

## ALL WALES PRACTICE GUIDE

Last updated: February 2021

# Safeguarding children from harmful practices related to tradition, culture, religion or superstition

*To be used in conjunction with the Wales Safeguarding Procedures*

## Who is this practice guide for?

This guide is primarily for practitioners working with children (up to the age of 18).

This includes those working in early years, social care, education, health, the police, youth offending and youth, community and family support services (including the third sector) and foster care and residential care.

## What is this guide for?

Safeguarding children is a responsibility shared by everyone in contact with children.

The Wales Safeguarding Procedures support individuals and agencies across Wales to understand their roles and responsibilities in keeping children and adults safe. They support a consistent approach to safeguarding practice and procedures.

This practice guide provides additional information about safeguarding children from harmful practices related to tradition, culture, religion or superstition. It should be used in conjunction with the Wales Safeguarding Procedures.

Effective safeguarding arrangements in every local authority area should be underpinned by two key principles:

- safeguarding is everyone's responsibility: for services to be effective each practitioner and organisation must play their full part both individually and in collaboration; **and**
- a child-centred approach: for services to be effective they should be based on a clear understanding of the personal outcomes for the child and what matters to them. The rights of the child should be central to the approach and their best interests should always be paramount.

There are some issues which are common across safeguarding practice guides and some which are specific to the safeguarding issue being considered:

- The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) guarantees every child the right to grow up healthy, happy and safe. This includes to be protected from harm and be appropriately supported to recover from abuse. Practitioners and professionals should adopt [A Children's Rights Approach](#) in line with the duty of due regard to the (UNCRC) and follow [National Participation Standards](#)
- Agencies must work together to provide a joined up response to safeguarding issues as set out in the Wales Safeguarding Procedures.
- There is a statutory Duty to Report Children at Risk on relevant partners under Section 130 of the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014. [Social Services and Well-being \(Wales\) Act 2014 Safeguarding Summary](#).
- Information sharing is central to good safeguarding practice. Practitioners must share information in accordance with data protection legislation. Data protection legislation allows for the sharing of information and should not be automatically used as a reason for not doing so. **One of the specific circumstances which provides for information sharing is in order to prevent abuse or serious harm to others.** When information is not shared in a timely and effective way, decisions about how to respond may be ill informed and this can lead to poor safeguarding practice and leave children at risk of harm.
- Our response to safeguarding issues should be proportionate, child centred and based on the individual needs and circumstances of the child. Children need to be meaningfully involved in the planning of their care and support.

- **Practitioners should familiarise themselves with the culture and beliefs of those families they work with.** Practitioners should not be afraid to ask about particular behaviours and the reasons for them in a sensitive manner and should never overlook potential harmful practices on the basis of cultural sensitivity.
- There are central and obvious concerns to be addressed in planning for the care and support needs of children with Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children (UASC) status. [Welsh Government Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children Guidance for Professionals](#) is available. However it is important to remember that practitioners must still consider specific safeguarding measures as part of their planning with and for the child. Where the age of a potential child victim is disputed agencies should continue to treat the individual as a child until age is established [Age Assessment of UASC](#).
- We know that sensory impaired and disabled children are at an increased risk of being abused compared with their non-disabled / non-sensory impaired peers. They are also less likely to receive the protection and support they need when they have been abused. Practitioners and professionals should explicitly recognise the increased vulnerability of sensory impaired and disabled children to abuse and neglect, as well as the barriers they may face, especially around communication and provide for any additional safeguards needed to protect them.
- All practitioners must be alert to the possibility of the child being at risk of harm regardless of the setting they are living in, whether in foster care, adoptive placements or a children's home. Children in placements or those who are adopted will have relationships that may include foster carers, adoptive parents, birth parents, siblings or other birth relatives. These relationships and any contact may be positive and welcomed or undesired and deemed a risk. Children's past experience of abuse and neglect may leave them at risk of having emotional, behavioural and mental health difficulties, which may continue to make them vulnerable.
- **Children should be seen and heard.** Evidence from Child Practice Reviews has highlighted the need for children to meet on their own with practitioners, away from parents and carers in an environment where they feel safe, so that the child can speak about the impact that the circumstances which have prompted safeguarding concerns are having on them. There are too many cases where the child was not seen or asked their views or feelings, or where this did not happen enough. Providing time and space to listen directly to children supports a child-centred system and promotes good safeguarding practice.<sup>1</sup>

