (n=34, 43%). Also mentioned to a lesser extent were Eastern Europeans, Albanian, Chinese, Jewish, and some Christian groups, including Mormon, Jehovah's Witness and Greek Orthodox.

For most of the agencies or organisations surveyed, between one fifth and one third thought forced marriage was 'very common' in the communities with which they worked (Table A5.1, Appendix Five). Two-thirds of voluntary sector organisations and almost as many of the statutory sector agencies thought that forced marriage was either very common or sometimes occurred in the communities with which they worked. Almost one in ten statutory and a similar proportion of voluntary sector organisations, came across between ten and fifty cases per year in their work.

The largest group of mapping survey respondents (n=34, 43%) thought that forced marriage cases involved marriage to someone abroad who would settle in the UK after marriage. Being forced to marry within the UK, or being forced to marry someone abroad with the intention of settlement there, were considered the less likely options (both n=7, 8.8%).

Interviews with stakeholders also indicated that forced marriage was considered an issue for a wide range of communities outside the South Asian Diaspora. This included Irish traveller women, orthodox/fundamental religious communities, Armenian, Turkish, some mainland Chinese communities, Eastern European communities (linked to trafficking and prostitution) and some African countries, in particular Eritrea, Somalia and Sudan.

The focus group participants similarly mentioned a number of ethnic and religious communities where forced marriage was seen as taking place both within and outside the EU. This included Irish Catholic, Jewish and travelling communities. While some South Asian respondents from Indian, Bangladeshi and Pakistani communities accepted that forced marriage did take place in their ethnic or in their religious community, others believed that the problem was not as extreme as was depicted within popular culture and the media. Several respondents from Bangladeshi and Pakistani communities believed that forced marriage was projected as a problem specific to their religion, that is Islam, pointing out in contrast that Islamic marriage was '*based on consent*'. Some focus group participants from Middle Eastern communities thought that forced marriage was a common occurrence in their communities, and Kurdish women stated that this was a major issue among Kurdish communities, where:

90% of girls aged between 15-35 were forced to marry.

The majority of survivors interviewed were South Asian and so unsurprisingly most survivors cited South Asian communities as communities in which forced marriage takes place. However, the few African and African Caribbean female survivors interviewed implied that the focus on South Asian communities regarding to forced marriages obscured what was happening in their own communities:

...everyone says Forced Marriage is the Asian way... they know just one side of the forced marriage, for example you could not believe that I didn't want to get married, that people are forced in different countries, different tribes, different traditions, where you don't want to marryyou can feel what's the consequences of telling people what's happening...there not much information about that...we hear more about the Asian side but there are so many people are forced to get married for different reasons 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.

I think a lot of other people out there think, forced, oh, that happens to Asian women, it doesn't happen to us not in our community.

Poverty and hardship were explicitly mentioned by two of the African women interviewed as a route into forced marriage. Both instances were linked to bride price (see also Ooto-Oyertey and Pobi, 2003). Choice and consent were therefore not available in these situations and crucially women were used as commodities to alleviate poverty.

Poverty is the major thing...if she [prospective in-laws] gives money, the family won't ask [for the young woman's consent]...the money will buy rice for them. Because of money, they will send their kids [for marriage].

Women are thus structurally located as the conduit to family survival and women's own

aspirations are subordinated within patriarchal structures:

Your father possesses you then your husband possesses you there is nowhere to go...Women are money.... they say the more girls you have the more you will get richer...

A minority of survivors expressed the view that forced marriages happens in all societies. For one participant this was structured around gendered norms of compulsory heterosexuality:

I will take that one step further and say in what community do we not see the pressure of marriage, yeah, I would say that we as a society are trained, from a very young age to believe that there are particular roles we need to fulfil and the other aspect of our life is that we want to fulfil those roles.

Contrary to perceptions that forced marriage is confined to 'under-developed' communities, one participant also asked:

... does somebody want to ask Prince Charles, did he feel he had a choice [...] and then we'll move on from there.

Marriage practices with regard to forced marriage across a range of communities – findings from the focus groups

The focus groups revealed that there was a range of marriage practices within different communities, which might provide different routes into forced marriage including: poverty and bride price primarily in North African communities; control over sexuality in South Asian, Middle Eastern, and Chinese communities; immigration in South Asian, Middle Eastern, Chinese and North African communities. This section outlines the practices discussed by the focus groups in order to highlight the sort of ideas and practices involved.

Chinese community

Two focus groups were conducted with Chinese women of different ages. In both groups, a distinction was initially made between 'ancient' marriage practices, where arranged marriages and forced marriages were the norm, and the present day where they did not think there was forced marriage and where young people had the right to choose their partners, whether living in China or the UK. During discussion, however, respondents also felt that there might be financial pressures on young people to marry, that this could be interpreted as force, and that they were aware of present day examples involving women from rural areas of China forced to marry men within China and possibly abroad.

South Asian communities

Four focus groups were conducted with a mixture of individuals from South Asian communities, including Pakistani, mixed race, Indian and Bangladeshi. In general there was an emphasis on the importance of marriage 'as a milestone', with Pakistani, Indian and Bangladeshi participants emphasising the role of arranged marriages. There was also a large measure of agreement that issues around ability to refuse a marriage were gendered, exemplified by the following extract from young South Asian men:

Int: Well do you think it would be different for him than it is for her?

R3: He might carry more weight, cause he's a boy, if he says I don't want to marry her, he might then, it might be easier to call it off.

R1: Yeh, it shows a, sort of status [...] that women in this background are a lot less higher than men. so if you're saying that a man's choice will carry more weight, it shows that a woman is not equal to a man.

Some respondents noted the shifts in societal attitudes towards relationships based on love, although one respondent also highlighted the difficulties he was himself facing as he was in love with a young South Asian woman from a different religious group.

Bangladeshi community

Three focus groups were conducted specifically with members of the Bangladeshi community, and a further two groups with mixed South Asian and other communities where some

respondents were Bangladeshi in origin. There was a difference in perception between these groups, largely based on age and gender. Younger Bangladeshi women under the age of 20 were most likely to suggest that forced marriage was common in their community, while young men of the same age group, and older married women, felt that arranged marriage, not forced, was the likely practice within the Bangladeshi community in the UK.

The young Bangladeshi women understood forced marriage as happening primarily in the context of young women and men being taken to Bangladesh to be married, and that this was more likely to occur if the young woman was acting outside the community 'norms':

...when a daughter of the family is misbehaving, or gets caught [...] doing something wrong, like with a boyfriend or smoking or doing.... drugs or alcohol, anything wrong.

In contrast, the young men conceptualised these marriages as taking place where it was difficult to find partners within the UK, thereby believing that these were, in the main consensual:

...if they're not like good enough for anyone in this country they [...] if you go to a different country, it doesn't matter what you look like, you can get married.

While both young women and young men acknowledged the role that emotional pressure could play in forcing young people to marry, the boys were less sympathetic to the vignette that described the dilemma of a young Bangladeshi Muslim woman in a relationship with a non-Muslim (see Appendix Two). One of the boys felt that the woman in the vignette was merely '*pressurising herself*'. However it was suggested by Bangladeshi respondents of both genders and all ages that the woman could only marry her boyfriend if he 'reverted' to Islam, otherwise she was likely to lose the parental support vital for a successful marriage:

If she falls in love with a non-Muslim man, her mother cannot give her permission. Because it is against her religion. Unless he reverts. You should always take your parent's view into consideration.

She can marry him, but has to leave her own family and if it does not work out, then she will lose the support of her family.

Indian community

One focus group was conducted with Sikh women from India. Respondents from this group emphasised that parents play a central role in arranging marriages between young people, and talked about the role of the '*vacholie*', that is 'introducers' or go-betweens, in marriage arrangements. In the main, within arranged marriages, young people were not allowed to date and they were generally expected to make a decision to go ahead with the marriage after one or two meetings. Respondents however believed that both boys and girls had the right to break off the engagement.

As in the case of Bangladeshi respondents, there was a general feeling that marriages outside the religion would be unacceptable, but some respondents asserted that there could be differences regarding this within generations, based on whether the older generation was British born or settled in the UK for a long time. There was an implication that such parents would be less '*traditional*' and more likely to accept intercommunity marriages for the sake of their children's happiness.

With regard to the vignettes, respondents did not think that force was an issue in marriages where a woman had to marry a man because she was pregnant, believing that this would be a marriage arranged to save face. However, respondents believed that pressurising a gay or a mentally or physically disabled person to marry would lead to a forced marriage.

Middle Eastern and North African communities

One focus group was conducted with a mixed Middle Eastern and North African group that included individuals identifying as Syrian, Moroccan and Jordanian. A further focus group was conducted with Iraqi Kurds and a third with Iranians.

Among Syrian, Iranian and Moroccan respondents the perception was that forced marriage did not occur within their communities, and also that they permitted young people to marry outside of the community. By contrast, arranged and introduction marriages were seen as common, and these were often arranged through familial and community networks. Some

marriages were arranged with partners from 'back home', but often at the ages of 23 or 24 in the case of women.

Kurdish women, however, reported a range of marriage practices including early marriages of girls before the age of 16 and an increase in polygamous marriages in Iraq in the last few years. They indicated that women in their community often experienced gender discrimination, manifested through sexual control, forced marriage and domestic violence, and that this may create very contradictory situations and emotions for the women concerned:

...They (girls) are under so much pressure from their family. And some of them they accept it easily because they say obeying a father, brother means everything. Because it is a culture. But most of them, the others, they are kind of liberated and they, their wives, they do not accept it and they kill themselves or they live with this depression for ever. And that is why the issue of domestic violence was very very high in UK, especially in the Kurdish community because of that, forced marriage.

The mixed Middle Eastern and North African group accepted that there could be emotional pressure in relation to some arranged marriages, and that such marriages might thus be forced. This was less clear in instances (as outlined in the vignette, Appendix Two) where a woman became pregnant outside of marriage and was pressurised into marriage. Some thought this was forced, others disagreed, seeing this as merely rational or normal practice.

Within the Iranian focus group, there was less concern about women's sexual purity before marriage, and it was suggested that immigrant and diasporic Iranians were less likely to be concerned with such notions. They also believed that in the UK-based Iranian community, women often enjoyed a dominant role within the family. They did, however, consider forced marriage an issue for Iranians living in Iran. It was suggested that more girls than boys were generally forced into marriage, that forced marriage came about due to fears about sexual promiscuity by girls, and was in this way linked to ideas of familial honour. None the less, they did think that men were also at times forced to marry:

You hear sometimes that boys living here and girls living back in Iraq, and their family says that you have to marry this girl and the boy does not [want] it. They force the boy to go back [to] marry, bringing her to London, and then you know later the boy start to beat the girl. But this is very very rare. It is generally women who are forced.

One of the respondents also made a connection between forced marriage and honour killing, with the common theme being control over sexuality.

With regard to pressure on gay people to marry (see vignette, Appendix Two), the Syrian, Iranian and Moroccan respondents thought that this could be seen as a forced marriage, but also pointed out that homosexuality was not allowed within Islam. Iranian respondents were more critical of such attitudes, and suggested that they would accept their children's sexuality even if they were not personally comfortable with it.

African communities

Two focus groups were conducted with members from African communities, one with Ugandan professionals, and the other with women from Kenya, Ghana, Egypt and Cameroon.

The Ugandan focus group focused on the centrality of tribe and caste categories in marriage arrangements, indicating that forced marriage was common in some tribes in Uganda, where there were restrictions about marrying outside the tribe and ideas about cultural superiority:

Well I'll give you an example. This young man I know who's done very well ..he's a doctor. And he's had his girlfriend for about, maybe all six years. He's a Jopadhola and she's Ankole. Two different tribes, .. one is a Luyia, one is a Bantu. I mean her father won't have it. ... He's refused to meet her... It's not the education.

They also reported on international marriages involving very young brides from Uganda married to much older men living in the UK, defining this as a form of child abuse.

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. Somebody who doesn't know where to find help. Someone who is locked in the house as he goes to work. You know it's just a way of,

child abuse.

Gender, social class and access to education were all seen as common determining factors in forced marriages among Ugandan people, both in Uganda and in the UK. Education was in this instance a way to defer marriage, especially among middle class people, who believed that women's role was to marry. As with other communities the gendered differences between expectations for women and men were noted, and in this instance a financial reason, associated with inheritance, was attributed to this.

...across all the .. different cultural identities that we have, the single aspiration, .. is marriage. So girls are born for marriage. The boys are free. Their inheritance is assured.

In addition the issue of poverty and bride price was seen as linked to forced marriage:

Because if a father thinks, believes, that he can get so many manner of cattle or dowry, out of this one girl, and he can use that for three of his sons, to marry, to get them wives, then he's going to get that girl out of school at thirteen.

Similarly respondents from Ghana and Kenya believed that issues of class, poverty and gender were vital in marriage practices, especially in cases of forced marriage.

Summary

- Forced marriage was seen as an issue in a wide range of communities outside the South Asian Diaspora. This included Irish travellers, orthodox/fundamental religious communities, Armenian, Turkish, some mainland Chinese, and Eastern European communities (linked to trafficking and prostitution), some African countries including Eritrea, Somalia and Sudan. Also, survivors of forced marriage interviewed came from African Caribbean communities, from Sierra Leone and Mozambique.
- The focus on South Asian communities in much public and policy discourse on forced marriage obscures the existence of forced marriages in a range of other communities, including the majority white community.
- Focus groups and survivor interviews highlighted the different routes into forced marriage. These included: poverty and bride price primarily in African communities; control over sexuality in South Asian, Middle Eastern, Chinese and African communities; immigration in South Asian, Middle Eastern, Chinese communities and African communities. A blurring of the boundaries, as well as distinctions, between arranged and forced marriage were highlighted in relation to most of these contexts.
- The study highlights the need to shift conceptualisation of forced marriage away from being perceived primarily or only as constitutive of minoritised cultural or religious practices, to an understanding which incorporates structural factors such as poverty, immigration, asylum systems and unequal gender relations.

