



DERBY CITY COUNCIL

MINORITY ETHNIC COMMUNITIES ADVISORY COMMITTEE 17 NOVEMBER 2005

Report of the Director of Policy

Home Office Consultation on Forced Marriage

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. To consider the key points in the consultation document, Forced Marriage, A Wrong Not A Right and provide input to the Council's response to the consultation.

SUPPORTING INFORMATION

- 2.1 The Home Office definition of forced marriage is a 'marriage that has taken place without the consent of one or both parties, or where consent is extracted under duress'. The Government's Forced Marriage Unit currently sees around 250 cases each year. Approximately 15% of these cases involve male victims.
- 2.2 'Forcing someone to marry' is not a specific criminal offence. However, parents or family members could be prosecuted for offences that can be linked to forcing someone into marriage.
- 2.3 The Home Office produced the consultation document, Forced Marriage, A Wrong Not a Right, along with a summary, to get the message across that forced marriage is unacceptable and giving possible options on the way forward in addressing this issue.
- 2.4 The consultation seeks views on whether a specific criminal offence would help in the fight against forced marriage. It also seeks views on how any proposed offence might be created and what the penalties should be.
- 2.5 The consultation period began on 5 September 2005 and ends on 5 December 2005, with a summary of responses due to be published by 5 February 2006. The decision on the next steps is expected to be taken soon afterwards.
- 2.6 The Women's Advisory Committee is also being asked for its views.

- 2.7 The summary contains 11 questions and is attached as Appendix 2. The Committee may wish to respond to all the questions, however, to help focus the discussion, you may choose to respond to the following questions:
2. What are the disadvantages to creating a specific offence of forcing someone to marry? Are there any we have not discussed?
 3. What are the advantages to creating a specific offence of forcing someone to marry? Are there any we have not discussed?
 4. On balance, should the Government introduce a criminal offence for forced marriage?
 9. How successful has the Government been in communicating the unacceptability of forced marriage, particularly that force can include emotional as well as physical force?
 10. In what other non-legislative ways could the Government communicate this message?
 11. What more needs to be done to empower people to withstand pressure?

**For more information
contact:**

Background papers:

List of appendices:

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Forced Marriage, A Wrong Not A Right, Home Office

http://communities.homeoffice.gov.uk/raceandfaith/reports_pubs/publications/race_faith/consultation_forced_marriage.pdf?view=Binary

Appendix 1 – Implications

Appendix 2 – Summary: Forced Marriage, A Wrong Not A Right, Home Office

http://communities.homeoffice.gov.uk/raceandfaith/reports_pubs/publications/race_faith/forced_marriages_summary.pdf?view=Binary

IMPLICATIONS

Financial

1. None.

Legal

2. The Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000 puts a legal obligation on all public authorities to promote racial equality and good race relations between different racial groups. It is generally accepted that forced marriages are more likely to be experienced by Black and minority ethnic groups.

Personnel

3. None.

Equalities impact

- 4.1 The issues of forced marriages have a particular impact on minority ethnic groups. Contributing to this consultation may enable the Committee to identify specific issues from a local perspective.
- 4.2 Victims of forced marriage can be either male or female, however females are more likely to be the victim.

Corporate objectives and priorities

5.
 - Engaging in the consultation process links directly to the Council's objective of producing **healthy, safe and independent communities**.