- There is some evidence that the disclosure and the reporting of abuse, in particular child sexual abuse may be even more difficult for children and adults in some communities because of cultural barriers.<sup>2</sup>
- It is important to believe a child who tells you something that suggests that they may be at risk of abuse even if what they tell you appears to be far fetched. It is important that the information is reported as a safeguarding issue and that an opportunity is taken for the child to speak to a practitioner without the presence of family members. For a child who needs the support of an interpreter it is important that this is an independent interpreter and not a member of their family or community.

## Culture

When thinking about safeguarding children from abuse related to tradition, culture, religion or superstition, it is important to have some understanding of how culture and tradition influence specific behaviours and practices. Whether people live in established communities or are newly arrived in Wales, maintaining their home traditions, culture and religion is rightly important and families will often wish to pass these values onto their children. Within this context it should be remembered that child abuse is never acceptable in any community, in any culture, in any religion, under any circumstances.

The concept of 'honour' is a deeply held belief within many families and communities and those who are perceived to dishonour their family or community by their behaviour can be subject to abuse, emotional abuse and death.

These 'honour' codes are evident across countries, cultures and religions. The term 'honour based abuse' is contentious – there is no honour in the commission of murder, rape, kidnap and other violent acts, behaviour and conduct that make up 'abuse in the name of honour'. However, it has been recognised that the term is understood and used globally, including in conventions such as the United Nations Convention the Rights of the Child.

The International NCO Council on Violence against Children has published a report on [Violating Children's Rights: Harmful practices based on tradition, culture, religion or superstition](#) which provides more information.

## What is 'Honour' Based Abuse?

'Honour' crime involves abuse and/or violence, including murder, committed by people who want to defend the reputation of their family or community. It can also take the forms of intimidation, coercive control or blackmail. Honour killing is the murder of a person accused of "bringing shame" upon their family. Actions taken by family which may be believed by them to restore honour can include:

- Abduction or kidnapping
- Imprisonment or isolation
- Acid attacks
- Beatings and domestic servitude
- Forced marriage
- Female genital mutilation
- Mutilation/disfigurement
- Murder
- Controlling or coercive behaviour

Where the person who is subject to or at risk of 'Honour' Based Abuse is a child (under 18 years of age) they must be considered as a Child at Risk under the Social Service and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014.

## Why does it happen?

In many instances, the crimes are committed by family members against a female relative and this may include a girl under the age of 18 years. However, it is important to remember that while less common, males can also be victims and this may include a boy under the age of 18 years. Victims have been attacked or killed, suffer emotional or psychological abuse for behaviours which conflict with the family or community's expectations, for example:

- refusing to enter a marriage ( or committing adultery or seeking a divorce)
- refusing to be cut (FGM)
- being LGBT+
- being a victim of rape or sexual assault
- being in a relationship that displeased their relatives
- wearing makeup, possession of a mobile phone
- being seen talking to boys
- dressing 'inappropriately'
- aspirations for a career
- behaviour which is perceived to be too 'Westernised'

In cases of HBA concerning a child under the age of 18, consideration should be given as to whether it is safe to speak to the child's parents/carers. **Involving the family or community may increase the risk of significant harm to the child.** The family may deny the allegations and in some cases may also attempt to take the child out of the country.