Chapter Five

Factors perceived to increase or decrease the risk of forced marriages

This chapter examines the factors that participants across the research highlighted as either increasing or decreasing the risk of forced marriages taking place, focusing in particular on the responses of survivors, stakeholders and from the mapping survey. The issues highlighted by focus group respondents regarding to routes into marriage, as outlined in the previous chapter, are also of direct relevance to discussion of risk.

The literature suggests that a key factor contributing to forced marriage is the low status ascribed to women and children, and their lack of rights within the family. This echoes the views of our focus group respondents and survivor accounts, Forced marriage has consequently been examined as gender based violence, involving an abuse of women's human rights (Uddin and Ahmed, 2000; Siddiqui, 2002; Hossain, nd. Gangoli et al., 2006). Documents from the Foreign and Commonwealth Office and Department of Health similarly perceive forced marriage as a form of domestic violence and as contributing to domestic violence after marriage (FCO and DoH, 2003). In addition studies have pointed to migration as increasing the vulnerability of women to experiencing the detrimental expressions of patriarchy, due to the barriers that immigrants encounter in accessing support and services. Migration may challenge gender roles in newly immigrant families, thus creating stress that could culminate in domestic violence and forced marriage (Ahmed et al., 2004).

Where child marriage is involved, forced marriage has also been seen as a form of child abuse due to the absence of free and full consent. The literature on forced marriage in this context shows the serious consequences for young girls, including sexual assault and health risks associated with early pregnancy, high maternal and child mortality and increased risk of sexually transmitted diseases (Forum on Marriage, 2000; Ooto-Oyertey and Pobi, 2003; Uttara et al., 1998). Another factor, documented as contributing to forced marriage of children, is poverty, and child marriage has therefore also been conceptualised as a development issue, linked to poverty related practices such as bride price for instance in Ethiopia (Ooto-Oyertey and Pobi, 2003). Survivor accounts in the current study also indicate this is the case in other African countries.

It has also been suggested that intergenerational conflicts can sometimes increase the vulnerability of young people to forced marriage (Stobarrt, 2002), as also highlighted by our focus group respondents (see previous chapter).

Existing literature also shows the ways in which racism, gender and culture can intersect in relation to forced marriage, compounding the multiple and complex oppressions faced by BME women. Gender, ethnicity, culture and immigration can increase women's risks of experiencing patriarchal control, especially in the context of forced marriage (Ahmed, 2004; Gangoli et al., 2006). Taking into account such links allows examination of the power dynamics between and within communities and groups, thus helping to highlight the impact of different aspects of culture (Anthias, 2002). Some studies look at the ways in which communities have constructed arranged marriage as an integral part of their culture (Bhopal, 1997). However, while there is a difference between arranged and forced marriage, there can also be slippage or blurring between the two in terms of experience (Shan, 1991; Carroll, 1998), and cultural notions such as *izzat* (honour) and *sharam* (shame) may be used to silence young people in cases of forced marriage in South Asian contexts (Akbar, 2005; Gangoli et al., 2006). The failure to work with intersectionality at a policy and practice level has been shown in other studies to compound the difficulties encountered by survivors facing forced marriage and other forms of domestic violence (Batsleer et al., 2002; Burman et al., 1998; Chantler et al., 2001)

The issues highlighted in the literature were also reflected in various ways in our study, and the in-depth examination of survivors' experiences of forced marriage and the responses by agencies and organisations allowed detailed examination of the factors leading to increases or decreases in the risk of forced marriage. Intersections between racism, gender and culture

were particularly important in understanding the risks and the means of preventing these.

Increasing the risk of forced marriage

The previous chapter outlined the various marriage practices and attitudes towards forced marriage of a range of communities, as identified by the focus groups. It was shown that structural factors such as poverty, immigration, asylum systems and unequal gender relations might contribute to the risk of forced marriage, although the particular risk factors tended to be specific to certain groups. Thus economic factors such as poverty and bride price were linked to risk of forced marriage primarily in African communities. Economic factors associated with immigration were seen to increase risk in South Asian, Middle Eastern, Chinese and African communities. Gender-based factors, such as control over sexuality, also featured as risk in South Asian, Middle Eastern, Chinese and African communities and gender inequality led to generalised increase in risk of forced marriage for women in particular. Moreover, marriages that initially appeared as arranged might actually be or become forced.

Experiences of survivors

Risk factors associated with routes into marriage

The interviews with survivors also indicated that different routes into forced marriages need to be taken into account in order to understand the particular vulnerabilities and risks faced by individuals within different communities. In addition to the issues brought up by focus group participants, survivors talked about overt coercion, mental ill-health, and death of a parent as aspects that formed part of their being forced into marriage, as well as further issues related to sexuality, and to immigration and asylum.

Extreme physical and/or sexual violence or a highly controlling family environment was reported by eight survivors as part of the context for forced marriage, including coercive violence and wrongful confinement, and threatened circumcision.

I was scared, really scared, petrified, I felt like a prisoner [...] like I couldn't make any choices about what I was going to do in terms of my [...] post sixteen, my future in terms of wanting a career.

Sheer, .. fright. I didn't know what was going to happen, it was just sheer fright I didn't want to go with this stranger, but I was abused as a child anyway physically by my mother, so you know ... I just went along with it really.

When her auntie was talking about forcing her to get married she was really scared to be murdered by her auntie as she was threatening her (via interpreter)

Ten of the female and one of the male survivors interviewed specifically talked about parents and extended family pressurising them to marry because they were seen as having sexual or potentially sexual experiences that were not deemed acceptable. Forced marriages or engagements were precipitated by fears that survivors (both women and men) were in 'unsuitable relationships', (or that their siblings were) and as a way of containing their sexuality. For instance, a Bangladeshi man was forced to marry a British Bangladeshi woman because he was in love with another woman who was seen as 'unsuitable', and because his parents believed that migrating to the UK would improve his chances of happiness. Two women were forced to marry when they were discovered to be in relationships with members of the opposite sex that were deemed 'unsuitable' due to fears associated with sexual activity.

My relationship with [name of boyfriend] was innocent, we held hands but never did anything...I never even took my clothes off, and we were punished like this....they [aunt and uncle] never asked for my side of the story, and when I tried to explain, my aunt covered her ears and said that she didn't want to hear the dirt.

Three of the survivors were pressurised to marry because they were gay or lesbian, and two women from abroad married men whom they later discovered were gay. A young woman from India was forced to marry a man living in the UK, when her parents discovered that she was lesbian. A lesbian woman from Sierra Leone was forced to marry her aunt's son. A gay British Indian man was pressurised to marry despite his parents knowing that he was gay, and this pressure continued throughout his 20's and 30's despite being in a relationship with his current (male) partner.

Immigration and asylum issues featured in half (14 of 38) of the survivor accounts, including twelve women and two men. The fourteen individuals concerned originated from a wide range of countries: Pakistan (n=7), Bangladesh (n=2), India (n=2), Iran (n=1), Sierra Leone (n=1) and Mozambique (n=1). Two types of forced marriage experiences linked to asylum and immigration could be discerned. One set of survivors were foreign nationals who were forced to marry either to improve their own career and life chances, or were UK nationals who were under obligation to improve the life chances of relatives from outside the EU. The second category concerned women who were forced into marriage in their countries of origin (outside the EU) and who had claimed or were claiming asylum in the UK on the basis of gender persecution. For the women claiming asylum, and others who were attempting to leave forced marriages, their problems were compounded by the policy of no recourse to public funds¹⁵.

In five of the female survivors' accounts, the death of a parent or guardian acted as a trigger for forced marriage. In one instance this was linked directly to problems of poverty arising because of the death. In the others, where fathers or male guardians had died, the women concerned claimed they were under greater pressure to marry to make their mothers happy and to ward off their anxieties. One of the women was studying at university at the time. She did complete her course but was married immediately afterwards, illustrating that in this instance being older and a graduate did not prevent a forced marriage. A Pakistani woman, whose guardian had died, was forced to marry a UK citizen whom she otherwise regarded as her brother.

Attempts were made to force a British Bangladeshi man into marriage because he had mental health problems. He was taken to Bangladesh twice to be married, although managed to escape before the marriage was solemnised in either case. He believed that his mental health problems were worsened due to this experience:

I was locked up, and ran out of medication...it was like torture. If I had a rope I would have hanged myself.

Risk factors associated with access to services

The availability of certain support and services may be crucial to decreasing the risk of forced marriages taking place (Gangoli et al., 2006). Individuals may thus experience greater risks if they are unable to access appropriate services.

The three female and one male survivor who were taken abroad at the time of marriage felt especially vulnerable, as they were unaware of services existing in the countries they were taken to or in the UK, or there were in any case no services to access. As one of the British nationals taken abroad for a forced marriage commented:

I was in a village in the middle of nowhere as far as I was concerned.

The lack of services abroad was mentioned by the survivors who were foreign nationals marrying a UK national, or foreign nationals who were forced to marry within their country of origin and later arrived in the UK.

Some participants who had tried to access support in their countries of origin had generally found this to be a negative experience. As one African woman commented:

I went to the police twice, they said it's a family matter why don't you have respect?... They said I have to be respectable, don't shame your family.

A number of survivors talked about the difficulties they had had in accessing support in the UK, or getting anyone to recognise what was happening to them. One respondent who was a British national, engaged in her country of origin (Pakistan) but married in a civil ceremony in the UK, spoke about the lack of information about her options at the time of the marriage:

When I think back now at the sequence of events, I was just doing what people told me. It would have been helpful if I had been given information at the civil wedding.

¹⁵ Individuals who enter the UK as spouses or long-term partners of a British national or someone settled in this country are subject to a two year probationary period before they can apply for residency and have no recourse to public funds during that period. That is, are unable to access statutory help for housing or related public funds for housing costs or living expenses.

They can identify from the paperwork that this man had come from Pakistan. Or information when I went to the solicitor, I could have chewed it over, thought about it and perhaps get support.

Another survivor who was married abroad at 13 and returned to the UK at age 14 and pregnant, reported that nobody (neither health nor social services) asked her about the circumstances of her pregnancy:

The social didn't even ask what was going on, the hospitals didn't ask what was going on and why this fourteen year old is pregnant. You know none of the authorities checked, none of the authorities were concerned.

A lack of cultural understanding by agencies was mentioned by several participants as creating difficulties when they attempted to access services. For instance one young woman who was suicidal as a result of the pressures on her to marry:

...well [when] I came to University I accessed a young people's counselling service, which stopped me from killing myself. But apart from that really didn't massively help me because the counsellor I was placed with really didn't understand my kind of culture background.

Another woman who had tried to speak to various housing providers commented that:

They didn't understand anything about my culture, they didn't understand what a forced marriage was.

Access to housing, including temporary accommodation in a refuge, was also undermined by the rule on no recourse to public funds.

One woman talked about how her GP in the UK had discussed her case with her parents, thereby violating the ethics of doctor patient confidentiality.

The wider political context, especially the pressures on Muslim communities, was also mentioned as a potential barrier to accessing mainstream services:

it's like your choices have suddenly over the last couple of years been diminished as a Muslim woman, diminished [...] with the politics. The community feels like it's under siege and women are part of that community and therefore they feel as though they are under siege and therefore they're not going to go and take the risks and have that trusting relationship with the mainstream.

Issues identified by stakeholders

Three key issues were identified by stakeholders as increasing or compounding the risk of forced marriages: lack of appropriate services to support potential victims; no recourse to public funds; and wider socio-political issues leading to more traditional Muslim identities being adopted. All these themes were also evident in the survivor accounts.

Stakeholders felt that there was a lack of strategic planning as well as lack of appropriate services in relation to forced marriage cases, related constraints on time, other resources and a lack of quantifiable data. Tensions between 'gender' and 'culture' made it difficult to see where strategic and operational responsibility for forced marriage should be located. These tensions were echoed in operational work by practitioners being unsure of how and when to intervene in cases of forced marriage. The key challenge was how to work with culture and gender simultaneously, and to take notice of the wider social processes in the adoption of cultural identities. The severe problem of under-funding and lack of sustained funding for services dealing with forced marriage compounded the problems faced by organisations. The short-term funding and historic under-funding of BME organisations were identified by many of the agencies as especially problematic, as these are often the organisations where expertise on forced marriage is seen to reside.

[we] don't get any local or central government support. We get referrals from social services, police the community so we are doing the job of 10 organisations. We rely on grants from charities.

Voluntary agencies don't always have funding and can't use services like language line, which the police use, because the costs are phenomenal.

No recourse to public funds emerged as an equally major issue for stakeholders. It was cited as a major obstacle in work around forced marriages by a wide range of organisations, including at least thirteen South Asian, Chinese and more general women's organisations, counselling services, immigration units, and law centres. These stakeholders challenged traditional constructions of forced marriage as only focusing on consent to enter a marriage. Exit out of such relationships also needed to be considered, including the systems (state practices and their intersections with cultural practices) that keep women in forced marriages and thus may be deemed to increase risk. Whilst it is right that the focus should be on 'consent', what was clear from the stakeholder interviews (and from some of the survivor interviews) was that consent is sometimes hard to establish. In addition, there may well be cases where despite refusal, a marriage will take place. Stakeholders highlighted that these factors make it important to focus not only on 'entry into', but also 'exit out of' such relationships. In relation to the domestic violence concession, it is important for agencies (including government departments) to recognise that if a person has been forced into a marriage, this should automatically count as evidence of domestic violence.

