

“A journey of a
thousand miles
begins with a
single step.”



INTRODUCTION

Everyone has the right to choose who they marry and when they get married. You are not wrong for having made the brave decision to leave a forced marriage.

This book will give you useful and practical information to help you take control of your life and focus on the future.

A MESSAGE FROM ANOTHER SURVIVOR

I cried for the first six months of my marriage. I used to look out of the window, see happy people going about their daily lives, and cry. I felt life was so unfair. Why should I have to live my life with someone I didn't love?

I felt my life was wasted and that I had no purpose. I'd planned how to kill myself. I'd even planned to leave some money in an envelope to pay for my funeral; I didn't want to burden anyone with it.

I thought about my parents. Would they miss me? Would they think about me when I was gone? Deep down I still loved them. I just wanted the pain to stop. I felt like a coward – suicide is against my religion.

If it wasn't for the Forced Marriage Unit I wouldn't be here now. Back then I just needed a cuddle. I needed someone to tell me that everything would be OK. Speaking to the FMU gave me hope. I felt

that somebody who understood me was on my side – no gossip, no judgement and no conditions. I didn't always like the options the FMU gave me, but they helped me to take my life into my own hands and understand that I have the right to choose.

Now when I wake up in the morning I can put it all behind me. Sometimes it pops into my head – what I went through – but it's over now. I'm looking forward to the future, maybe meeting a guy who I have chosen for myself.

The stories of other survivors inspired me through the hardest times. I hope that my story will help others: I want to tell it to everyone! When I first left my forced marriage I had millions of questions, and I'm sure you must have too. This book is full of useful information and I hope it answers some of the questions you have.

I know how much you must be hurting, but it's your life. Do it for yourself and everything else will fall into place.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Aisha". The signature is written in a cursive style with a small asterisk above the letter 'i' and a long horizontal flourish underneath the name.

THE FORCED MARRIAGE UNIT (FMU)

Our caseworkers understand the issues surrounding forced marriage. We've helped 1,250 people rebuild their lives since 2001, so we know about the family pressures you've experienced.

We also know how difficult it can be to talk about your situation. We offer support and information to anyone who's experienced forced marriage. It's completely confidential and we won't contact your family.

You'll find messages from our caseworkers throughout this book. We hope these will help you understand some of the ways that we are able to help you.

You can speak to us on 020 7008 0151.

HOW TO USE THIS BOOK

You probably feel that you now have lots of things to think about and lots of decisions to make. It can be a confusing time, and you might not be sure how to get all the information you need.

We've tried to think of everything you might need to know more about and provide telephone numbers and websites where you can get more details. Some words are highlighted, and you'll find an explanation of these in the glossary at the back of the book.

Some of the information in this book will help you immediately. Other sections are about things you'll want to think about later. There's also plenty of space for you to write your own notes, including questions you need to ask or answers you're given.

Each year, we help around 250 people who've left a forced marriage. They tell us that it's not unusual to feel completely alone at first, but you should remember that there are people working for support agencies and organisations who can help you.

Throughout this book, you'll find quotes from people who have rebuilt their lives after a forced marriage. They've had to deal with many of the issues you're now experiencing. You are not alone.

This book won't give you all the information you need, but it will act as a good starting point to help you build your new life.

CONTENTS

• Looking to the future	4		
• Life after a forced marriage	6		
If you're overseas	6		
If you're in the UK	8		
Your safety	10		
Ending your marriage	13		
Forced marriage and visas	16		
Legal help	18		
Getting a new identity	21		
• A place to live	26		
Living in a refuge	27		
Other housing options	28		
Finding local healthcare	31		
• Looking after your finances	35		
		Opening a bank or building society account	35
		Repaying debts	35
		Claiming benefits	38
		Receiving your benefits	39
		• Back to education	42
		If you're under 18 years old	43
		If you're 18 or over	44
		Basic skills	45
		• Finding a job	49
		Looking for work	49
		• Glossary	52
		• Other sources of help	54
		• Recommended reading	56

LIFE AFTER A FORCED MARRIAGE

“Now I live a life I want to live. I make my own decisions, I say what I want to say, do what I want to do, and wear what I want to wear. This means a lot to me. And I’m living the life that you should be living and will live. I think you’re very courageous to have escaped and should be proud to have made that decision for yourself.”