## Forced Marriage

- Forced marriage is an unacceptable cultural practice; it is child abuse and a form of violence against women and girls. Forced marriage is illegal in the UK. For the purpose of the criminal law in England and Wales, forced marriage is one which occurs without the full and free consent of one or both parties.
- Forced marriage can involve both females and males being coerced into marriage. It affects children from the age of around 13 upwards, depending on the country and culture; approximately 20% of victims are male. People, including children under the age of 18 years, with learning difficulties can be particularly vulnerable to forced marriage.

- Forced marriage is a hugely under-reported crime and there is no authoritative estimate of the actual number of forced marriages in Wales, or the UK. However Forced Marriage Unit (FMU) statistics from a one year period identified that 30% of victims were under the age of 18, 16% being under 16.<sup>3</sup> One of the reasons for under-reporting is that victims of forced marriage are often reluctant to seek help for a number of reasons:
- Seeking help would break the 'honour' code, bringing shame on their family or community
- Victims do not want to criminalise their families
- Fear that it may make their situation worse through physical or emotional abuse
- Victims are isolated and do not know where to get help
- Forced marriage is a hidden crime, where families and communities collude, believing that they are upholding the cultural traditions and preserving family and community 'honour'. Families believe they are protecting their children from 'unsuitable' relationships or that they are building stronger families and preserving cultural or religious beliefs.

## **Some of the indicators related to risk of Forced Marriage for children**

This is not an exhaustive list but these are signs that practitioners should be aware of and together they may build a picture to suggest that a child is at risk.

### **Education:**

- Absence or sudden disappearance
- Request for extended leave of absence and failure to return from visits to country of origin
- Fear about forthcoming school holidays

- Surveillance by siblings or cousins at school
- Decline in behaviour, engagement, performance or punctuality
- Being withdrawn from school by those with parental responsibility
- Not allowed to attend extra-curricular activities
- Sudden announcement of engagement
- Prevented from going on to further/higher education

### **Family History:**

- Siblings forced to marry
- Early marriage of siblings
- Self-harm or suicide of siblings
- Death of a parent
- Family disputes
- Running away from home
- Unreasonable restrictions e.g. kept at home by parents (“house arrest”) & financial restrictions

### **Health:**

- Accompanied to doctor’s or clinics
- Self-harm
- Attempted suicide
- Eating disorders

- Depression
- Isolation
- Substance misuse
- Early/unwanted pregnancy
- Female genital mutilation

### **Police involvement:**

- Victim or other siblings within the family reported missing
- Reports of domestic abuse, harassment or breaches of the peace at the family home
- Female genital mutilation
- The victim reported for offences e.g. shoplifting or substance misuse
- Threats to kill and attempts to kill or harm
- Reports of other offences such as rape or kidnap
- Acid attacks

## **Forced Marriage Protection Order (FMPO)**

In 2007, the UK Government brought in Forced Marriage Civil Protection Orders through the Forced Marriage (Civil Protection) Act, 2007. Under this Act, a person threatened with forced marriage can apply to court for a Forced Marriage Protection Order (FMPO) which can contain whatever provisions the court finds would be appropriate to prevent the forced marriage from taking place, or to protect a victim of forced marriage from its effects, and may include such measures as confiscation of a passport or restrictions on contact with the victim.

Any person threatened with forced marriage can apply or any practitioner can apply for an FMO, on their behalf.

The [Forced Marriage Unit](#) are the primary source of help and guidance for forced marriage victims, potential victims and those people who may come into contact with them.

**Forced Marriage Unit Helpline: 020 7008 0151**

Where the person who is subject to or at risk of Forced Marriage is a child (under 18 years of age) they must be considered as a Child at Risk under the Social Service and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014.

[Rubie's Story](#) is a short video by a survivor of forced marriage.