If the government had a policy on forced marriage, then they would also be looking at women with no recourse [to public funds].

The last set of risks identified by stakeholders were to do with the family dynamics and identities, also highlighted through survivors' experiences: being too 'westernised'; a pattern of controlling family dynamics including childhood abuse; and the behaviour and marriage outcomes of other siblings in a family were all mentioned. Some stakeholders also linked these to wider global politics and issues of identity. At least five stakeholders - from statutory, voluntary and government sectors working with adults or young people - identified the development of a strengthened cultural identity in the face of a hostile environment, especially for Muslims, as a risk factor in a context where parents and young people were perceived as holding onto cultural practices ever more rigidly.

When there are hostile conditions in society then people will cling more and more to their identity.

It's not about religion, but needing to stick together, the need for a strengthened Muslim identity.

Decreasing the risk of forced marriage

Decreasing the risk of forced marriage was largely the reverse of factors that were thought to increase the risks: an understanding of forced marriage; better strategic planning; increasing the capacity of existing services; increasing and improving funding and resources; ensuring that the current guidelines on forced marriage were implemented (particularly for police and social services); improved education for all sectors of society; improved understanding of individual human rights and entitlements in the UK; and dealing with no recourse to public funds were the most frequently cited. The general emphasis was on the need for appropriate community based support.

Suggestions for reducing forced marriage, from survivors who were interviewed, included interventions that had a national and an international dimension. At an international level, the dearth of services available to victims (British nationals taken abroad or overseas nationals) was of concern and survivors suggested a range of measures for overseas countries: women's groups, telephone helplines, better information about agencies to contact, campaigning for improved rights for women (legally and culturally) and community education both about forced marriage and the realities of life in the UK. One female survivor commented on how men coming from the UK usually painted a (false) picture of 'England as paradise' with 'money on trees'. The reality was very different and this when combined with very orthodox views about the role of women made life a misery for incoming spouses.

Survivors also felt that incoming spouses should be better supported once they were in the UK, through help with English, information about emergency services and other women's organisations, help with immigration applications in instances of domestic violence and help with no recourse to public funds.

Other UK based suggestions widely mentioned by survivors were community work, education and awareness building in communities to counter forced marriage, a positive media

campaign, and appropriate support services¹⁶. These were considered to be more effective in preventing cases of forced marriage than changes in immigration legislation:

what they need to deal with is education and awareness of those communities and say these are the choices... this is what is better for you in the long run. [...] instead of having a penalty driven change they need to look at a more accepting empowering engagement of those communities to influence change, rather than to force change.

[it is important for] communities to think about the consequences of a forced marriage. Some people see it as a duty to get their child married off.

It was suggested that the work with BME communities needed to be accompanied by campaigns to combat racism and Islamophobia in society, and to overcome any perceptions that campaigns against forced marriage were associated only with certain communities and religions.

Where stakeholders were concerned, education and awareness building were also seen as central. In the main this was seen as including:

- staff development for practitioners;
- community awareness for both parents or elders and young people - informing young people of their rights and providing independent advice (rather than through families) was thought to be essential;
- traditional academic education was seen as an empowering process and also as a way of possibly delaying marriage.

Community development including preventative work was also cited by stakeholders as important although it was noted that this was difficult in funding contexts which prioritise case-work over longer term development work. Some grass roots stakeholders (such as South Asian women's provider organisations) reported that the government should be working much more closely with them and currently they did not see this happening.

Access to support and services

Organisations that took part in the mapping survey were also those most likely to provide support in instances of forced marriage, working with a wide range of communities across Manchester, Tower Hamlets and Birmingham. Most of the organisations that were dealing with such cases said they saw between ten to fifty cases of forced marriage per year. This applied to organisations working with the Somali, Other African, Chinese, Middle Eastern, Latin American, or other communities (see Table A5.1, Appendix Five). Those organisations working with South Asian communities each saw up to ten cases of forced marriage per year.

Between a third and a half of the organisations surveyed provided support to victims of forced marriage, with less providing help to both victims and their families. Of those organisations that did provide a service, this was mostly advice (n=34, 43%), referral to other agencies (n=28, 35.4%) or counselling (n=25, 31.6%). A smaller number provided emergency accommodation (n=10, 12.7%), befriending (n=12, 15.2%) or mediation (n=9, 11.4%). (see Table A5.2, Appendix five)

The mapping survey thus indicated that organisations from the three locations were working with a considerable number of forced marriage cases, and were providing a range of support to victims and/or their families. However, it was apparent that the survivors and focus group members might not have managed to access any of these particular organisations. Survivors interviewed who were able to access services, were most likely to mention that they had had positive experiences from women's groups. The focus group participants also praised the provision provided by women's refuges. Two of the survivors, talking about the support provided by Women's Aid and South Asian refuges, said that:

I can say the only people, I find was woman group in United Kingdom, honestly...A big help I can say. You know the pain of the situation .. sometimes a very small help, can be very big for you.

¹⁶ This included a suggestion of access to airport staff who may be able to prevent a journey from taking place at the last minute.

I stayed there for about a year and it was an absolute Godsend and I will always, always look back on that place and just to be nothing but admiration and fondness and heart-warming feeling that that building and those people and those memories and the chance that it gave me to appreciate what I could make of the life that I had...I loved those memories I cherish them.

A woman from India who had been forced to marry because she was lesbian, was not able to access any support at the time of the marriage. However, she managed to escape her marriage due to the efforts of a gay rights and support network in India that her partner was a member of, and they continued to support her. She especially valued their support because she had had to end any contact with her natal and marital family after her escape.

The members of the Kurdish focus group thought that many of the services on offer in the UK were good, and one member, who was also a service provider for immigrant Kurdish women, cited two cases where responses to forced marriage from the education sector, the police and immigration services were both timely and effective:

We had one case last year. And we helped a teacher who was concerned about one of her student because she mentioned to the teacher that the family had a plan to take her back and marry her and she gave our phone to her and we gave information to police as well. They put a kind of, what is the word in English, they put something in her passport, and she couldn't travel until she was 18.

... another case.. Iranian woman... She came to this country with two children and the husband had a plan to come and take the children back to Iran. They were age 14 and 15. Again we called the police to protect her and told them about the case and they stopped him to come here. ..They didn't give him visa.

Summary

- Chapter Three indicated that there might be negative actions associated with changing the age of sponsorship or entry of a spouse to 21 or 24. Structural factors such as poverty, immigration, asylum systems and unequal gender relations were also seen as increasing risk for specific groups.
- In this chapter, additional risk factors were identified. A variety of circumstances and behaviours were seen to create particular vulnerabilities and risks, involving overt coercion by family members, mental ill-health or death of a parent or a potential spouse, 'unsuitable' sexual behaviour, and issues relating to immigration and asylum status. Lack of appropriate services, no recourse to public funds, and wider socio-political issues impacting on more traditional Muslim identities being adopted, were seen to further compound such vulnerabilities and risk of forced marriage.
- Decreasing the risk of forced marriage was largely the reverse of factors that were thought to increase the risks. In large part, better support to victims as well as preventive work was thought to be crucial, and should involve a wide range of communities and agencies. Particular mention was made of education and awareness for practitioners, young people, communities as well as academic/vocational education.
- Survivors suggested the development of appropriate services abroad, especially women's organisations.

Chapter Six

Key findings and recommendations

Communities where forced marriage takes place

The research indicated that forced marriage may be experienced by women and men from a wide range of communities. These included Irish traveller women, Armenian, Turkish, and some mainland Chinese communities, possibly Eastern European communities, some African communities originating from Eritrea, Somalia, Sudan, Sierra Leone, and Mozambique, as well as South Asian communities. Orthodox or fundamental religious communities were also included. Thus forced marriage may be experienced more widely than the commonly held view that it is an issue primarily affecting South Asian communities (c.f. Samad and Eade, 2002; Gangoli et al., 2006; Razack, 2004).

Different routes into forced marriage were identified, within which gender played an important role. Different communities were thought to exhibit different pressures that routed people into forced marriage: control over sexuality in South Asian, Middle Eastern, Chinese and African communities; economic considerations, such as poverty linked to bride price, in African and Chinese communities; immigration in South Asian, Middle Eastern, Chinese communities and African communities; and trafficking for prostitution in Eastern European communities. In all these communities the expectation that individuals must get married underpinned these other pressures.

Forced marriage was found to take place across a range of ages. While most occurred between 16 and 24, some marriages also took place when the individuals concerned were in their late twenties or thirties, and some engagements and marriages took place below the age of 16.

Increasing and decreasing the risk of forced marriage

The research revealed a variety of factors that increased the risk of forced marriage, and also prevented victims from escaping forced marriage. These included a variety of circumstances and behaviours such as overt coercion by family members, mental ill-health, death of a parent and 'unsuitable' sexual behaviour of potential spouses, as well as attempts to bypass certain immigration and asylum rules. Such risks were compounded by lack of appropriate services targeted at victims of forced marriage, insecure immigration status, the two year rule, and no recourse to public funds limiting victims' ability to exit forced marriages. Socio-political processes such as Islamophobia, were also perceived as leading to more 'traditional' Muslim identities being adopted and thus increasing risk. Further increase in the age of sponsorship or entry to 21 or 24 was another factor identified as a potential risk.

The reverse of factors considered to increase the risks of forced marriage tended to be seen to decrease the risk. Better support for victims, both within the UK and internationally, and including training of statutory and voluntary agencies to deal with cases of forced marriage, were seen as crucial. Preventative work in both the UK and abroad was thought to be essential, including working on gender equality and poverty alleviation in a range of contexts and communities. Particular mention was made of awareness training for practitioners and communities, and academic or vocational education for young people to improve their choices. While some saw the increase in the age of sponsorship or entry to 21 as potentially useful in preventing forced marriage, most respondents also cited substantial risks. In Denmark government strategies to prevent forced marriage has included dedicated refuges, hotlines and housing (Hvilshøj, 2006; Ny i Danmark, 2007), measures which could also be considered in the UK context as a part of the support to victims, as also emphasised by our respondents as key to preventing forced marriage.

Raising the age of sponsorship or for entry into the UK

The report has been written in the context of proposals by the UK Government to increase the age of sponsorship or entry of a spouse to 21, and it is therefore important to explore the possible responses to this decision as raised by our research. While there was little or no

evidence that the raising of the age of sponsorship or entry from 16 to 18 had specifically prevented forced marriages, there was some support for this increase. However, the predominant view was that a further increase in the age of sponsorship or entry, to 21 or 24, would be detrimental with regard to human rights, be discriminatory with regard to arranged and love marriages, and/ or would have a disproportionate impact on some ethnic minority communities. In addition, it was felt that increasing the age would not prevent forced marriages, as communities would find ways to escape the consequences of the increase - for instance, by use of falsified age certificates and the forced relocation of young women to their country of origin until they would be able to sponsor their spouse. The findings from other countries such as Denmark and the Netherlands, also indicates that increasing the immigration age may not have specifically reduced forced marriage cases (Hvilshøj, 2006).

Recommendations

1. A further increase in the age of sponsorship or entry to 21 or 24 is unlikely to prevent forced marriage, given the range of communities and ages that are affected. Our research does therefore not support a change in policy to increase the age.
2. Forced marriage affects a wide range of communities, and there are a variety of routes into forced marriage. Any policies around forced marriage needs to take this into account.
3. Increased funding and capacity is needed at a strategic, management and practitioner level for organisations charged with responsibilities for supporting victims of forced marriage.
4. Specifically targeted services are also needed including specialist refuge support and appropriate mental health support.
5. Forced marriage is already a form of domestic violence, and women subject to the two year rule should not be required to prove further domestic violence in order to be eligible for the domestic violence concession.¹⁷
6. Community awareness and education initiatives regarding forced marriage as well as community development with parents and young people are vital.
7. Anti discriminatory practice is needed in generic and specialist agencies to improve access to services for survivors of forced marriage.
8. Improved services are needed internationally in cases of forced marriages, including establishment of women's groups, helplines and campaigns for women's rights as well as poverty alleviation programmes targeted at women.
9. There is a general paucity of statistical information required to monitor the effects of legislation in this field. Recommendations on possible improvements to the availability of data are included in Appendix Three.

¹⁷ A woman can be granted 24 months stay on the basis of her marriage or relationship with a person settled in the UK (Paras. 281 and 282 of the Immigration Rules). If the marriage or relationship breaks down due to domestic abuse during the 24 months period she may apply for settlement if she meets the criteria for Indefinite Leave to Remain under the Domestic Violence Rule (Para. 289 A of the Immigration Rules).

Appendix One

Participants

Familiarisation and stakeholder details

Familiarisation interviews (N=13):

1. Metropolitan Police,
2. IND Croydon
3. IND Croydon
4. IND Sheffield,
5. Imkaan,
6. Women's Aid Federation England (WAFE)
7. Academic working on travellers
8. FCO,
9. Southall Black Sisters (SBS)
10. Jewish Women's organisation
11. Jewish Community organisation)
12. Mifumi (African Organisation)
13. West Yorkshire Police.

Stakeholder interviews (N=45):

Manchester (n=12):

1. Refugee and Immigration projects
2. Refugee and Immigration projects
3. Central Manchester Women's Aid
4. Law centre
5. Head of sixth form teacher (girls school)
6. South Asian women's domestic violence service
7. Government Office North West
8. Young People's mental health agency
9. Chinese Women's organisation
10. Greater Manchester Police
11. University based Student Counselling Services
12. Sudanese Women's Alliance.

