

This is a message sent by Caroline Murray, SMBC Domestic Abuse Co-ordinator
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Forced Marriage and Honour Based Abuse

While the majority of extended holidays or visits to family overseas are for valid reasons, schools are well placed to raise concerns and take action to prevent young people from being forced into marriage whilst on these extended visits to their parents' home country or that of extended family. The period approaching school holidays is especially key for schools.

The terms forced marriage and arranged marriage are often confused. In a forced marriage, at least one party does not give their consent and some element of duress, either physical, emotional or psychological, is involved. In an arranged marriage, both partners take a significant role in the proceedings and either party reserves the right to withdraw at any stage. There is little or no basis in any religion for forced marriage, however, confused or deliberately convoluted notions of religion and culture are often used to justify the practice. Honour based Abuse (HBA) is frequently connected to forced marriage.

All professionals working with children and young people, including schools and education professionals, have a legal obligation (section 175 of the Education Act 2002; section 47 of the Children Act 1989) to safeguard children, promote their welfare and protect them from harm. Part of this responsibility includes taking action to enable all children to have the best possible outcomes.

The NASUWT have released guidance for schools. The practice guidelines include content focused specifically on schools, colleges and universities that makes reference to the role that educational professionals should fulfil in relation to forced marriage. The NASUWT has produced this document to highlight the key issues related to forced marriage and to provide advice for school leaders and teachers, including those with designated responsibilities for child protection.