## Female Genital Mutilation

- Female Genital Mutilation is also known as Female Circumcision or Female Genital Cutting (FGC) and is a traditional cultural practice. The procedure causes severe short and long term health consequences, including difficulties with childbirth, causing danger to the mother and child and mental health problems.
- FGM has no health benefits, and it causes significant harm. It involves removing and damaging healthy and normal female genital tissue, and interferes with the natural functions of girls' and women's bodies. Generally speaking, the health risks increase with increasing severity of the procedure, although the psychological effects may be similar whether or not the procedure is physically severe.
- The age at which girls undergo FGM varies enormously according to the community. The procedure may be carried out when the girl is new born, during childhood or adolescence, just before marriage or during the first pregnancy. However, the majority of cases of FGM are thought to take place before a child is 8 years old.
- Many of the women who are survivors of FGM want the practice to stop. FGM causes significant harm and trauma which has a lifelong impact. There are many survivors of FGM and other members of affected communities who do not want FGM to be practiced on children today. They will often need support to protect their children from FGM because of pressure from family or community members. [A Change has Begun](#) is a short video on FGM where women talk about the impact of FGM on women. It does not contain any graphic images of FGM.

- [Voices over Silence](#) is available on the Live Fear Free website. The film raises awareness of, and fights for cultural change on Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) in Wales by capturing young people's voices and views on this issue to support intergenerational conversations within a range of different communities and contexts.
- At the same time it is important to be aware of the possible emotional and psychological consequences of discussing FGM with women and girls who have moved from a country where FGM is the norm, to one where it is illegal and socially unacceptable. Many women from affected communities oppose FGM but there are others who do not. It is important that the language used to describe FGM should be respectful and is not insulting to individuals, their culture or tradition. If interpretation services are needed, ensure that the interpreter is independent and not known to the family.

## Some of the indicators related to risk of FGM for children

This is not an exhaustive list but these are signs that practitioners should be aware of and together they may build a picture to suggest that a child is at risk.

- If parents state that they or a relative is planning to take the child out of the country for an extended period of time
- The child talks about visiting the family's country of origin where FGM is practiced
- The child talks about "a special celebration"
- A child is heard talking about FGM to her friends
- A family originates from an FGM affected community [FGM affected countries](#).
- Any child whose mother has undergone FGM may be at risk
- Any child whose sister or close female relative has undergone FGM

Other things to consider include:

- levels of engagement with professionals (education, health or others)

- younger female siblings who may be at risk
- any existing safeguarding issues
- unexplained absences from school

A girl who has undergone FGM may:

- have difficulty walking, standing or sitting
- spend longer in the bathroom or toilet
- appear withdrawn, anxious or depressed
- behave unusually after an absence from school or college
- be particularly reluctant to undergo normal medical examinations
- ask for help, but may not be explicit about the problem due to embarrassment or fear

The Female Genital Mutilation Act (2003) made FGM a criminal offence in England, Wales and Northern Ireland (Scotland has its own law on FGM); to perform FGM either inside the UK or to take a girl abroad to have it performed. The law was amended by the Serious Crime Act (2015), which added extra powers to the 2003 law, these include:

- A [Mandatory Reporting Duty](#) where health and social care professionals, teachers and lecturers, have a legal obligation to report to the police if they are informed by a child that FGM has been carried out on them, or they observe physical signs of FGM. The duty is a personal duty and cannot be transferred to another person. This is a legal requirement under the Act and should be carried out alongside safeguarding procedures. The Mandatory Reporting Duty (to the Police) only applies where you are told by a girl that FGM has been performed on them or you observe physical evidence of FGM.
- Introduces FGM Protection Orders which closely model the Forced Marriage Protection Orders and are designed to protect a girl who is at risk of FGM.
- Extends the extra-territorial jurisdiction to include not just UK nationals but also those who are habitually resident in the UK.

- Guarantees anonymity of the victim.
- Introduces a new offence of failing to protect a girl from FGM, by those with responsibility (not necessarily parental responsibility) for the girl.

The Home Office has produced a [FGM protection orders: factsheet \(PDF\)](#).