Tower Hamlets (n=13):

1. Support Service For BME Women
2. East London Somali Youth and Welfare Group,
3. Domestic Violence Forum
4. Tower Hamlet Law Centre
5. Support Service for Domestic Violence
6. ADVANCE Advocacy Project
7. Refuge For BME Women In London
8. Metropolitan Police Service,
9. Tower Hamlets Wedding Registrar
10. Tower Hamlets Parents Advice Centre,
11. Newham Asian Women's Project
12. Counsellor at Counselling and Migration service at a London University
13. Head Teacher, Mulberry School for Girls, Tower Hamlets

Birmingham (n=20):

1. Jyoti Ashram

2. Irish Welfare
3. Immaan Somaili Group
4. Health Gay Life
5. FWA
6. Doli Project
7. Chinese Community Centre
8. BWAIC
9. Birmingham Women's Aid
10. Birmingham Central Mosque
11. Barosa
12. Bangladeshi Welfare Association
13. Asylum Seekers Team
14. CSIP
15. West Midlands Police
16. Women's Help Centre
17. Government. Office (West Midlands)
18. University of Central England*
19. University of Central England – Counselling Service*
20. Black Women's Network

* The UCE interview was counted as 2 interviews as the participants in this interview were often saying different things.

Survivors interviewed (N=38)

Table A1.1: Survivor Demographics - Ethnicity and gender

Ethnicity	Female	Male	Total
British/ British Asian	7	1	8
Indian	2		2
Pakistani	12	1	13
Bangladeshi	7	3	10
Iranian	1		1
Mozambique	1		1
Sierra Leone	1		1
Somali	1		1
African Caribbean	1		1
Total	33	5	38

Table A1.2: Survivor Demographics – religion

Religion	Total
Muslim	28
Sikh	2
Zoroastrian (converted from Islam)	1
Hindu	2
Catholic	2
Methodist	1
Atheist	1
Total:	37

Note: One respondent did not divulge their religion

Table A1.3: Survivor Demographics – ethnicity

ETHNICITY	Total
British Asian	9
Indian	2
Pakistani	12
Bangladeshi	10
Iranian	1
Sierra Leone	1
Somali	1
African Caribbean	1
Mozambique	1
Total	38

Table A1.4: Survivor gender, ethnicity and age at marriage

	Engaged before 16		Married before 16		Married between 16-17		Married between 18-20		Married between 21-24		Married after 24	
	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F
British Asian		1		1		1		1				
Indian								1		1		
Pakistani				2	1	3		3		4		1
Bangladeshi					1	2		2		3	1	
Iranian								1				
Sierra Leone								1				
Somali						1						
Total		1		3	2	8		9		8	1	1

Note: Two respondents did not divulge their age at marriage, and four respondents never married.

Table A1.5: Survivor nationality at time of marriage and place

Nationality at time of marriage	Married in the UK	Married in country of origin	Married elsewhere	Total
Indian		2		2
Pakistani		7		7
Bangladeshi		3		3
Sierra Leone		1		1
Somalian			1	1
Mozambique		1		1
Iranian		1		1
British	7	10	1	18

Note: Four respondents are never married.

Table A1.6: Survivor current immigration status

Nationality at time of marriage	Probation period (NRPF)	Domestic violence concession	LLR	LLR pending	Asylum seeker/ Refugee status	British	Other	Total
Indian			1				1	2
Pakistani	1	3	2			1		7
Bangladeshi						3		3
Sierra Leone					1			1
Somalian							1	1

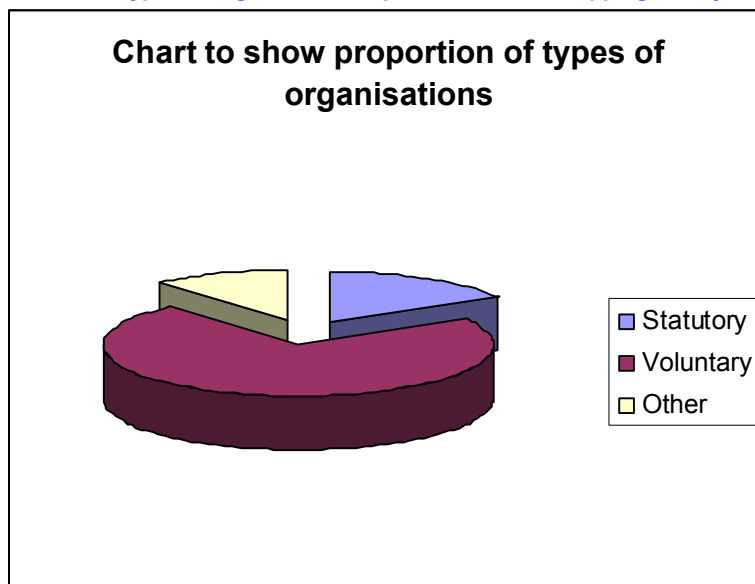
Mozambique					1			1
Iranian					1			1
British						22		22

Mapping survey (n=79)

Table A1.7: Types of organisations represented in the mapping survey

Sector	Total	percentage represented
Statutory	13	16.5
Voluntary	56	70.9
Other	9	11.4
Missing data	1	
Total	79	100.0

Chart A1.1: types of organisations represented in the mapping survey



Focus Groups

Table A1.10 – composition of focus groups

Description of group	Female	Male	Total
African/African-Caribbean women (Ghanian, Kenyan, Cameroonian, Egyptian and African–Caribbean)	7	-	7
Ugandan men and women	3	1	4
Chinese young women	5	-	5
Chinese older women	12	-	12

Lesbian women (South Asian, Irish and White British)	5	-	5
South Asian young men (17 -19 years)	-	6	6
Girl's Sixth Form College (South Asian, Middle-Eastern and African)	12	-	12
Sikh women	7	-	7
South Asian women (Pakistani and Indian)	5	-	5
Bangladeshi women	5	-	5
Bangladeshi boys (15-20)	-	6	6
Bangladeshi girls (15-20)	10	-	10
Middle Eastern and North African women (Arab, Jordanian, Syrian, Moroccan)	4	-	4
Iranian men and women	2	2	4
Kurdish women	5	-	5
Total	82	15	97

Appendix Two

Research Tools

Interview Schedules

A) Stakeholder interviews

- 1) Do you have an organisational/working definition of Forced Marriage? Are there any differences between the organisational and working definition? If no definition, then ask, what is your understanding of the term forced marriage?
- 2) Do you have an organisational policy of Forced Marriage and if you do can we have a copy?
- 3) What is your understanding/awareness of Government policy around Forced Marriage?
- 4) Can you describe the work your organisation does in relation to forced marriage? (Here we may be particularly interested in the mix of cases – abroad and ‘home’ forced marriages and interventions offered?)
- 5) The Government has recently increased the age at which a person can sponsor someone to come to the UK on the basis of marriage or gain leave to enter from abroad on the basis of marriage from 16 to 18 years. What kind of impact (if any) has this had on your work with forced marriage? (prompts: resource to public funds, immigration implications, victim support, less money available for support).
- 6) Have you seen any changes in the number of people you have helped/supported since the change in age, are there any differences (age, ethnicity etc) since the age was increased?
- 7) Do you have any views as to how to measure the impact that legislation has had on forced marriage?
- 8) What does your organisation/you think are the benefits (if any) of raising the age:
 - a) to 18,
 - b) to 21 and
 - c) to 24

What does your organisation/you think are the risks (if any) of raising the age:

 - a) to 18
 - b) to 21
 - c) to 24
- 9) How do you think the increase in age will be viewed by minoritised communities?
- 10) Are there any implications that this proposed change in policy will have on a) victims and b) support services for women experiencing forced marriage (could prompt e.g. immigration implications, victim support, less money available for support etc)?
- 11) From the work that you do can you identify any factors that are likely to:
 - a) Increase the risk of forced marriage?
 - b) Decrease the risk of forced marriage?
- 12) What kind of difficulties do you encounter working on forced marriage (both with victims and organisationally)?
- 13) In which communities do you think Forced Marriage is an issue?

- 14) As part of this study, we will be interviewing survivors of forced marriage – would it be possible for you to put us in touch with any survivors please?

DATA QUESTIONS

- 1) Do you keep any kind of records about the people who use your service? (prompts: for example in a filing cabinet or on a computer database)
- 2) Would those records identify people who have experienced forced marriage?
- 3) IF YES:
 - What type of information do these records contain?
 - Approx. how many records are there of people who have experienced forced marriage?
 - If yes, is the data available at an individual level or is it amalgamated?
- 4) Does your annual report contain any figures about forced marriage? (Can we have a copy?)
- 5) Have you ever had any kind of research or evaluation done on your organisations work with forced marriage? (Can we have a copy?)
- 6) Who is responsible for maintaining the database?

We would like to do a fuller interview with the person who is responsible for your computer database or filing system (i.e. the person who analyses the records if possible, otherwise the person who inputs data/files the records). Please can you give us their contact details and explain to them that someone will be phoning in a few weeks to ask them some more detailed questions? The type of questions we will be asking will be more technological, for example to do with programmes and formats.

B.) Survivor interviews

Personal information

- Age
- Gender
- Ethnicity
- Nationality
- Religion
- Marital Status
- Children
- Immigration status (if not a UK citizen) (Indefinite leave to remain (ILR)/settlement, leave to enter (probationary 2 year period), extension to leave to remain, [NB the interviewers need to be aware that this is not a definitive list and that there is the possibility that they may come into contact with people who do not fit into these categories (eg asylum seekers, illegal entrants or overstayers).

1) What were/are your expectations of marriage? What kind of partner/dreams did/do you have?

2) When did you get married? (need a date of course to establish whether the change in age legislation would have had any impact directly on the person being interviewed)

3) Where did you get married (which country if not UK)? Perhaps if they answer abroad or a foreign national has been brought to the UK, could go on to ask question 6.

- 4) How would you define your marriage or engagement? (Prompt – forced, arranged, love)?
- 5) How did you meet your partner? (Prompts – age at engagement/marriage; did you meet them before the ceremony; were you asked if you agreed to the marriage/engagement)?
- 6) What were the circumstances of your wedding? (prompt had no knowledge of it before it had happened, was involved in the planning of it, etc) [NB there was concern when raising the age that victims might be forced to live abroad with their spouse until they reached 18 rather than being able to come back home and sponsor their spouse immediately and seek support whilst in the UK. It might therefore be worth asking where the marriage took place with a view to finding out whether the victim was taken abroad without any prior knowledge of the intended wedding, whether the victim's family forced the victim to remain with his/her spouse until entry clearance had been obtained and what effect she/he considers the raise in age may have had.]
- 7) If you felt at the time that you were forced into marriage, could you describe the circumstances? (Prompts – response of relatives, community, immigration officers, voluntary or statutory agencies)?
- 8) Do you think that your age had an impact on the form of marriage you entered?
- 9) Were you able to access any support (prompts: relatives, community, agency)? What are your views on the type of support you accessed?
- 10) If didn't access the support – why not?
- 11) What is your understanding/awareness of Government policy around Forced Marriage?
- 12) The Government has recently increased the age at which a person can sponsor someone to come to the UK on the basis of marriage or gain leave to enter from abroad on the basis of marriage from 16 to 18 years. Has this change had any impact on your experience of marriage or immigration? If married before the age change rule- would it have had an impact? (Prompts: resource to public funds, immigration implications -being made to stay abroad until 18, victim support, less money available for support).
- 13) What do you think are the benefits (if any) of raising the age:
- a) to 18,
 - b) to 21 and
 - c) to 24
- What do you think are the risks (if any) of raising the age:
- a) to 18,
 - b) to 21 and
 - c) to 24
- 14) How do you think the increase in age will be viewed by your community?
- 15) From your experience, can you identify any factors (changes in policy, personal attributes of the person concerned (eg learning difficulties), involvement in criminal activity (?), links with parent's original homeland etc that are likely to:
- Increase the risk of forced marriage?
- Decrease the risk of forced marriage? making forced marriage a criminal offence, other policy changes, parents view or experience, being in education, being a high achiever in education, etc
- 16) In which communities do you think Forced Marriage is an issue?

C) Focus groups

1. Introductions, and Ground-rules (see Annex 1)

2. Aims and objectives of the research
 - Explanation of the proposed change in legislation.
 - Definition of Forced Marriage

The Home Office definition is:

Where one or both parties are coerced into a marriage against their will and under duress. Duress includes either physical and/or emotional pressure. It is very different from arranged marriage, where both parties give their full and free consent to the marriage. The tradition of arranged marriages has operated successfully within many communities and many countries for a very long time.

3. Aims and objectives of the Focus Group
 - Understanding of marriage practices, with a special emphasis on forced marriage
 - attitudes towards the proposed change in legislation
 - the benefits and risks associated with such a change
4. Go around the group and ask everyone to describe themselves a bit including
 - Age
 - Ethnicity
 - Immigration status
 - Religion
 - Marital Status/Sexual orientation
5. Vignette.
6. If a woman was pregnant outside of marriage and was pressurised to marry the father of the baby, would you see this as an arranged or forced marriage? or other –please specify
7. If a person was gay, and was pressurised to marry would you see this as an arranged or forced marriage? or other –please specify
8. If a person had a mental or physical disability, and was pressurised to marry would you see this as an arranged or forced marriage? or other –please specify
9. What do you think are the benefits (if any) of raising the age:
 - a) to 18,
 - b) to 21 and
 - c) to 24
10. What do you think are the risks (if any) of raising the age:
 - a) To 18
 - b) To 22
 - c) To 24

E) Data sets interview schedule

Question guide.

A. About the database

1. Do you have a written description of your database that you can send us?
2. When was your database started?
3. Why was the database set up?
4. Are the data variables collected consistent over time?
5. How was information collected before the database was set up?
6. For how long have you been responsible for the database?
7. Which software do you use (e.g. Access, Excel, SPSS)? Please specify which

version you currently use.

