



WEST YORKSHIRE POLICE

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Bradford District

Our ref: FM/DCI Bickerdike

20 June 2018

Dear Head Teacher/Principal,

I am writing to you regarding a reminder of the Forced Marriage legislation that is particularly significant to Secondary Schools. On the 16th June 2014 legislation was introduced which criminalises forced marriage. The legislation provides an opportunity for the Police to take positive interventions to safeguard victims at risk of being forced into marriage and enforce the law where offences are disclosed.

Evidence shows that the issues of forced marriage affects certain sectors of the community, typically girls in the age range of 14–16 years old originating from Pakistan, India & Bangladesh (approx. 60% of the cases); together with a percentage of cases of children originating from the Middle-East and African countries.

Two previous Government Select Committee reports have provided detailed reports of the issues and have previously highlighted 15 areas of concern, one of which includes the West Yorkshire region. The profile of those at risk within the report confirms the above evidence.

As part of the Police's commitment to ensure the legislation is complied with, it is necessary to establish and identify those children who are at risk of forced marriage.

It is understandably the case that due to the age and ethnic background of those susceptible to this type of crime that school and education authorities are in a strong position to identify those most likely at risk.

A signal of this type of offence is the removal of victims from school and lengthy absence which is often unexplained. To manage the introduction of legislation I would respectfully request that as a secondary head of an education establishment; where victims of forced marriage are likely to originate, that you consider current attendance / absence and raise any concerns you have with the Bradford and District Children's Initial contact point Tel 01274 437500 this will be then referred to Child MASH (Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub) where a joint inter-agency S47 Strategy discussion will take place to what Safeguarding intervention is deemed appropriate.

Whilst the onus of investigation for criminal offences will remain with the Police I would appreciate co-operation from school in line with current child protection statutory responsibilities.

You may also refer to HM Government Multi agency practice Guidelines: Handling cases of Forced Marriage – this publication is available for download at www.official-documents.gov.uk

Yours sincerely,

Paula Bickerdike
Detective Chief Inspector
Safeguarding Investigations