**For health practitioners**, the [Public Health Wales- All Wales Clinical Pathway on FGM](#) states that if a practitioner is concerned that a child (under 18) may have undergone FGM, or a child tells them, they must ensure safeguarding procedures are followed and inform their local Safeguarding lead of the case. This Clinical Pathway should be completed every time a new case of FGM is identified or suspected, in both women and girls of any age, including a disclosure by a parent or carer. Mandatory reporting should be in collaboration with the completion of this pathway.

Where the person who is subject to or at risk of FGM is a child (under 18 years of age) they must be considered as a Child at Risk under the Social Service and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014.

Any practitioner can also contact the national NSPCC FGM helpline for advice: National NSPCC FGM Helpline: 0800 028 3550 [Email: help@nspcc.org.uk](mailto:help@nspcc.org.uk).

## **Breast ironing/flattening**

Professionals working with children and young people must be able to identify the signs and symptoms of girls who are at risk of or have undergone breast ironing or flattening. As with Female Genital Mutilation (FGM), breast ironing or flattening is classified as physical abuse. There is no specific law banning breast ironing in the UK and no-one has ever been prosecuted for carrying out the practice. However, offenders can be prosecuted for a range of crimes, including common assault, child cruelty and grievous bodily harm.

### **What is breast ironing/flattening?**

Breast flattening, also known as breast ironing, is the process during which young pubescent girls' breasts are ironed, massaged, flattened and/or pounded down over a period of time (sometimes years) in order for the breasts to disappear or delay the development of the breasts entirely.

In some families, large stones, a hammer or spatula that has been heated over scorching coals can be used to compress the breast tissue. Other families may opt to use an elastic belt or binder to press the breasts so as to prevent them from growing.

Breast flattening usually starts with the first signs of puberty, which can be as young as nine years old and is usually carried out by female relatives who may believe that this will protect her from sexual harassment.

As well as extreme pain and psychological damage, the practice puts the young women at increased risk of developing cysts, infections and even cancer.

It should also be acknowledged that some adolescent girls and boys may choose to bind their breast using constrictive material due to gender transformation or identity, and this may also cause health problems.

## **Child Abuse linked to faith or belief (CALFB)**

Child abuse or neglect linked to faith or belief is not confined to one faith, nationality, ethnic group or community. Not all with such a belief go on to harm children. However, some beliefs and superstitions can and have resulted in the abuse of children.

- The term 'belief in spirit possession' is the belief that an evil force has entered a child and is controlling him or her. Sometimes the term 'witch' is used and is the belief that a child is able to use an evil force to harm others. In cases identified by research, every child had an accusation of 'evil' made against them. This was commonly accompanied by a belief that they could 'infect' others with such 'evil'. The explanation for how a child becomes possessed varies widely but includes through food that they have been given or through spirits that have flown around them.
- These beliefs are not confined to any one country, culture or ethnic group and importantly, belief that a child is spirit possessed does not automatically lead to child abuse but can still be traumatic for the child. In all these cases, genuine beliefs can be held by families, carers, religious leaders, congregations and the children themselves that evil forces are involved and abuse can occur when an attempt is made to 'exorcise' or 'deliver' the child. This type of abuse has traumatic effects on children ranging from bruises and scars to psychological problems and sometimes results in death.
- Children are abused by those around them, family, friends and congregations, in order to expel or exorcise the evil spirit or demon, or as a ritual of deliverance. This can be in

the form of physical abuse, presenting as bruises, burns, cuts, stab wounds, strangulation marks, evidence of physical restraint (burn marks on wrists or legs). Rubbing chillies into a child's genitals or eyes is also a common practice in deliverance/exorcism.