8. Approximately how many records does your database currently include?
9. How do you define a record? Prompt: what does it equate to?

B. Information included in database

10. Do you have a 'data dictionary' for the database? If so, could we have a copy?
11. Do you use electronic data entry forms and/or record information in hard copy? If so, could we have copies of the formats?

Age

12. Do you record age (of whom? at what stage?)
13. Does your data include the age in single years or is it categorised? (If categorised, is this also the case for your raw data)

Sex/Gender

14. Do you record sex or gender (of whom?)

Citizenship

15. Do you record any of the following: country of origin/birth/previous residence/citizenship or nationality?
16. Do you use the ISO (international standards organisation) 3166 machine-readable codes.

Immigration status

17. Do you record the immigration status? Of whom?
18. Date when entered the UK (if applicable)

19. Date when the case came to your attention (and entered onto database) [knowing the dates may be important to work out whether the 2 year probationary period for the applicant is an important factor]

20. Do you have data on sponsors prior to April 2003 when the entry age was raised to 18? (if applicable)

21. Do you have separate records on applicants prior to December 2004 when the entry age was raised to 18 for that group? (if applicable)

Marital status

22. Do you record marital status? (of whom? at what stage?)

Forced marriage

23. Do you have a way of identifying who on your database may have experienced forced marriage? (How does this operate? What definition is used? Who decides whether a case involved forced marriage? How does the identification differentiate between arranged and forced marriages?)
24. Can your database distinguish forced marriages where both parties are British/EU nationals from forced marriages involving an overseas spouse?
25. Do you have a way of identifying who on your database may have experienced arranged marriage?
26. Do you have a way of identifying who on your database has experienced any form of gender-based violence (e.g. trafficking for sexual purposes, sexual violence, marital rape, domestic violence, FGM)?
27. Age at marriage
28. Do you record age at marriage?
29. Other information
30. What other information do you collect? (would you be able to send us a complete list?)

C. Data quality

31. How do you assess your data quality?

32. What validation checks, if any, do you make on your database? (Internal/with other sources?)
33. What does an empty cell in your data denote? (e.g. missing, not available, 'no')
34. How complete is your database (Is there a lot of missing data?)

D. Data processing

35. What happens to your data input files?
36. What do you do with the raw data?
37. How do you collate and process your raw data?
38. Are the raw data stored or disposed of?
39. Can you send us a blank copy of a data input form?

E. Data dissemination

40. Do you disseminate your data?
41. Are the data publicly available in any format?
42. Would you be able to run some queries for us in order to get the information we would require from the database (if you are unable to provide us with the raw data)? If so, how much notice would you need to do this?

F. Access to your database for later stages in the research

43. Has your database ever been accessed by researchers for government funded research before?
44. Are your data easily anonymised? (e.g. by deleting certain variables)
45. Might it be possible for us to see your anonymised database?
46. What are the processes we would need to go through to gain access to your anonymised data?
47. What formats might the database operators be able to export their data to – e.g. .TXT, .CSV etc?

Mapping survey questionnaire

- Confirm the organisation has received the letter YES/NO
- Ask who the best person to speak to on this issue is
- Introducing the study
- Explain that the purpose of the questionnaire is to explore marriage practices, but with a specific focus on forced marriage
- Ask if there are any questions about the study
- Confidentiality

Background Information

- Name of organisation
- Name of contact
- Role in organisation
- Address
- Telephone no.
- Which communities do you work with?
- Telephone interview conducted by.....

HO Definition of Forced Marriage

As this study mainly concerns Forced marriage, we'd like to start off by offering you the HO definition of Forced Marriage, and then you can tell us whether or not you think Forced Marriage happens in your community/or the communities you work in.

The HO definition is:

Where one or both parties are coerced into a marriage against their will and under duress. Duress includes either physical and/or emotional pressure. It is very different from arranged marriage, where both parties give their full and free consent to the marriage. The tradition of arranged marriages has operated successfully within many communities and many countries for a very long time.

1) Using the HO definition, do you think that Forced Marriage happens in your community (or the communities you work in)?

Yes

No

1i) If Yes, how common is FM in your community or the communities you work with?

- a) Very common
- b) Sometimes occurs

1ii) Have you any idea how many instances of forced marriage are part of your work each year

1iii) (Where appropriate) do the majority of cases involve:

- a) People being forced to marry within the UK
- b) Person being forced to marry somebody from abroad who would settle in the UK after marriage
- c) Person being forced to marry somebody from abroad with the intention of settlement in that country
- d) Other – please specify
- e) No specific pattern

1iv) (Where appropriate) Does your organisation provide support to:

- a) victims
- b) families
- c) both
- d) do not offer support in this field
- e) other

1v) For responses a and b: What kind of support do you offer:

- a) advice
- b) counselling: informal or formal
- c) mediation
- d) emergency accommodation
- e) referral to other agencies
- f) befriending
- g) other

Marriage Practices within your community

2) Is it usual for parents to introduce people to each other for the purposes of marriage?
Yes/No

2i) If yes, how much choice does the person have to turn down a prospective spouse? Please tick one of the following:

- a) Complete choice
- b) Some choice
- c) No choice
- d) Mixture of the above, please specify.....

2ii) Would you describe this as a forced or arranged marriage? or other –please specify

2iii) How much choice do people have in choosing their own partners?

- a) Complete choice
- b) Some choice
- c) No choice
- d) Mixture of the above, please specify.....

2iv) Would you describe this as a forced or arranged marriage? or other –please specify

3) For this part of the questionnaire, we would like to describe four situations with you to explore marriage arrangements a little further.

In the first situation, if a woman was pregnant outside of marriage within your community, or the community in which you work, how much pressure would be placed on her to marry the father of the baby? Tick one of the following:

- a) No pressure
- b) Some pressure
- c) A lot of pressure

3i) For responses b and c: Would you see this as an arranged or forced marriage? or other – please specify

4) In the second situation, if a person was gay, would marriage be seen as a way to deal with this within your community? Yes/No

4i) If yes, would

- a) Any pressure
- b) Some pressure
- c) A lot of pressure be put upon the young person to marry

4ii) Would you see this as an arranged or forced marriage? or other –please specify

5) In the third situation, please tell me whether any pressure would be put upon a person with mental or physical disability to marry the first person who agrees to the match?

- a) No pressure
- b) Some pressure
- c) A lot of pressure
- d) Other response – please specify

5i) Would you see this as an arranged or forced marriage? or other –please specify

6) Within your community, are there child betrothals, child marriages or informal arrangements made between families regarding marriage of children? Yes/No

6i) If Yes, when the young person comes of age how easy would it be for them to refuse to the marriage?

- a) Very easy
- b) Quite difficult
- c) Very difficult
- d) other, please specify

6ii) For responses b and c: Would you see this as an arranged or forced marriage? or other – please specify

7) Do you think the fact that both sponsors and applicants now have to be 18 years before they can legally marry in the UK or act as sponsor has made any difference to the number of forced marriages that you see? YES/NO/Don't know

8) Using the Government definition of Forced Marriage (might need to repeat), which

communities, other than yours, do you think FM occurs in?

9) (Where appropriate) Earlier you mentioned that you work with victims of FM or people who have been pressurised into marriage.) Could you put us in touch with victims? Yes/NO

10) (Where appropriate- could say something like... it sounds as though you have a lot of experience with your community/marriage practices)Would you (or another member of your organisation) like to be interviewed as part of stakeholder interviews that will be more detailed, and will deal with the benefits and risks of increasing the age of sponsorship/entry for a spouse or fiancé(e) visa.

Yes/No

11) Any other comments?

Ending

Thanks for your time

Any other questions?

Examples of Focus Group Vignettes

Case-Study 1

Rakiya is a 19 year old Bangladeshi woman in London who lives with her parents. She is studying at University and doing very well. Her parents have told her that they have found a suitable man, Rashid from the UK for her to marry. Her parents are in the process of arranging the engagement so that by the time Rakiya has finished her degree, she can be married. Rakiya does not really want to marry Rashid. She has met him previously and she feels that they will not get on as she is nervous that they will have different expectations of each other. She is independent and wants a career. Moreover she has met somebody at University who she is in love with. Rakiya has not told her parents about her boyfriend as he is not the same religion or ethnicity as her family and she does not think they will approve. Neither does she feel she can oppose her parents' wishes.

Discussion

1. If Rakiya accedes to her parents wishes, how would you define this marriage?
2. What advice would you offer Rakiya?
3. What services could Rakiya access?

Case-Study 2

Akash is a 26 year old South Asian man who has a good job and his own home. For many years his parents have been suggesting to him that he should get married and settle down. In particular, they have young woman, Meena in mind from back home. The reason they are keen for this marriage to go ahead is because in the past Meena's family have been very helpful to them at a time when they were really struggling. This marriage is seen as a way of repaying Mary's family. Akash's parents know that he has a girlfriend, but because of their obligation to the girl's family in India, they are pressuring Akash to get married to Meena in the next few months. Akash gets on well with his parents and in discussion they suggest that he could always get married to Meena and still discreetly continue his relationship with his girlfriend.

Discussion

1. If Akash accedes to his parents wishes, what kind of marriage would this be?
2. What are the options for Akash and what do you feel he should do?

Appendix Three

Data Set Exploration and 'pen portraits'

Overview of current statistical data quality and availability

The impacts of policy changes may be measurable and quantifiable when policy-relevant statistics are available and of sufficiently good quality to allow analysis of patterns and trends over time. Twenty-eight official and unofficial datasets were identified as possible sources of relevant data. The research team then investigated whether or not data exist in these sources to enable policy-makers to monitor the incidence of forced marriages and to identify the impact of the implementation of legislation aimed at reducing forced marriage and protecting victims. As far as it was possible to determine, no single existing source currently provided such statistical data of sufficient quality and coverage. Furthermore, combining data from different sources would not produce statistics or indicators of the necessary quality and coverage. Unofficial sources, such as the datasets of non-governmental organisations (NGOs), often contain detail on individual cases of forced marriage, but generally do not provide sufficient coverage, the data are not managed for the purposes of producing statistics and data quality is not monitored.

Quality and coverage are further compromised by the fact that few statisticians are involved at any stage in either official or unofficial sources, in processing any of the data relating to forced marriages.

Official and unofficial sources: relative strengths and weaknesses

At a general level, the data collected and produced by different types of official and unofficial sources present various strengths and weaknesses. Official sources generally record 'events', which take place in administrative procedures. These sources may be expected to provide greater statistical coverage, whilst unofficial sources generally suffer from partial coverage, but collect qualitative data of greater richness.

Central Reference System (CRS) - UK Visas

The most obvious potential source of statistical information is the marriage visas database, in which all applications for a visa and related decisions are recorded. The database contains information on the administrative events which are the dates when applications are recorded and visas are issued. Usually there is around two to five months between an application and the issue of a visa. The two events are not linked in the available statistical tables produced from the raw data, although it may be technically possible to link records on applications and decisions relating to each individual. There is, however, no information on date of entry to the UK and age was only available in the tabulations with an age breakdown of 'under-18' and 'over-18', so these figures should be seen only as possibly indicative of likely patterns and trends in total numbers and citizenships. The database does include a breakdown by sex, age (by date of birth) and nationality (citizenship). Further exploration of this source might also produce information recorded in the case files but not recorded in the electronic database and/or information for years earlier than 2003. The total numbers appear to be fairly consistent from one year to the next (between around 3,400 and 3,600) and it was not possible to determine whether or not this consistency is in part a product of administrative factors related to volume or speed in the processing of applications. At the time of writing, this database appears to show no evidence either way of any effect caused by the raising of the age limit of sponsors or applicants.

Case Information Database (CID) – Border and Immigration Agency

The effect of the change in legislation for applicants (i.e. spouses, fiancé(e)s entering the UK on the basis of marriage) may be assumed to appear in the 'passengers given leave to enter' data. However, it would be impossible to know whether any of these passengers given leave to enter had been forced or were about to be forced into a marriage. Age and certain demographic are collected so it would be possible to look at changes in these demographics

as a result of policy changes, however as the legislation came into effect in December 2004, the impact (if any) would not begin to appear in leave to enter data until 2007 (for 2006 data). At the time of this research these data were still unpublished.

In summary, in relation to marriages involving international migration, the statistical information available for the period 2003-2005 from the Home Office on numbers of persons given leave to enter the United Kingdom as husbands, wives or for marriage from 'key' countries of the Indian sub-continent does not allow for meaningful statistical analysis in relation to forced marriages.

Marriage registrations

Another obvious source for the purposes of this research might have been the marriage records of the General Register Office (GRO). This source, however, lacks the crucial piece of information of whether the marriage is in fact a 'forced marriage'. Under UK law, a marriage cannot be legal if it is not freely entered into, so by definition the GRO does not collect data on forced marriages. Information is collected on the age and citizenship of the spouses, which may allow the identification of changes in patterns such as the mean age at marriage, according to citizenship. This would not overcome the problem of identifying groups within the total population of UK citizens. Mid-year statistical estimates on marriages in England and Wales are published in the autumn of the year following the reference year and include a breakdown by age. The time delay in the production of these statistics means that it was too soon to use them for meaningful analysis of the impact of the raising of the age limit for sponsors in relation to the current research as available data currently apply. The effect of legislation coming into force in 2004 could only be expected to appear in figures for 2005 onwards

Pupil registrations

Records of deregistration from schools might indicate patterns in pupils being removed for the purposes of marriage, however formal de-registration often does not happen and the reason for leaving is undeclared in the case of forced marriage.