Lina, a survivor of forced marriage

IF YOU’RE OVERSEAS

Our caseworkers may be able to help you get back to the UK if you’re overseas and have left a forced marriage or escaped a potential forced marriage. This is called **repatriation**.

We can also try to find you somewhere safe to stay while you are waiting to be repatriated.

Each person’s circumstances are different, but here are some general things you should know about being repatriated.

“I went to Pakistan for my brother’s wedding. About two years earlier I had been forced into marriage, and I wanted to get a divorce while I was there. But then I found out that they were keeping me there. I got threatened by my relatives – they said they were going to kill me. I was really scared and didn’t know what to do. I thought there must be a way out so I went to the British High Commission.”

Zenib, a survivor of forced marriage

WAITING TO BE REPATRIATED

- You’ll be supported by someone from the **British High Commission, Consulate** or **Embassy**. This person will keep in touch with you after you’ve been taken to temporary accommodation.

- You should try not to call anyone except your contact from the British High Commission, Consulate or Embassy. Speaking to members of your family at this stage could put you in danger.

YOUR TRAVEL ARRANGEMENTS

- If your British passport has been lost or taken away from you, your British High Commission, Consulate or Embassy contact can help you get an emergency passport.
- They can arrange your flights back to the UK. In doing so they will try to arrange direct flights and avoid using airlines that might pose a risk to your safety (for example, flights that members of your family might be taking).
- You will need to pay for your flight back to the UK. If you’ve got a friend or relative in the UK who can help you with this, the FMU will contact them and arrange for the money to be transferred to the British High Commission, Consulate or Embassy.
- In exceptional circumstances, if you’re unable to pay for your flight and you don’t have a friend or relative who can help with the cost, the **Foreign and Commonwealth Office** may be able to lend you the money. You will have to repay the money when you’re back in the UK.

ARRIVING IN THE UK

“Coming back may seem a daunting experience, full of obstacles to get over. We can help you to get through each challenge step by step. Once you’re back in the UK, it’s not possible for us to be there for you every moment, but we can give you information on organisations who will help you rebuild your life.”

Shailin, Forced Marriage Unit

If you have a friend or relative who can meet you at the airport when you arrive back in the UK, the FMU will let them know your flight details. If you don’t have anyone who can meet you, we’ll arrange for someone to collect you.

If you’re able to stay safely in the UK with a friend or relative, the FMU can arrange for you to go to their home from the airport. If you don’t have anywhere to stay, we’ll arrange for you to be taken to a **refuge** or other temporary accommodation.

If you have any special needs you haven’t already mentioned, let the FMU know and we’ll do our best to make suitable arrangements for your arrival.

IF YOU’RE IN THE UK

If you want to escape from a forced marriage and are in the UK, the FMU can still help you. We’ll talk through your options with you, and can give you confidential information and support.

For more information, visit the FMU’s website at www.fco.gov.uk/forcedmarriage or call 020 7008 0151 to speak to one of the team.

YOUR SAFETY

Making sure that you're safe is a top priority. Now that you've left a forced marriage, you may have to think about your personal safety in a new way.

You should be aware that your family may try to look for you and may use other relatives or your friends to try and find you. You should only tell people you totally trust about your plans.

If you think your family will tell the police that you are missing, you should contact the police yourself. They can then tell your family that you are alive and well, but they won't tell them where you are.

“When I first left, I thought my husband’s family were coming after me. I received strange calls at work. One day, I saw their car outside. Even at weekends, I was too scared to go out. I contacted the police for advice and support. Now I’ve done what I needed to do, I’m not scared any more. I’m free and confident. I’ve won!”

Aisha



Although the FMU can't guarantee your safety, we can put you in touch with agencies that can protect you.

If you feel you're in immediate danger at any time, you should call the police on 999.

www.crimereduction.gov.uk/personalsafety has useful advice about staying safe, and there are helpful personal safety tips at www.refuge.org.uk and www.mindbodysoul.gov.uk/safety.pers.html.

If you're under 18 and worried about your safety, you can contact the NSPCC on 0808 800 5000 or by visiting www.nspcc.org.uk. Childline also supports children and young people. You can speak to someone on 0800 1111 or find out more at www.childline.org.uk.