- Emotional abuse may be in the form of isolation, for example, not allowing a child to eat or share a room with family members, or threatening to abandon them. The child may also accept the abuse if they believe they are possessed. Children may be neglected by parents/carers failing to ensure appropriate medical care, supervision, school attendance, good hygiene, nourishment, clothing or keeping the child warm. In some cases, children may be sexually abused.
- Religious/faith beliefs in the form of witchcraft or 'Juju magic' are often used to control people in some African countries who are being trafficked and used in modern slavery. People are often told that if they disobey their trafficker, they will incur the wrath of the spirit world through nightmares, madness and death. If there are concerns that a child may have been trafficked practitioners should also refer to the All Wales Practice Guide- Children who may have been trafficked. Professionals and practitioners in contact with children are encouraged to familiarise themselves with the potential indicators of trafficking or modern slavery outlined in the Child NRM Form.

There are a number of factors associated with children being targeted for abuse linked to faith, superstition or belief<sup>4</sup>:

- Evil Spirits: Belief in evil spirits that can 'possess' children is often accompanied by a belief that a possessed child can 'infect' others with the condition. This could be through contact with shared food, or simply being in the presence of the child.
- Scapegoating: A child could be singled out as the cause of misfortune within the home, such as financial difficulties, divorce, infidelity, illness or death.
- Bad Behaviour: Sometimes bad or abnormal behaviour is attributed to spiritual forces. Examples include a child being disobedient, rebellious, or overly independent, wetting the bed, having nightmares or falling ill.
- Physical Difference/Disability: A child could be singled out for having a physical difference or disability. Documented cases included children with learning disabilities, mental health issues, epilepsy, autism, stammers and deafness.

- Gifts and uncommon characteristics: If a child has a particular skill or talent, this can sometimes be rationalised as the result of possession or witchcraft. This can also be the case if the child is from a multiple or difficult pregnancy.
- Complex family structure: Research suggests that a child living with extended family, non-biological parents, or foster parents (as part of a private fostering arrangement) is more at risk. In these situations they are more likely to have been subject to trafficking and made to work in servitude.

Some of the indicators related to risk of Child Abuse linked to faith or belief (CALFB)

This is not an exhaustive list but these are signs that practitioners should be aware of and together they may build a picture to suggest that a child is at risk.

- a child reporting that they are or have been accused of being 'evil', and/or that they are having the 'devil beaten out of them'
- a child's body showing signs or marks, such as bruises or burns, from physical abuse
- a child becoming noticeably confused, withdrawn, disorientated or isolated and appearing alone amongst other children
- a child's personal care deteriorating, for example through a loss of weight, being hungry, turning up to school without food or food money or being unkempt with dirty clothes and even faeces smeared on to them
- it may also be directly evident that the child's parent or carer does not show concern for or a close bond with the child
- a child's attendance at school becoming irregular or being taken out of school all together without another school place having been organised

Where the person who is subject to or at risk of abuse linked to faith or belief is a child (under 18 years of age) they must be considered as a Child at Risk under the Social Service and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014.

## A proportionate response

- All cases where a child may be at risk of abuse related to tradition, culture, religion or superstition should result in the report of a child at risk.
- If a child is at immediate risk contact the Police on 999.
- Relevant partners have a Duty to Report Children at Risk (Section 130) under [Part 7](#) of the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act. Section 130(4) defines a “child at risk” as a child who:
  - **a.** is experiencing or is at risk of abuse, neglect or other kinds of harm; and
  - **b.** has needs for care and support (whether or not the Local authority is meeting any of those needs).

When a child has been reported under section 130, the local authority must consider whether there are grounds for carrying out an investigation under section 47 of the Children Act 1989.