Potential future exploitation of sources

For several reasons, most importantly those of data quality and coverage, useful statistics are only likely to be produced in the future from the official databases, not from those of the NGOs. The 'pen portraits' identify potential improvements in future data quality and availability in several official sources. Many of the organisations interviewed reported plans to improve their data collection systems and several were introducing new or improved computerised systems. In several cases free-text retrieval search tools would improve data 'capture'. Systematic 'flagging' of the data entered and the redesign of report forms would possibly allow for new cross-tabulations of variables. It was thought highly desirable that this happens in the case of the COMPASS database used by the FCO/HO Forced Marriage Unit, although this contains information only on 'cases handled'. The UKVisas Central Reference System, containing a record of every sponsor and applicant for a visa, is to be redeveloped in the near future and should be reprogrammed to allow queries using a 'forced marriage' flag (although this in itself would not guarantee reliable and consistent collection of data). An improved knowledge and understanding of the quality and coverage of information collected by entry clearance officers and Consular offices could indicate the potential of official sources outside the UK.

Conclusions regarding databases

None of the available, existing data sources on forced marriage met all (or even most) of the criteria for data quality and coverage of the whole of the target population. Most sources had partial coverage and the databases that existed at the time of the research had been established only recently, so no time series data were available that would allow statistical analysis of the effect of raising the age limit of a sponsor. Some sources (using a victim-led approach) can contain a wealth of detail and historical background on the experience of victims and of incidents and contacts between them, the witnesses and the police or advice/support voluntary organisation. The strength of these databases lies in their richness of detail, which results from the degree of confidence that the victim has in the person taking the records. The problem with attempting to use them for policy monitoring purposes is there

is no independent check on data quality and that any data quality that exists would be compromised if there might be any possibility that the databases might be:

- accessed by anyone other than the trusted responsible case officer or equivalent in the organisation
- used for any reason other than ensuring the protection and safety of the victim.

Given all the problems outlined above, it was not possible to use available statistical data to draw conclusions about the effect of raising the age-limit of sponsors. There was some potential for improvement but this was unlikely to significantly improve data quality and coverage.

The databases

Note on Police Forces/Services databases

There is lack of comparability between the data of 43 different police forces because no common system of data collection exists and different IT systems are used in each force. The organisations interviewed in-depth were:

1. West Yorkshire Police

West Yorkshire Police produce annual tables of the total numbers of forced marriage incidents by 'victim ethnicity' and 'victim age'. For the period 1st August 2005 – 31st July 2006 a total of 60 victims made contact with the police at the age of under 16 (5 persons) or 16-18 years of age (55 persons). Ethnicity is self reported or that determined by the reporting officer. This source has potential if the database information could be analysed in depth, using the free text information in individual records, which might reveal information on age at entry into the UK (if applicable). The VIVID database contains a 'Vulnerable person' number, which could provide statistics by 'ethnic origin'.

2. The Metropolitan Police

The Metropolitan Police have three databases: CRIS; CRIMINT and MERLIN. The CRIS database was established in 1996 (when it replaced paper records) and is used to record incidents recorded to the police (some but not all of which will be crimes). Forced marriage is identified in the records by the 'flag' FM in the VIW (Victim, Informant, and Witness) screen. Information on immigration status, sponsors etc are only recorded if the police officer recording the case deems it relevant. CRIS can provide incident-based information on all cases recorded by the Metropolitan Police, however will not be able to adequately answer the questions in this study. The data have already been analysed as part of an internal Metropolitan Police report. The full report is a confidential internal police document.

3. The Foreign and Commonwealth Office/Home Office Forced Marriage Unit

The UK Visas Central Reference System (CRS) contains a record on sponsors and applicants for every application for a visa. The information is recorded mostly by entry clearance officers and covers the period before entry to the UK. Variables recorded include date of birth and citizenship. Searches of the database are carried out using a pre-set query via a web-based system. There are plans to redevelop the system in the near future and it would be possible to re-programme the queries to request reports using a 'Forced Marriage' flag. The database contains text reports, which may include information on forced marriages, but there is no free-text retrieval search option. The CRS database and the Home Office/IND CID database are not linked and information on changes of visas/visa switching cannot be retrieved from either.

The COMPASS database contains records of all the cases handled by the FM Unit. It is possible to search the cases and request a report on the variables 'Forced Marriage' or 'Forced Marriage - Minor'. Paper records are kept for recording telephone calls and used for data entry purposes. These include information on the victim's date of birth and gender. The database only includes cases handled by the Unit (for example not phone-call enquiries). There is no link between COMPASS and CRS.

Birmingham

1. Bangladeshi Welfare Association

Does not keep records of people using the service.

2. Barosa

Does keep records of people using the service and records would identify people that have experienced a forced marriage. The referral system shows suicide, forced marriage, self harm etc. Annual reports will be produced in the future with the changes to be introduced with adult services and equalities.

3. Family Welfare Association (FWA)

Does keep records of people using the service but not currently of people who have experienced a forced marriage. This may change in the future in relation to child protection issues.

4. Health Gay Life

Does keep records of people using the service, but it is not known how many have experienced a forced marriage. The information collected greatly depends on the issues the client presented with. The system identifies the primary issue and then 4 other issues. Variables include: Primary issue: eg age, mental health status, issues etc.

5. Jyoti Ashram

Does keep records of people using the service and the records would identify people that have experienced a forced marriage. The information collected is basic: for instance - name, reason for referral. It is not known how many people experienced a forced marriage, but it may be possible to discover this. There is no annual report or any other report containing figures about forced marriage. No research or evaluation has been carried out about forced marriage.

6. Women's Helpcentre

Does keep records of users of the service, but these would not identify people who have experienced a forced marriage. If funding became available for monitoring (and this is in writing), the project will produce stats and make sure that forced marriage data is introduced into their monitoring forms.

7. Asylum Seekers and Immigration Team

Does keep records of users, but forced marriage would only be recorded as a failed sponsorship, which could be sub-categorised as family breakdown.

The information is confidential and it was not possible to respond further on this point.

8. Birmingham Women's Advice and Information centre (BWAIC)

BWAIC works with a wide range of women (Iranian, Jamaican, South Asian) who have come from abroad and are forced into a marriage. Hand-written records are kept, rather than a database. Forced marriage would be presented as domestic violence. There is no annual or other report containing data on forced marriage.

9. The Irish Welfare and Information Centre

An electronic database is kept, containing records of users of the service. Reasons for referrals are coded, but these reasons do not include forced marriage.

10. The Chinese Community Centre Birmingham

A database of users is kept and this includes information on people who have experienced forced marriages, but the information is not recorded as 'cases'.

The organisation requested that no further contact be made with them on this point.

11. West Midlands Police

Records are kept of individuals, but forced marriage is logged as domestic abuse. Around 4-5 cases of forced marriage had been identified during the previous 3 month period.

12. Imaan Somali Women's Group

Records are kept of people using the service, but they would not identify people who have

experienced a forced marriage.

A request was made not to contact the group again on this point.

13. Birmingham Central Mosque

Does not keep records of people using the service.

14. University of Central England

Records are kept of users of the service but there is no systematic recording of forced marriages, no evaluation or research has been carried out on the topic and no annual report is produced containing relevant data.

15. The Dohli Project

Manual records are kept, which identify people who have experienced a forced marriage, together with age, gender, background. There were around 50 cases during the period January to October 2006.

16. Birmingham Women's Aid

Records are kept of users of the service, but these would not identify people who have experienced a forced marriage.

The organisation requested not to be contacted again on this point, nor to be assumed to endorse this report's recommendations or outcomes.

Potential future sources of data

1. Data on school registrations/de-registrations

It could be useful to look (in target areas) at the numbers of pupils coming off the school rolls each term or school year, so school registrations and de-registrations are a possible source, although often pupils will not be reported as de-registering, they simply disappear.

2. UK Visas - Visa application form VAF2 (applications for settlement visas).

Data variables collected from applications made using this form include nationality, date of birth, sex and passport number. One category is 'Reluctant sponsor'. Case files are destroyed after 5 years, unless there is an ongoing investigation, but statistics are kept on the main variables. On the UK Visas database, it is possible to do a search by sponsor or by applicant. There are Home Office generated numbers in CID, but the FMU has no access to this system. Information is exchanged between the two by email.

The data query formats could be rewritten/reprogrammed in order to extract more useful information from the database. Addition of a 'forced marriage' flag could allow better exploitation of the data, although this would not overcome the inconsistencies in the system. Once the IT team has worked on it, it should be possible to produce tabulations including, for example, the following data variables (in addition to 'forced marriage'):

- 'nationality'
- 'date of birth'
- 'sex'
- 'Reluctant sponsor'

Entry clearance officers in Consular Offices might be able to report on the number of visa issuances that have taken place and how numbers/patterns have changed (or not) since the change in the age rule. Statistics could probably be produced at post and if the date of application is just after the implementation of the change in rules, there is a potential wealth of information available from this source. The Consular Immigration Link Team in Islamabad checks date of birth. It might be possible to see, for example, how many applications were delayed from the ages of 16-18 to 18 plus two months.

3. UK Human Trafficking Centre <http://www.ukhtc.org/>

The remit of the UKHTC includes forced marriages, but it is too soon to know whether or not any data collection activities will be carried out on the subject.

Comparison with other European Union Member States

The European Migration Network <http://www.european-migration-network.org/>

Preliminary enquiries made through the European Migration Network indicate that some statistics are available in the Netherlands, Denmark and possibly Germany (police statistics). The National Contact Points of the EMN might be potential future sources of information on forced marriages in the EU, but there are no sources currently exploited which could produce comparable cross-national datasets.

Appendix Four

Methodology

Composition of the research team

The research team consisted of women, was multi-cultural and multi-lingual and included a variety of professional and academic disciplines. This meant that we had a range of 'cultural resources' within the team, which contributed greatly to the study. One team member was able to read the relevant Danish literature. Several of the research team members were South Asian from Muslim, Hindu and Sikh backgrounds and this factor brought a high level of awareness of the interplay between gender and 'race'/culture. Additionally, all members of the research team had previously worked on issues of violence against women in a range of minoritised communities. Networks created in previous work facilitated access to stakeholders and community groups. We also had the possibility of including a male researcher, but this did not become necessary.

Debates in relation to 'cultural matching' in qualitative research lean towards the view that similarities between researcher and researched contribute to quicker rapport and trust being established, a more accurate interpretation of participant accounts and a greater attention paid to power relations than in 'unmatched' researcher – researched relationships (Henwood, Griffin, and Phoenix, 1998; Kitzinger and Wilkinson, 1996). By contrast, our previous work has also indicated concerns about safety of participants where interviewers and respondents are from similar communities (Hester et al., 2003). Whilst we would argue that having a strong 'Asian' presence on the team had beneficial impacts, particularly in relation to women's organisations and survivors, it is worth noting that 'matching' remains a problematic concept. Even with the same ethnicity and gender, the variables between any two individuals can be so great (such as age, level of education, class, marital status) as to make matching rather elusive. Further, as the study involved interacting with a wide range of stakeholders, including those who were from minoritised groups other than South Asian, and included stakeholders who were relationally in more dominant positions to the researchers, a different set of possible dynamics are equally amenable to analysis. It is beyond the scope of the present report to discuss these further, but we include this brief discussion to highlight our engagement with similarity and difference throughout the research project.

Methods

Stakeholder Interviews (phases one and two)

In total 45 interviews were conducted. Of these 23 were conducted in phase one (acting as a pilot) and the remainder were carried out in phase two (see Appendix One for a list of who was interviewed). Where organisations did not wish their specific name to be cited, a more generic descriptor, as suggested by the stakeholder, has been used. In terms of sampling, the decision was made to include some similar organisations across the three case-study areas (such as the police, women's aid organisations, larger community and voluntary organisations, refugee organisations), but also leaving flexibility to respond to the specifics of each of the case study areas.

A combination of telephone and face-to-face interviews were conducted with participants. A semi structured interview schedule was used following a similar structure to the familiarisation visit schedule (see Appendix Two). The interview asked about the organisation's work on forced marriages; the communities that in their view experience forced marriage; the impact of the proposed increase in minimum age; the potential risks of the legislation; and potential safeguards against the risks and their views on other options aimed at preventing forced marriages (other than the proposed legislative change). Detailed notes were compiled from the interviews and where requested these were sent to participants for verification and amendments. All 45 organisations interviewed were offered the notes, and these were taken up in 40 cases, and amendments were requested and made in some.

Stakeholders were approached initially by a letter detailing the terms of the research. They were then contacted by telephone or email to ascertain whether they had received the letter and whether or not they consented to participate in the research. Where consent was given,

the interview schedule was sent to the participants. Stakeholders were also asked whether they could identify and/or share datasets or documentation that could potentially be useful for the study, and to identify other agencies or individuals (particularly survivors) who could also contribute to the study.

Database Exploration (phases one and two)

As part of the familiarisation and stakeholder interviews, agencies were also asked to provide preliminary information regarding data being collected by their organisation on forced marriages. The aim was to identify existing and potential sources, other than the Central Reference System (CRS), of information and statistical data relating to forced marriages and to assess their potential use in identifying the impact of the raising of the minimum age. Letters requesting interviews about their databases were sent to the officials and organisations identified in phases one and two as potentially useful sources. In phase two, the research team followed up the information gathered initially, and detailed interviews were carried out with 28 government departments, statutory and voluntary sector agencies about the scope, coverage, content and accessibility of these databases. A questionnaire (see Appendix Two) was used in email, telephone and face-to-face interviews to collect detailed information on the structure and content of the relevant databases.

As awareness of research governance has grown over recent years, we anticipated that database managers would be reluctant to provide the research team with access to entire databases. Even if dates of birth are removed, data can rarely be said to be 'truly anonymous'. We had planned to start negotiating access to databases in phase one in case they were needed for later stages. However, this proved unnecessary as none of the sources were able to provide detailed or robust data on forced marriage.