ENDING YOUR MARRIAGE

If you were forced into a marriage overseas, and that marriage is valid in the country you were in, it's likely that it will also be valid in the UK. You now have two options for legally ending your marriage. These are outlined below but you should talk to a **solicitor** for more detailed information.

You will need a copy of your marriage certificate in order to get an **annulment** or a **divorce**. The FMU may be able to help you get this if your marriage took place overseas.

“I chose not to stay in a forced marriage and to get a divorce. At the end of the day, as a human being, I have my rights. I have to live my life the way I want to live it. It's not going to make me happy doing what other people want.”

Zenib

GETTING AN ANNULMENT

An annulment is a legal term that means a contract – including a marriage – is declared invalid. If your marriage is annulled, it means that in the eyes of the law, you've never been married and you regain your status as unmarried or single.

The laws governing marriage in England, Wales and Scotland say that a marriage can be annulled “if either party of the marriage did not validly consent to it, whether in consequence of duress, mistake, unsoundness of mind, or otherwise”.

This means that if you have been forced into a marriage, a solicitor who specialises in family law may be able to help you get an annulment.

If you are trying to get an annulment, you will usually need to do this within three years of the date of your marriage.

FORCED MARRIAGE AND VISAS

If you've been forced to marry someone from overseas, they may want to apply for a **spouse visa** to join you in the UK.

At first, they can apply to stay in the UK for two years. At the end of this time, if you're still married, they can apply to stay in the UK permanently. This is called **indefinite leave to remain (ILR)**.

If they want to apply for a settlement visa, your husband or wife will need to prove that:

- you are legally married to each other
- your marriage is not **polygamous** or **bigamous** (you are not also married to anyone else and your spouse is not married to anyone else)
- you met each other before you got married
- he/she is not under 18, and you are not under 18
- you both intend to live together permanently as husband and wife
- you are present and settled in the UK
- you can support yourselves and any dependants without any help from public funds (which means that you don't need to claim any **benefits**)
- you have suitable accommodation, which is owned or lived in only by you and your family, and where you and your dependants can live without any help from public funds.

REFUSING TO SPONSOR A VISA

“Initially, I was scared of making a statement to get his visa stopped. I knew my parents wouldn’t want this to happen, but I had to help myself. When I found out he was going to be deported, I felt relieved. I felt the sooner he was gone, the sooner I’d be free.”

Aisha

If your husband or wife wants to come to the UK on a spouse visa against your wishes, the FMU can provide you with information on your options.

Your husband or wife will not be granted a spouse visa to come to the UK if you make a disclosable statement saying that you do not support his or her application. A caseworker in the FMU can provide you with a template to help you write your statement, and they will talk you through what happens afterwards. If you can’t do this – perhaps because of pressure from your family – there’s no guarantee that we can help you. One of our caseworkers will be able to explain your options in more detail.

If your husband or wife is already in the UK and wants to be granted ILR, and this is against your wishes, we may be able to help you. In some cases, spouse visas can be revoked and your husband or wife may be asked to leave the country.

LEGAL HELP

“When you’re in this situation, it can feel like all the odds are against you. But we can help you to navigate your way through what may seem like a very baffling process. Even if you are too scared to make a public statement, we can try and help you to take each day as it comes and deal with everything one step at a time.”

Asiya and Naomi, Forced Marriage Unit

We cannot recommend individual solicitors or firms, but finding a solicitor may be easier than you think. The Community Legal Service website (www.clsdirect.org.uk) has details of solicitors in your area.

You may be able to get help with legal costs through the Legal Help Scheme, which is sometimes called **legal aid**. You can find out if you’re eligible for legal aid by looking at the Community Legal Service website or by speaking to a solicitor or someone from Citizens Advice.

You can find out more about UK visas at www.ukvisas.gov.uk.

For more information about finding a solicitor, visit:

- **the Law Society of England and Wales at www.lawsociety.org.uk**
- **the Citizens Advice Bureau at www.adviceguide.org.uk**
- **the Community Legal Service at www.clsdirect.org.uk.**

GETTING A NEW IDENTITY

“If you feel that the risk to your safety is high, you can think about changing your identity – but don’t go down this route unless you are really sure. Changing your name may be a first step for you in gaining some peace of mind, and you can do this yourself, but you’ll need the police to help you if you want to go any further and, for example, change your National Insurance number. The police will only do this if they feel that your life is in danger.”