- If Social Services make a decision that the report/referral received does not relate to a child at risk they will make a record of this and the rationale for their decision.
- Social Services of the local authority in which the child is located should make a decision on the evidence on whether to convene a multi-agency strategy discussion, to inform a decision on a response for the child, including whether to hold a multi-agency Strategy Meeting.
- If the initial assessment or multi-agency strategy discussion indicate that there are no grounds to proceed to a Strategy Meeting or to a Section 47 Inquiry, consideration should be given to a referral for preventative work to reduce the likelihood of future risk of harm.
- Where there is already a care and support plan, child protection plan or they are a looked after child or they are in the secure estate, there should be a multi-agency strategy discussion to decide whether a Strategy Meeting is necessary to inform the development or review of a plan for the child.
- The arrangements for carrying out a Strategy Meeting are set out in the Wales Safeguarding Procedures and in Welsh Government [Working Together to Safeguard](#)

[People Volume 5- Handling Individual Cases to Protect Children at Risk](#) issued under the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act. Wherever possible, the professionals and practitioners attending the Strategy Meeting should have direct knowledge of the child. It is, however, recognised that some agencies may come into contact with a child for the first time as a result of the issues being considered at the Strategy Meeting.

- The Strategy Meeting should consider if there is any information or evidence relating to the child which suggests that there are other specific safeguarding issues that need to be considered in addition to the primary presenting safeguarding issue. **The Strategy Meeting should be child centred rather than issue based.**
- Social Services should also refer to All Wales Practice Guides issued with the Wales Safeguarding Procedures on any relevant related issues.
- **The Strategy Meeting must result in a set of agreed actions to inform the development or review of a child protection and/or care and support plan for the child.** This plan must consider the holistic needs of the child in order to promote well-being and prevent future harm and must not be focussed exclusively on the management of risk.
- Where the Strategy Meeting results in an agreement that a plan is not required the rationale for this decision should be recorded and consideration should be given to making a referral to preventative services.
- Children and young people are entitled to an active offer of advocacy from a statutory Independent Professional Advocate (IPA) when they become looked after or become subject of child protection enquiries leading to an Initial Child Protection Conference. The **'active offer'** is made directly to the child by the Advocacy Service. An 'active offer' is a sharing of information about the statutory right and entitlement of a child in particular circumstances to access support from an Independent Professional Advocacy Service. Information should be shared with them that includes an explanation about the role of Independent Professional Advocacy. This includes what it can and cannot do, how it operates based on their wishes and feelings, its independence and how it works solely for the child/young person, its policy on confidentiality and significant harm – it explains the statutory right of children and young people to be supported to express their views, wishes and feelings as well as their right to make a representation or complaint.

## Appendices

**These organisations are there for all children and young people in Wales. Practitioners should let children know about these organisations and how to contact them.**

**Meic** is the helpline service for children and young people up to the age of 25 in Wales. From finding out what's going on in your local area to help dealing with a tricky situation, Meic will listen even when no-one else will. They won't judge you and will help by giving you information, useful advice and the support you need to make a change. You can:

- Chat to someone from Meic on-line: <https://www.meiccymru.org/>
- Call Meic for free and talk to someone: **0808 802 3456**
- Text Meic for free on: 84001

You can contact the [Children's Commissioner for Wales](#) Investigation and Advice service which is free and confidential. It's there as a source of help and support if children and young people or those who care for them feel that a child's been treated unfairly. You or you parent/carer can:

- Call the service for free: **0808 801 1000**
- Email the service: [advice@childcomwales.org.uk](mailto:advice@childcomwales.org.uk)

**Childline** is a free, private and confidential service where anyone under 19 can access support and advice. The Childline website [www.childline.org.uk](http://www.childline.org.uk) has information and advice pages as well as tools to help you work through problems yourself. If you want to talk or chat to Childline you can:

- Call Childline for free: **0800 1111**
- Register on-line to email Childline or chat on-line to a counsellor: [www.childline.org.uk/get-support/](http://www.childline.org.uk/get-support/)

If you want to talk to Childline in Welsh see [www.childline.org.uk/get-support/](http://www.childline.org.uk/get-support/)

## Resources

**Live Fear Free**

Information on support is available at [Live Fear Free](#). Live Fear Free Helpline: 0808 8010 800. Text service: 078600 77333 **Email: [info@livefearfreehelpline.wales](mailto:info@livefearfreehelpline.wales)**.