Despite the lack of adequate sources for statistical analysis, we were able to carry out a general scoping exercise of available data, and to provide recommendations for further developments and possible impact measures (see Appendix Three). For the purposes of clarity and comparability we prepared 'pen pictures' of each database and then provided a comparative analysis. Included in the 'pen pictures' is information about the databases: scope (what are the criteria for inclusion in the database? How many records and fields are included?); properties (what format is the database in? How frequently is it updated?); context (When was the database created? What is the purpose of the database?); and any previous analysis (has the database been analysed for other purposes?).

Survivor Interviews (phases one and two)

In total, 38 interviews with victims/survivors of forced marriages were conducted concurrently with the stakeholder interviews. Eight of these were in phase one and the remaining 30 in phase two. Within the timescale of the project and for a qualitative study, this was a major accomplishment with such a hard to reach group. (See Appendix One, tables A1.1 to A1.6 for demographics and status of interview participants)

The research team had prior experience in carrying out such interviews, and in dealing with the potential risks and problems. Some of the difficulties we anticipated included: respondents fearing isolation or ostracisation from the community for participating; confidentiality and trust issues; periods of religious and community significance when interviews may be difficult to organize; issues of conducting interviews with men on intimate relations and the difficulties of getting men to articulate 'potentially sexist inclinations' including admitting to violence against women (Derne, 1999). While some studies focus on the need to ethnically match interviewer and interviewee in research on minority communities (Beishon et al., 1998), we have found that some South Asian women for example may not want to speak to members of their community/country for fear that their anonymity is compromised due to the overlapping of networks in minoritised communities (Chantler et al., 2001; Hester et al., 2003; Gangoli et al., 2005). Non-minoritised researchers were also a part of the research team, who were available to conduct interviews where women felt uncomfortable talking to a researcher from their own community. However, no concerns were raised by participants in phase one interviews about 'similarity' and there were sufficient differences within the research team (different religious and language backgrounds and different geographical locations) to ensure that there was sufficient 'difference' and anonymity where this was required. We also had the possibility of including a male researcher, but this did not become necessary. The interviews with victims were based on protocols that were already developed by the team in different

research projects on forced marriage and domestic violence among minoritised communities (Batsleer et al., 2002; Gangoli et al., 2006; Gangoli et al., 2005; Wigglesworth et al., 2003; Chantler et al., 2001); domestic violence among young people (Hester and Gangoli, 2005; McCarry, 2005) and same sex relationships (Donovan and Hester, 2007).

Survivor interviews - sampling

We used purposive sampling, involving networking and snowballing, to develop the sample. This was the most appropriate approach as the aim was to access individuals who had been involved in a forced marriage. In line with the definitional problems identified, particularly around when an activity/process can be counted as a forced marriage, it was also legitimate to use an understanding of forced marriage which included people who had come under substantial pressure to marry, but who in the end were able to extricate themselves from the actual marriage.

The wide range of organisations participating in the familiarisation and stakeholder interviews, and other organisations that were contacted as part of that process, were asked if they could facilitate access to survivors. Our original hope had been that these organisations might refer potential participants to us. In the event, it was only certain types of organisations that were able to put us in touch with survivors: specifically women's aid organisations and South Asian women's groups¹⁸. This, together with the construction of forced marriage as an issue occurring only in South Asian communities, and with the demographic of minority communities in the three case-study areas, inevitably meant that most of the survivors interviewed were South Asian. In addition, an advertisement was placed in the Women's Aid bulletin (which interestingly also yielded South Asian participants) and informal snowballing approaches were also used.

Our decision to contact victims/survivors largely via agencies was not just one of convenience. There was an ethical concern that survivors should have access to support agencies during the research process should the need arise, and that this support would be best offered by an agency that the survivor trusted and had a prior relationship with. This was negotiated with the agencies at an early stage.

Interviews with young people who may have already been sent abroad to marry or to wait abroad until they were married were difficult to organise due to: a) difficulty in developing sufficient networks abroad within the time frame and budget for this study; b) ethical concerns – it may well be inappropriate to make telephone contact with someone abroad who is in the middle of a forced marriage; c) safety issues for the victim/survivor.

Survivors - recruitment process

Once an organisation had identified a potential participant, they approached the individual; to discuss participation in the research. Organisations were given a contact sheet as well as the interview schedule to pass on, so that potential participants had a clear idea of the study. These documents were in English only on the understanding that it would be translated into a different language where required, or that the worker from the referring organisation would offer a verbal discussion in the participant's language. At this stage, where there was initial agreement to participate, most participants were happy for their contact details to be given to a named researcher. In the remainder of the cases the worker from the agency set up the interview.

Prior to the interview, and together with the participant, specific requirements were sorted out such as the need for an interpreter, child-care requirements, safe location for the interview, transport arrangements and any further discussion about the study. Once the participants felt they had sufficient information (and this was checked again at the start of the interview), and were assured that the interview would be conducted safely, consent forms were filled in and signed by both parties, and also by the interpreter where one was used.

Survivors - interview process

Interviews lasted between 45 minutes and two hours and were based on a semi structured interview schedule (see Appendix Two). Questions were open ended, and asked about

¹⁸ This may also indicate that women's aid organisations and South Asian women's organisations are a crucial form of support to women who have experienced or are experiencing forced marriage.

circumstances leading to marriage, expectations of marriage and how much choice was involved, views about the proposed legislation and potential benefits and risks of raising the age as well as their views on what would increase/decrease the likelihood of forced marriages taking place. Where permission was given (in the majority of interviews), interviews were taped and transcribed. Participants were also asked if they would like a copy of the transcript or a copy of the tape (where this was preferred) to ensure that they were satisfied about the material which was to be included for analysis. Where permission was not given or where the recording equipment was faulty, detailed notes were taken and again participants were offered a copy of the notes. Only one of the women interviewed by the Manchester team and two interviewed by the Bristol team wanted to see the transcript, and suggested minor amendments. Contact details, tapes and transcripts were secured in locked filing cabinets and password secured databases at the universities. In Manchester 14 interviews were conducted in English, two in Urdu (with interpreter), one in French (with interpreter) and one was conducted in a mixture of English and Urdu (no interpreter). In Birmingham, 3 interviews were conducted in English. With regard to interviews conducted by the Bristol team, 14 interviews were conducted in English, 1 in Urdu (translated by interviewer), and 2 in Bengali (with interpreter).

Survivor interviews - safety for researchers

From undertaking previous work of this nature, we were well aware of the risks posed to researchers (and interpreters) of their involvement in the project. Interviews were conducted in a safe space for both participants and researchers. Individual researchers informed a colleague when and where they were conducting the interview and made contact with the colleague once the interview was completed. There is also a significant emotional component to safety and we took these equally seriously. Less discussed is the impact on researchers of listening to and engaging with distressing stories. Emotional support via mentors (already part of the university systems at Bristol and Manchester) and where necessary, access to counselling was key to ensuring the emotional well-being of the research team. This has been an important element in some of our previous work on domestic violence and minoritisation work (Batsleer et al., 2002, see Burman and Chantler, 2004 for an analysis of the emotions generated through the research process).

Mapping survey (phase two)

Organisations mapped

Manchester

In Manchester a total of 68 organisations/groups were contacted. The majority of these were selected from the 2005-2006 Directory of Ethnic Minority Organisations produced by Manchester City Council; the remaining organisations/groups were selected as a result of previously established contacts and also from suggestions from other agencies.

Our original sample of 35 organisations had to be expanded considerably due to the high rate of non-participation. The final sample of 68 organisations/groups consisted of two statutory organisations and sixty-six organisations/groups which could be classed as voluntary or community based. The organisations/groups were of varying sizes, ranging from national organisations which had a head office based in the Manchester area to much smaller groups that were run by volunteers. The selected organisations/groups represented and worked with a wide range of communities, e.g. South Asian, Jewish, African, Chinese, lesbian/gay.

From contact with the 68 organisations, 25 interviews were conducted. These interviews represented 26 organisations (one of the interviews was conducted with someone who did volunteer work for two of the organisations in the sample and one questionnaire was lost in transit).

The remaining 42 organisations/groups were unable to take part in the mapping survey for a variety of reasons.

Table A4.8: Reasons for non-participation - Manchester

Out of date Contact details	7
Letter returned	2
Unable to establish contact With relevant person	18
Time constraints	5
forced marriage not relevant	4
Mitigating circumstances	6
Total	42

For seven organisations/groups the contact details were out of date, so for example the phone number was no longer active or the organisation was no longer located at the given address.

One organisation returned the letter inviting them to participate in the study. It is unknown whether the letter was returned due to re-location of organisation, or the closure of the organisation, or some other reason.

The main reason why a large number (18) of the selected organisations were unable to be interviewed for the mapping survey was because the researcher was unable to establish contact with the appropriate person (despite numerous attempts) within the timeframe of the project. This was either because the appropriate contact was not available when calls were made or simply because no response to the initial invitation was ever received.

Upon contact nine of the organisations/groups stated that they were unable or did not wish to be involved in the study. Five organisations/groups stated that time constraints of their work prevented them from becoming involved in the study. For four organisations, the contact person felt that the study was not relevant to them or the communities within which they worked, as they reported that forced marriage was not an issue for their communities.

The remaining six organisations/groups that were contacted gave a positive response to the questionnaire stating their wish to be involved. However mitigating circumstances (e.g. person unavailable at agreed time due to workload, named person going on maternity leave) meant that the interviews were never completed.

Tower Hamlets and Birmingham

42 agencies were contacted in Tower Hamlets, of which interviews were conducted with 30 organisations. 33 organisations were contacted in Birmingham, of which interviews were conducted with 25. The mechanisms for drawing up the sample were similar to those used in Manchester, although it proved easier to obtain the Tower Hamlets and Birmingham samples than that in Manchester. The reasons for non response in Tower Hamlets and Birmingham were again similar to Manchester and included the following:

Table A4.9: Reasons for non-participation – Tower Hamlets and Birmingham

Out of date Contact details	4
Unable to establish contact With relevant person	1
Time constraints	2
Forced marriage not relevant	3
No reason given for refusal	5
No response	5
Total	20

One of the research questions was concerned with exploring the range of communities in which forced marriages might occur. It was decided to carry out a mapping survey of organisations in the three locations to ascertain the extent to which different organisations/agencies were working with individuals experiencing forced marriage, and to obtain wider views regarding the research questions. The possibility of carrying out a questionnaire with people who had recently been granted leave to enter on a marriage visa was also considered. However, it was decided that the mapping survey was a better approach because it would be less intrusive to participants, less likely to aggravate any existing domestic violence, and avoided individualisation of forced marriages by engaging at a community level. It had the added advantage of contributing to heightening awareness of forced marriage.

The mapping survey method enabled access to a far wider range of community organisations than had been possible through the stakeholder interviews, from diverse BME communities, many of which were not frequently involved in consultations. This approach helped to broaden the base of the study by seeking the views of forced marriage of smaller minority organisations themselves. Our aim was to conduct questionnaire telephone interviews with between 75 to 100 organisations across the three case study areas. A structured questionnaire was used (see Appendix Two). The data was loaded into an SPSS database for analysis involving largely frequencies and cross-tabulations.

Mapping survey - sampling

In order to ensure diversity in terms of BME communities the sampling concentrated on developing a heterogeneous sample. The survivor interviews highlighted issues concerning homosexuality as a route into forced marriage and as a consequence organisations whose remit was to work with gay men or lesbians were also included. In all three case study areas, directories of voluntary and community groups compiled by an umbrella organisation either from the voluntary sector or relevant local authority were used to identify potential relevant organisations. Some of the organisations within these listings had already been interviewed as part of the stakeholder interviews and so these were excluded from the mapping survey.

Altogether 143 agencies were contacted, and interviews conducted with 79 (55.2%). Of the 64 agencies that did not respond, some had the wrong addresses listed, some no longer existed, some refused to participate because they did not think that forced marriage was an issue in their community, and others gave lack of time or the relevant person not being available to speak as the reason not to participate (see Appendix One, tables A1.8 and A1.9). Of the agencies taking part the vast majority were from the voluntary sector (n=56, 71.8%), with significant representation from the statutory sector (n=13, 16.7%) (see Appendix One, table A1.7). The mapping survey was also used to identify further key stakeholders, who were then included in the stakeholder interview sample.

Mapping survey - process

Organisations were initially contacted by letter which explained the study and included the questionnaire. Participants were asked to contact the research team via email, telephone or letter by a certain date if they did not wish to participate. No refusals were received by the due date and researchers began contacting the organisations by telephone to arrange a suitable time to conduct the telephone questionnaire. There were three key reasons for the choice of a telephone questionnaire rather than a postal questionnaire: i) a higher response rate was more likely; ii) any questions that participants may wished to raise were more easily cleared up by telephone contact and iii) if the organisation was able to facilitate contact with potential victims, establishing a relationship with the project via telephone (rather than the anonymity of the postal questionnaire) was likely to be preferable.

Focus Groups (phase two)

Focus groups were thought to be the most appropriate method of obtaining in depth information regarding the practice and perceptions of forced marriage from a wider range of communities than might be obtained via a survey. Focus groups enable participants to discuss the issues more fully, and to respond to each other's comments, thus providing rich data.