Fauzia, Forced Marriage Unit

CHANGING YOUR NAME

You can change your name legally using the **Deed Poll** service. You don’t need a solicitor’s help, and the process can either be completed online or by post.

There is a fee for changing your name by Deed Poll, and you might also have to pay for some replacement documents such as a new passport and driving licence.

**For more information, visit
www.deedpoll.org.uk or call 0800 7833048**

GETTING A NEW PASSPORT

If you have decided to change your name, or if you no longer have your passport, you can apply for a new one.

If your passport was lost or stolen, you need to report this to the Identity and Passport Service (IPS). You can do this online at www.passport.gov.uk.

You can apply for a new passport by post or in person, if you make an appointment at your nearest passport office. Full details and an application form are available on the IPS website.

If you have changed your name, you will need proof of your new name, such as your paperwork, from the Deed Poll service.

More information and application forms are available at www.passport.gov.uk or at www.directgov.gov.uk/TravelAndTransport/TravellingAbroad/PassportsAndVisas, which also has some useful information for dual passport holders.

GETTING A NEW NATIONAL INSURANCE NUMBER

Everyone aged 16 or over who is an employee or self-employed, and who earns over a certain amount, pays National Insurance contributions. These build up entitlement to certain benefits, including State Pension.

Your **National Insurance number** is your own personal account number. It ensures that your National Insurance contributions are properly recorded. It also acts as your reference number for government tax and benefits systems.

To find out more general information on National Insurance you can call 0845 302 1479 or contact your local Jobcentre Plus, which you can find at www.jobcentreplus.gov.uk.

If you are scared that you may be in danger, the police will make an assessment of the level of risk to you, and if they feel that your life is in danger they will take steps to protect you. This might include providing you with a new identity, including a new National Insurance number, as it may be possible for you to be traced through your National Insurance records.

You will not be able to change your National Insurance number without help from the police.

You can find more information about National Insurance at www.dwp.gov.uk and at www.jobcentreplus.gov.uk.

“Instead of giving myself reasons why I can’t, I give myself reasons why I can.”

A PLACE TO LIVE

One of your first priorities is likely to be finding somewhere to live. Many people who've left a forced marriage find that staying in a **refuge** is a good short-term solution.

Refuges aren't open to men, but there are other options. Both men and women can call Shelter's free 24-hour housing advice line on 0808 8004444.

“Living away from home for the first time was awful at first. I didn't want to leave my family and I was homesick. I was worried about practical things too: how would I see my doctor? What if my post got delivered to my parents by mistake? Then I started to find myself. I had breathing space to think about what I really wanted to do with my life.”

Aisha

LIVING IN A REFUGE

A refuge is an ordinary house for women and children. Only the residents know the address, which makes it a safe place to stay. Some women will stay in a refuge for a short time, others for much longer. It depends on each person's circumstances.

“It was a relief to know that I wasn't the only one going through this situation. What also kept me going was that I knew that there are people out there who want to help me and people who care for me.”

Rehana, a survivor of forced marriage

Your rent at the refuge may be covered in full by Housing Benefit, if you're able to claim this (see page 38 for more details). If you're working, you might have to pay some or all of the rent yourself. The staff at the refuge will be able to let you know about this and can also give you information about housing, legal and financial matters. They can also help you find out if you're entitled to any financial help, and tell you how to get your name on the local council housing list.

There are refuges all over the UK so, if space is available, you can stay anywhere you feel comfortable. You can contact a refuge yourself by calling the free 24-hour National Domestic Violence Helpline on 0808 2000 247. You can also ask someone from the FMU, the police or social services to refer you to a refuge.

OTHER HOUSING OPTIONS

If you're not able to go to a refuge – perhaps because there aren't any available places in your area – you can add your name to your local council housing list. If you have nowhere to stay, you can contact your local authority, which will have a **homeless persons' unit**. They may be able to provide you with temporary accommodation. They are there to assist people who are homeless, including those who are homeless because of domestic violence. Forced marriage is a form of domestic violence.

