

APPENDIX C

Notes on General Comments provided in evidence

Forced marriage is a violation of human rights and a form of child/adult/domestic abuse and should be treated as such. Therefore, ignoring the needs of victims is not an option. Cases should be tackled regardless of cultural sensitivities using existing structures, policies and procedures designed to safeguard children, vulnerable adults and victims of domestic violence.

Existing strategic bodies should ensure that their member agencies work effectively using agreed policies and procedures to tackle this issue. This includes Local Councils, Local Strategic Partnerships, Local Safeguarding Children Boards, Children's Trusts, Multi-agency Risk Assessment Conferences, Learning Disability Partnership Boards, Local Criminal Justice Boards, Local Family Justice Councils and Multi-Agency Adult Protection Management Committees.

What measures are in place to meet these requirements and are they effective?

Liz Rowbotham - NHS Leicestershire County & Rutland

No issues on forced marriage had arisen in the County from a NHS perspective. Staff would become aware of problems through the safeguarding process. Staff are aware of problem and health professionals would report if there were any emotional problems identified in patients that might relate to coercion. Any problems are probably best examined on a combined City and County basis.

It was also suggested that we should talk to some representative teachers.

Detective Inspector Peter Williams, Domestic Abuse and Safeguarding Adults Coordinator, Leicestershire Constabulary.

The Association of Chief Police Officers (ACPO) set out a policy 3 years ago on Honour Based Violence and Forced Marriage (HBV&FM). It aims to work with partner organisation in developing its strategy and training. He was satisfied that the Leicestershire Constabulary had made comprehensive efforts and put policies in place dealing with these issues. He is satisfied that they are embedded as far as possible within the culture, taking into account human fallibility, using experienced police, proper recording procedures and a policy of taking positive action to identify and deal with problem areas.

Police statistics are very reliable but only provide data where an incident has been reported. There are certainly more incidents than reported but there are no reliable statistics that can be used to reliably estimate the size of the problem.

The Leicestershire Multi-Agency Domestic Abuse Strategy 2010-2013 (MARIC) is in place and 30% of reported cases related to HBV&FM (with particularly high levels within the city). The problem arises in several communities with an "Honour Based Culture" (HBC), including those originating from South India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, the Punjab, Somalia, and Eastern Europe together with some parts of the travelling community. Forced marriage can involve young people with mental/physical disabilities and learning problems together with young lesbians and gays in particular. (1 in 8 of reports relating to HBV&FM safeguarding of adults involves people with learning difficulties). Leicestershire Constabulary worked with other bodies, in particular the Prince's Trust, to produce a DVD looking at forced marriage issues and honour based violence through the eyes of young people. The DVD was produced, filmed and edited by young people from Leicestershire in 2009 and won a Balfour Beatty community impact award. It has been used nationally and been viewed by more than 10,000 police officers. It is not police focussed and can be used with any group to highlight the problems associated with HBV&FM.

In some cases the police have found that HBC communities have used the system to get around the immigration controls and are arranging forced marriages in return for payment to allow the foreign partner to gain entry to the UK.

A problem with some of the civilian agencies is that they normally involve parents at the outset if there is a problem with a child. In the case of HBV&FM they have to appreciate that this is the last, rather than the first thing, that should be done. Changing the culture can be challenging.

Natasha Rattu, Karma Nirvana, Leeds

The majority of calls to Karma Nirvana (KN) come from GCSE pupils before the summer holidays. Probably the most effective way of addressing the problem is to provide more support for teachers in helping them identify children at risk. It needs to be stressed to schools and teachers that Honour Based Violence and Forced Marriage (HBV&FM) relating to their pupils is a child protection issue. This is reinforced in the statutory Forced Marriage guidance: Education and the multi-agency statutory guidance: <http://www.fco.gov.uk/en/travel-and-living-abroad/when-things-go-wrong/forced-marriage/fmconsultation1>

The other area where progress can be made is in raising awareness of pupils in all schools about the issues. HBV&FM can be found in many cultures, regardless of religion. Shakespeare's "Romeo and Juliet" is based around HBV&FM, which can be used as a theme for discussing the issues and what is and what is not Honourable/Dishonourable behaviour. It can be incorporated in Personal Health and Social Education lessons and/or Citizenship.

No mainstream religion condones HBV&FM, it is a cultural issue where the Honour Based Culture (HBC) has a higher priority than the rules of the religion,

which in some cases are distorted to support HBC. KN deals with people from HBCs in the Middle East, East Africa, Northern areas of the Indian sub-continent and some states in southern India. About 15% of the calls received by KN are from males. Most of these relate to men in gay relationships or in an existing relationship which is not approved of by their family.

Walter McCulloch, Assistant Director for Children's Services
Chris Nerini, Head of Service, Extended Services and Family Support
Leicestershire County Council

The CYPS (Children & Young People's Service) within the County have taken a reactive stance to the issue of forced marriage (FM) whilst Leicestershire Constabulary have been proactive in addressing this matter. This accords with their respective roles and CYPS has always taken matters forward in accordance with laid down procedures when a report has been received from the Police.

There may be some work to be done in schools in raising awareness of the issue. It is believed that some schools put up posters relating to FM but no data on this is available. There has been one case so far where the FM Protection Orders might have been utilised. All procedures were correctly followed and in this case it was a single extended family rather than a community issue. The legal team had been consulted on a number of occasions but no FM Protection Orders have been issued by the County. The official statistics would seem to indicate that there is no major problem amongst the communities of Leicestershire, but this could be due to matters not being identified or reported. Training has been given and guidance on the standard procedures to be adopted are in place.

In the one case directly linked to a possible forced marriage, the situation was reported by pupils who are friends of the person identified as being at risk, although they did not come from the same cultural background.

Procedures appear to be working effectively. Working on a proactive basis in this area is difficult if there is no identified problem. Some more development work around the issue needs to be undertaken. CYPS are improving their liaison systems with the Police with regard to the categorisation of domestic violence. The volume of reports makes correct categorisation and prioritisation vital. Improvements in the system may make problems that may involve Honour Based Violence and Forced Marriage (HBV&FM) easier to identify. The Police in particular, recognise that we need to get "smarter" in using the reporting systems.