Focus group - sampling

The sampling for focus groups was influenced by the previous elements of the research as follows: First, there was a gap in terms of ages covered and we wanted to rectify this in the focus groups. In particular we wanted to elicit the views of younger people (16 -18 years) as well as those of older generations (parents of young people and grandparents). Our second criterion was based on the need for diversity. As South Asian communities had featured quite substantially in the rest of the study, we needed to maintain this strand, but also engage with other communities who had said that forced marriages occurred in their communities, or where the literature appeared to identify communities (other than South Asian) where forced marriage occurred. Third, homosexuality had emerged as a trigger into forced marriage and it was therefore important to include at least one focus group around this issue. Fourth, issues of asylum and immigration had also been dominant in survivor accounts and so merited a focus group. Particular difficulties associated with conducting a focus group with individuals who had knowledge or experience of asylum and immigration include the transient nature of this group, and trust issues involved especially in relation to a Home Office funded study. In the event it did not prove possible to convene such a group due to the additional time required to build appropriate networks for such a focus group. We would also have liked to include a wider range of communities including Orthodox Jewish communities, travelling communities and more African communities, but time and budget constraints did not allow for this.

In terms of gender, research around domestic violence (of which forced marriage is a specific form) has traditionally focussed on victims. Latterly there has also been a shift to include perpetrators. Victim focussed research in general domestic violence studies (such as the British Crime Survey) and in forced marriage studies, unequivocally demonstrates that women are more likely to be victims than men (FCO, 2004). FCO (2004) suggests there is evidence that 15 per cent of victims of forced marriage are male. Thus, whilst the aim of the focus groups was to gain impressions more widely, engaging largely with women was thought to be extremely valuable in highlighting issues, which they or other female friends/relatives may experience. It was therefore legitimate to include focus groups largely composed of women. In addition, we also facilitated two male only focus groups, involving altogether 15 men (15% of focus group participants). This gender ratio is in keeping with FCO estimates of male victims of forced marriage.

In total, 15 focus groups were carried out with 97 individuals (82 women and 15 men) from South Asian, Chinese, North African, Middle Eastern and Irish communities. The groups included a range of religious communities: Hindu, Christian, Sikh and Muslim, with a minority of respondents identifying themselves as atheists or non believers. Also included was one lesbian group. Ages ranged from 15 to 60 and participants were also from different social classes. Where respondents were not British, they had a variety of immigration statuses, including indefinite leave to remain, refugee, work permit, dependent visa and student visa. Demographic information was obtained via a voluntary self-completed questionnaire at the beginning of the focus group.

Focus groups - recruitment

Based on the criteria above, researchers used a combination of strategies to create potential focus groups. This included contact with relevant minority organisations, developing the interest generated in the study as a result of the stakeholder interviews or mapping survey, and working with sixth form colleges. Two of the focus groups were created via snowballing (South Asian young men's group and Lesbian Group). The young people's Chinese focus group was formed by sending an email outlining the study to all students at the local university, and inviting people originally from mainland China to contact one of the researchers. More women than men came forward through this process. As mixed gender focus groups would not have been appropriate and there were insufficient numbers to run a male group, a women only group was facilitated. Protocols for recruitment were standardised as far as possible, bearing in mind the need to respond to specific groups differently where required. A standard leaflet outlining the study was given to all potential participants at the recruitment stage. The venues for the focus groups were chosen to ensure safety and comfort for those taking part, for instance using women only buildings or rooms and organising groups at a time to suit participants.

Focus groups - vignettes

Vignettes (case-studies) are frequently used in focus groups and often act as aids to the

discussion. They enable participants to have a discussion about the salient issues without having to reveal any personal information. As our focus groups were very diverse, both culturally and linguistically, we decided that it would be inappropriate to develop one vignette to use across all groups. Attention to cultural specificity was crucial if the vignettes were to have any meaning or resonance with participants. The vignettes were compiled using composites from other parts of the study as this would give the vignettes authenticity. Where the vignette was to be used with a focus group culturally very different to the researchers, to maintain authenticity, the vignettes were constructed in discussion with members of the relevant communities. All together 12 vignettes were used, which centred around a common theme but varied to reflect specific community experiences (see Appendix Two for vignettes).

In addition to the vignettes, focus group members were also asked about specific questions pertaining to the research questions relating to raising the age of entry (see Appendix Two for schedule).

Focus groups - group process

Food and refreshments were organised for participants, which helped to create a welcoming and friendly atmosphere. At the beginning of the group, the researchers outlined the research study and responded to any clarification questions that participants wanted to ask. Consent forms were signed and these forms included a section on demographic information which participants were asked to complete. The structure and format of the group was then discussed. Firstly, ground rules were established, such as confidentiality, ensuring that space was given to all to participate, being respectful of others even when disagreeing with them and so on. Following this the vignettes were used which acted as an ice breaker and also led into a more general discussion about forced marriages in the context of their communities. Lastly, specific questions were asked of all groups about the risks and benefits of increasing the age of sponsorship and entry and the factors perceived as contributing to a reduction or increase in forced marriages. The group facilitator ensured that all group members were able to participate, thus avoiding the problem of only engaging with the more dominant group members.

The focus group discussions were taped and transcribed in all but 3 cases, where the respondents refused permission to tape the interview. Instead detailed notes were taken. Interpreters were used in 3 groups, that is, the older women's Chinese group, older women Bangladeshi group and the Kurdish women's group. The rest of the focus groups were conducted in English.

Analysis

The material from familiarisation visit interviews, stakeholder and survivor interviews as well as focus groups were analysed using a thematic approach. The first stage of the analysis involved a careful reading of the transcripts or notes of the interviews. Summaries were written for interviews, either from detailed notes or from transcriptions, and used to identify key themes (Banister et al., 1994). From this a thematic framework was developed for categories that reflected the original research questions as well as additional themes which emerged from the transcripts. From an ethical point of view, it is essential to include key themes and narratives arising from the interviews which may not appear to be immediately related to the more tightly defined research questions. This is particularly the case in survivor interviews where survivors may well have a different perspective of the issues based on their own experiences. Indeed many of the survivor accounts challenge the focus of forced marriage interventions as primarily centred on entry into marriage and strongly indicate the need to conceptualise forced marriages as also including what happens during the course of the marriage and their struggles to leave the forced marriage. Further, the inclusion of additional themes also aligns with the generally accepted feature of qualitative research of 'giving voice', particularly to those in marginalised positions and to those for whom any proposed intervention may impact, or to those for whom the proposed changes may have led to different outcomes at the time when their own forced marriages occurred.

On this basis (i.e. original research questions plus additional themes arising), framework grids were drawn up to aid the analysis (Ritchie & Lewis, 2003). Grids consisted of data extracted manually and summarised according to the four key research questions together with other salient aspects of the research. For example, for the survivor interviews, the main grid

included the four research questions as well as other issues e.g. age at which the individual was married, country in which marriage took place, current age, number of children, nationality or immigration status, ethnicity, religion, sexuality issues and a column for any other issues. This form of data reduction was used to ensure that all participants were included in the analysis. It also allowed quantification of some of the responses, and an easily accessible and transparent tool with which to look at similarities and differences between participants. As interview data was analysed, themes emerging were compared to those for others in their group and similarities and differences identified. Each cluster of interviews were then analysed in relation to other clusters, drawing out parallels and contrasts. The analysis is in this sense both interpretative and also presents verbatim examples from participants to illustrate salient points.

Verbatim quotes are recognised as being a marker of quality in qualitative research (Spencer et al, 2003), yet explanations of the process of their selection is uncommon in qualitative research (Corden and Sainsbury, 2006). The criteria that were used to select quotes included those quotes that assist the reader to deepen their understanding of the issues, to 'give voice', to provide evidence for the claims being made and, as an explanation or illustration of how participants link issues together. In this study, this is particularly noticeable for example in how survivors link the issue of bride price as constitutive of culture, gender and poverty.

In this study, once the grids (as described above) were compiled, quotes from all participants (from a particular group e.g. stakeholders, survivors, focus groups, familiarisation visits) relating to that particular theme were grouped together. A selection then had to be made (owing to space constraints) about which quotes to include in the report. To avoid focussing on only a few accounts, a system of coding was devised as a safeguard against this danger. For familiarisation and stakeholder interviews, this was the name of their organisation or an alternative descriptor where the agency did not wish to be identified. For the survivor interviews, the coding process included the location of where the interview had taken place (Manchester (M), Birmingham (B) or Tower Hamlets (TH), a chronological number relating to when they were interviewed and their gender). Other than acting as a safeguard against focussing on only a few accounts, this system of coding also provided the necessary anonymity to participants. Many were fearful of being identified and therefore ethnicity, religion, class or any other information which may jeopardise the safety or security of participants was not considered suitable to be directly connected to their quotes. Additionally, the focus of the survivor interviews was not to explore differences in experiences of forced marriage across ethnicity, class or sexual orientation and it is therefore legitimate to exclude these markers from the quotes. For this reason, standard classification of ethnicity groups (as provided in the census surveys) was not used; instead we preferred a self-identification system. This contributed to a range of labels used e.g. British Sikh, British Asian, name of country of origin etc.

In order that the reader can assess for themselves the frequency or urgency¹⁹ of a particular theme, wherever feasible we have provided the number of participants who identified this as an issue and then selected quotes on the basis of the criteria mentioned above. It should also be noted that three members of the research team were involved in reading transcripts, writing summaries and compiling the grids and quotes. This means that there was a high level of reliability as different readers were in agreement about the key issues.

¹⁹ Urgency indicates that even where a small number of participants articulate a particular issue it is just as worthy of consideration as more common themes.

Appendix Five

Communities in which forced marriages occurs

Table A5.1: Mapping survey – organisations: communities with whom they work and frequency of forced marriage cases per annum

Main community with whom they work*		How common is forced marriage?						How many cases per year [n]		
		<i>Very common</i>		<i>Sometimes occurs</i>		<i>Don't Know/ N/A</i>		<10	10-50	50-75
		<i>N</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>%</i>			
<i>South Asian</i>	n=53	14	26.4	30	56.6	9	17.0	14	9	3
<i>Somali</i>	n=30	9	30.0	10	33.3	11	36.6	4	6	2
<i>Other African</i>	n=25	9	36.0	9	36.6	7	28.0	6	6	2
<i>Chinese</i>	n=11	5	45.5	3	27.3	3	27.3	1	3	1
<i>Middle Eastern</i>	n=22	5	22.7	11	50.0	6	27.3	3	6	1
<i>Latin American</i>	n=9	4	44.4	3	33.3	2	22.2	1	3	1
<i>Other communities</i>	n=22	6	27.3	10	45.5	6	27.3	2	6	1

*May work with more than one community, therefore total does not add up to 79

Table A5.2: Mapping survey – communities worked with by agencies/ organisations

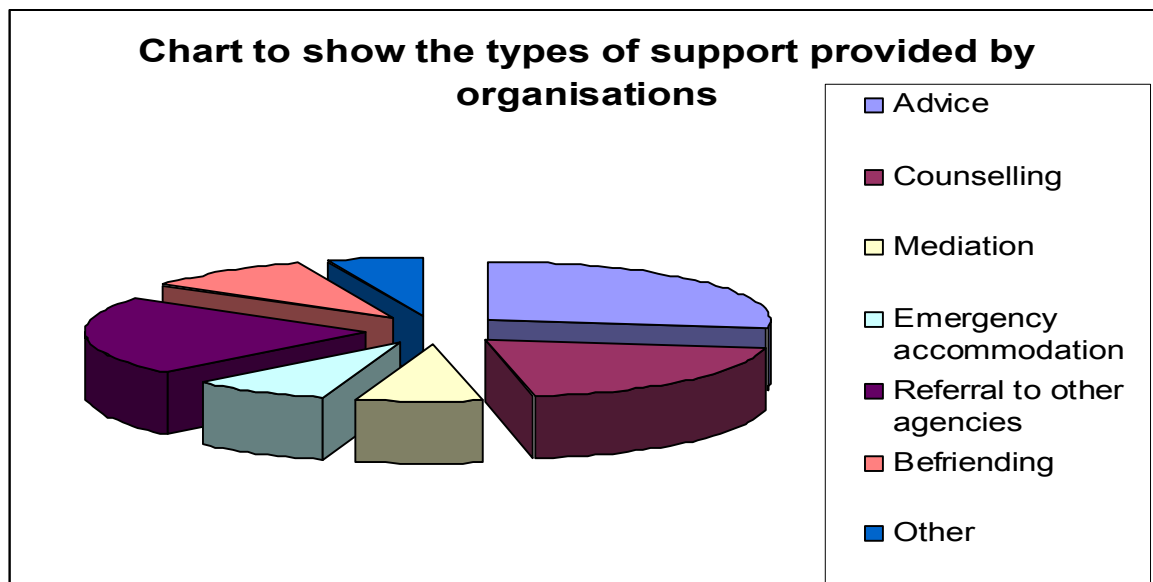
Main community with whom work		Who is supported regarding forced marriage?					
		<i>Victims</i>		<i>Victims & families</i>		<i>No support</i>	
		<i>N</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>%</i>
<i>South Asian</i>	n=53	19	35.8%	12	22.6	17	32.1
<i>Somali</i>	n=30	10	33.3	5	16.7	9	30.0
<i>Other African</i>	n=25	13	52.0	4	16.0	7	28.0
<i>Chinese</i>	n=11	4	40.9	2	18.2	4	36.4
<i>Middle Eastern</i>	n=22	9	40.9	4	18.2	8	36.4
<i>Latin American</i>	n=9	4	44.4	3	33.3	2	22.2
<i>Other communities</i>	n=22	8	36.4	6	27.3	5	22.7

Appendix Six

Type of support provided by agencies

Table A6.1: Mapping survey – type of support provided

Type of support	N	%
Advice	34	43.0
Counselling	25	31.6
Mediation	9	11.4
Emergency accommodation	10	12.7
Referral to other agencies	28	35.4
Befriending	12	15.2
Other	7	8.9
Total	79	



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