You should be aware that if you want to live with your boyfriend or girlfriend, it's unlikely that the homeless persons' unit will be able to house you together as a couple. You might have to live apart for a while.

If you go to a homeless persons' unit, it's a good idea to take along all of your documentation because you'll be asked to produce evidence of your identity. Someone from the unit will interview you about your housing needs and you'll be told whether or not they can provide you with temporary accommodation, possibly in a hostel or bed and breakfast.

In the longer term, you have many options about where to live. If you're working, you may want to rent a private property, or you may want to think about buying or renting a property through a housing association scheme or applying for a local authority home. You can find out more about your options by visiting www.directgov.gov.uk/HomeAndCommunity.

For information and advice about housing, visit

- www.directgov.gov.uk/HomeAndCommunity/SocialHousing
- www.shelter.org.uk
- www.mungos.org
- www.refuge.org.uk

FINDING LOCAL HEALTHCARE

“Looking after yourself is very important. When you have so many other things on your mind it can be easy to forget the basics, but you should never forget that your health and safety come first.”

Shailin, Forced Marriage Unit

If you feel physically ill, depressed or anxious, you should see a doctor. To do this, you'll need to register with a local GP. If you need medical help before you've registered with a new GP, you can visit an NHS walk-in centre. You can find details of all of these – and opticians, dentists, chemists and hospitals – by visiting www.nhsdirect.nhs.uk.

If you're feeling ill and you're not sure if you need to see a doctor, you can look at the self-help guide on the NHS Direct website or call 0845 4647 to speak to someone who can help.

“Even a happy life cannot be without a measure of darkness, and the word ‘happy’ would lose its meaning if it were not balanced by sadness.”

LOOKING AFTER YOUR FINANCES

Many of the people we've helped after a forced marriage have never had to think about their own finances before. If this is true for you, the information below is designed to help you understand how to get your own **bank** or **building society** account, claim **benefits** and manage any debts you may have.

OPENING A BANK OR BUILDING SOCIETY ACCOUNT

If you are eligible for benefits, you'll need to have your own bank or building society account before you can claim them. And if you get a job, your employer will want to pay your wages straight into your account.

You can find some useful information about choosing the right account by visiting www.directgov.gov.uk then going to the section on 'Managing money' and then to 'Bank accounts and banking products'. There's also a useful guide at www.adviceguide.org.uk/basic_bank_accounts.pdf.

REPAYING DEBTS

If you're worried about your debts, try not to panic, but don't ignore the problem. Talk to the people or organisations you owe money to and let them know if you're having problems making repayments. Tell them how much you can afford to pay and when you can afford to make payments. Most organisations will be more helpful if you approach them first.

Your local Citizens Advice Bureau will be able to give you advice on managing your debts, and there's a useful online guide at www.advice.org.uk.

CLAIMING BENEFITS

“The process of applying for benefits may seem really confusing right now, but it is not as difficult as you think.”

Fauzia, Forced Marriage Unit

If you have a low income, you may be eligible to claim benefits. These will give you a basic amount to live on. To get them, you'll need to pass a **means test**. This is an assessment of your income and savings. If you live with a partner, civil partner, husband or wife, their income and savings are also taken into account.

Benefits are paid by the Department for Work and Pensions. Some key benefits are explained below. You can also go to www.directgov.gov.uk, where there are some benefit factsheets in the 'Money, tax and benefits' section.

INCOME SUPPORT

If you're not able to work full time and you don't have enough money to live on, you might be able to claim Income Support. Whether you qualify or not and how much you get will depend on your circumstances.

JOBSEEKER'S ALLOWANCE

If you're over 18 but unemployed and looking for work, you may be eligible for Jobseeker's Allowance. You can't claim this benefit if you're a full-time student.

WORKING TAX CREDIT

If you're over 16, living on a low income and working 16 or more hours a week, you can apply for this benefit. It can also include support for childcare. Extra help is available for disabled people and those aged over 25 who work 30 or more hours per week.

HOUSING BENEFIT AND COUNCIL TAX BENEFIT

If you're on a low income and need help to pay all or part of your rent, you may be able to get Housing Benefit. In some parts of England and Wales, people who rent from a private landlord can claim Local Housing Allowance.