### **The Forced Marriage Unit (FMU)**

The [Forced Marriage Unit](#) is a joint Home Office and Foreign & Commonwealth Office Unit. It operates both inside the UK, where support is provided to any individual, and overseas, where consular assistance is provided to British nationals, including dual nationals. The FMU operates a public helpline to provide advice and support to victims of forced marriage as well as to professionals dealing with cases. The assistance provided ranges from simple safety advice, through to aiding a victim to prevent their unwanted spouse moving to the UK ('reluctant sponsor' cases), and in extreme circumstances, the rescue of victims held against their will overseas.

The FMU are the primary source of help and guidance for forced marriage victims, potential victims and those people who may come into contact with them.

**Karma Nirvana** – advice and help line 0800 5999247

**The Henna Foundation** is a third sector registered charity, committed to strengthening families within the Muslim Community. The Foundation works nationally and internationally to advance the needs, concerns and aspirations of Muslim women, children and the families that they live with in.

Phone 029 20496920 or Email [info@hennafoundation.org](mailto:info@hennafoundation.org)

**Bawso** is an all Wales voluntary organisation, providing specialist services to victims and BAME people affected or at risk of Domestic Abuse and all forms of violence including: Female Genital Mutilation, Forced Marriage, Honour Based Violence, Modern Day Slavery and Human Trafficking.

Phone - 0800 731 8147

[www.bawso.org.uk](http://www.bawso.org.uk)

[The Petals FGM app](#) a useful online resource developed by Coventry University.

[Safeguarding children's rights-exploring issues of witchcraft and spirit-possession](#)

**Section 4** of the **Violence Against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence (Wales) Act** of 2015 requires Welsh Government to produce a National Strategy, which includes setting out what they will do to challenge cultural attitudes which can underpin traditional harmful practices such as FGM, Forced Marriage and Honour Bases Abuse.

### Violence Against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence (Wales) Act 2015

In 2007, the UK Government brought in **Forced Marriage Civil Protection Orders in the Forced Marriage (Civil Protection) Act, 2007**. Under this Act, a person threatened with forced marriage can apply to court for a Forced Marriage Protection Order (FMPO) which can contain whatever provisions the court finds would be appropriate to prevent the forced marriage from taking place, or to protect a victim of forced marriage from its effects, and may include such measures as confiscation of passport or restrictions on contact with the victim.

Any person threatened with forced marriage or any professional can apply for an FMPO, on their behalf.

The subject of a FMPO can be the person to whom the forced marriage will occur, or any other person who aids, abets or encourages the forced marriage. A marriage can be considered forced not merely on the grounds of threats of physical violence to the victim, but also through threats of physical violence to third parties (for example, the victim's family), or even self-violence (for example, marriage procured through threat of suicide.) A person who violates a force marriage order is subject to contempt of court proceedings and may be arrested.

In June 2014, further legislation was introduced to make forced marriage a criminal offence, in the **Anti-social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014**, under which the penalty is a maximum prison sentence of seven years. It is designed to strengthen the 2007 Act by making forced marriage an imprisonable offence, which was not previously available and giving protection to people with learning difficulties.

### Mandatory Reporting, FGM - Home Office Guidance

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<sup>1</sup> [https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/175391/Munro-Review.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/175391/Munro-Review.pdf)

<sup>2</sup> Harrison, K. and Gill, A K; (2018) Breaking Down Barriers: Recommendations for Improving Sexual Abuse Reporting Rates in British South Asian Communities- *The British Journal of Criminology*, Volume 58, Issue 2, 15 February 2018, Pages 273–290

<sup>3</sup> Forced Marriage Unit Statistics 2017, Home Office, 2018 [https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/730155/2017\\_FMU\\_statistics\\_FINAL.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/730155/2017_FMU_statistics_FINAL.pdf)

<sup>4</sup> Child abuse linked to faith or belief <https://www.met.police.uk/advice/advice-and-information/caa/child-abuse/faith-based-abuse/>