And if you need financial help to pay your council tax bill, you may be able to claim Council Tax Benefit.

Both of these benefits can be paid to people who are working as well as those who are unemployed.

IF YOU'RE EXPECTING OR BRINGING UP A CHILD

People who are expecting a baby or already bringing up children can usually claim Child Benefit, regardless of their earnings. If your income is below a certain level, you may also qualify for Child Tax Credit.

If you're able to claim some of these benefits, you may also qualify for the Welfare Food Scheme, which offers free milk, infant formula and vitamins, or for the Healthy Start scheme, which offers free milk, fruit and vegetables.

RECEIVING YOUR BENEFITS

When and how often you are paid will depend on the type of benefit. Most benefits are paid directly into a bank or building society account.

More information about claiming benefits can be found at:

- www.dwp.gov.uk
- www.adviceguide.org.uk
- www.directgov.gov.uk/Bfsl1/BenefitsAndFinancialSupport.

BACK TO EDUCATION

“I was 15 when my parents stopped me going to school and took me to Pakistan for a forced marriage. I left home when I was 18 and it was the hardest decision I’ve ever made. I now work as a young person’s project worker, sharing my experiences and giving hope to others. I have gone on to further education and I have managed to get my first ever qualification.”

Shazia, a survivor of forced marriage

Once your immediate priorities are taken care of, you’ll probably start to think about getting new skills and knowledge. There are lots of different options available. For some of these, you might be able to get financial help, so it’s worth doing lots of research and thinking carefully about the type of study you’d like to do.

You may want to study full time, part time or at evening classes. Or perhaps you want to improve your **basic skills** in **IT** or reading, writing and **numeracy** to help you find a job or complete application forms.

Whatever you decide you want to learn, there’s a range of information and financial support available to help you get the skills and qualifications you need.

“I’m planning to get back to the UK and go to university. I’d already done a year in college and now I’m planning to go to university and get a degree. I want to become a lawyer.”

Zenib



IF YOU'RE UNDER 18 YEARS OLD

If you're under the age of 16, you'll automatically be re-enrolled into school full time until you're 16 and able to take your GCSEs.

If you're aged between 16 and 18, you have the option to enrol at college to take A levels or **vocational** courses such as an NVQ or BTEC. These qualifications relate to a particular industry or sector and you can study for an NVQ at work, college or as part of an **apprenticeship**. GNVQs are another kind of vocational qualification that will give you a more general introduction to an area of work.

FINANCIAL HELP

If you're 16 or over and are studying, financial assistance may be available to you in certain circumstances. For example, if you are living away from your parents (or anyone acting in place of your parents) because you are in physical or moral danger, you are **estranged** from them, or there is a serious risk to your physical or mental health.

IF YOU'RE 18 OR OVER

If you're 18 or over, your educational options include an access course, **foundation degree** or going to university. And universities and colleges aren't just for school leavers. Every year, thousands of adults who've been out of education for some time choose to develop by going into higher education.

People who are 21 or over when they enter the first year of a higher education course are known as 'mature students'. If you don't have the qualifications you need to get on to a higher education course, you can take an access course to get all the skills you'll need.

Access courses are aimed at adults (19 years or over) who want to get on to a higher education course but don't have the necessary qualifications. Access courses are a good way to get back into study because they help learners find out how to study at this level, as well as teaching you more about a specific subject.

Access courses are usually run at local colleges, and take up to a year to complete. They are flexible, though, so learners can study over two years if they want to.

FINANCIAL HELP

You may be eligible for financial support if you've experienced particular difficulties that mean you need extra help so that you can study. You're also eligible if you're continuing with a course started before you reached 19, and/or you have childcare needs.

If you're starting a higher education course, you'll have to meet a number of expenses at the beginning of the first term. Thankfully, there may be financial help available – probably more than you think – from your chosen institution and from the government. You could also look at other sources of finance, such as part-time work. This will help cover expenses such as **tuition fees**, and other costs of living such as accommodation, bills and food.

BASIC SKILLS

There's lots of help available if you want to improve your basic skills in reading and writing, IT or maths. Many of these courses are free, and you can find out about what's on offer in your area by calling learndirect on 0800 100 900.

You can find information on all your learning options by visiting www.directgov.gov.uk/EducationAndLearning.

More information about courses and finance can be found on the following websites:

- **Department for Education and Skills – www.dfes.gov.uk**
- **learndirect – www.learndirect.co.uk**
- **www.aimhigher.ac.uk**
- **www.hotcourses.com.**

Connexions offers help and advice to 13 to 19 year olds at www.connexions.gov.uk.

Information and learning materials for basic skills learning are available at www.bbc.co.uk/skillswise.

FINDING A JOB

Many people feel that work is an important part of leading an independent life. As well as earning money, you can make friends through your job, and you can learn new skills and develop new interests.

“During everything, my job kept me going. My colleagues supported me throughout. It was my manager who put me in touch with the FMU. If I hadn’t had my work, I would have gone mad.”

Aisha

LOOKING FOR WORK

Jobcentre Plus is a good place to start looking for work opportunities, whether you want something full time or part time, temporary or permanent. Many jobs are now listed online at www.jobcentreplus.gov.uk. You’ll also find advice on job hunting, completing application forms, and claiming **benefits** while you look for work.

You can also speak to a personal adviser at your local Jobcentre Plus (details are on the website). He or she will be able to help you find the kind of job that’s right for you, whether you’re looking for your first job or returning to work after a break. They can also help you arrange any training you need for the job you want.

“As a man, I didn’t know who to turn to. I felt it wasn’t macho for me to come forward. Now I know there are many men in similar situations and I’m trying to use my experiences to help them. I’m also doing an access course at university.”

Imran, a survivor of forced marriage



“When a person puts a limit on what he will do, he puts a limit on what he can do.”

GLOSSARY

Annulment	A legal procedure that dissolves a marriage so it's as though it never happened.	Building society	The main difference between banks and building societies is in the way they are set up, but they both offer the same kinds of financial services.
Apprenticeship	This is a form of employment where you are trained to do a job as you work.	Deed Poll	This is a legal document that allows you to change your name.
Bank	A company that will look after your money. They offer current accounts (for day-to-day spending), savings accounts, credit cards and loans. You will need a bank account for any wages or benefits to be paid to you.	Divorce	The legal end to a marriage.
Basic skills	These are skills in reading, writing, maths and IT at a level necessary for everyday life.	Estranged	No longer in contact with one another.
Benefits	Allowances paid by the Government to people who need financial help and who meet the eligibility criteria.	Foreign and Commonwealth Office	This is the government department which represents the UK overseas, and which provides assistance to British nationals abroad.
Bigamous	Getting married to someone when already married to someone else. Bigamy is illegal in the UK.	Foundation degree	Foundation degrees are higher education qualifications that combine academic study with workplace learning.
British High Commission, Consulate or Embassy	Representatives of the British Government overseas work in a High Commission, Consulate or Embassy.	Grounds for divorce	Reasons given in court by someone trying to get a divorce.
		Homeless persons' unit	This is part of the local authority, and is responsible for helping homeless people to find temporary accommodation quickly.

Housing Benefit A benefit paid by local authorities to people who rent their home and have no income or a low income.

Indefinite leave to remain (ILR) Permission granted to a foreign national to stay in the UK indefinitely.

IT Information technology – using computer equipment and software.

Legal aid Help with legal costs.

Means test This is where your income and savings are assessed to see if you're entitled to any financial help.

National Insurance number This is your personal account number for the National Insurance you pay when you are working. The Government uses this to record your contributions and to work out your eligibility for certain **benefits**.

Numeracy Basic maths.

Polygamous Having more than one wife or husband at the same time. This is legally acceptable in many Muslim countries.

Refuge A safe house where women and children can stay temporarily. Refuges are based all over the UK.

Repatriation The return of a person to their country of birth, citizenship or origin. If you are a British national, the British High Commission, Consulate or Embassy can help you get back to the UK from overseas.

Solicitor A person who can represent you in court or help with other legal matters.

Spouse visa A certificate in a passport giving permission to enter the UK as the spouse of a British national.

Tuition fees The cost of doing a course.

Vocational Training that is directed at a particular type of work.

OTHER SOURCES OF HELP

NATIONAL ORGANISATIONS THAT MAY BE ABLE TO HELP YOU

Asian Family Counselling Service **020 8571 3933**

A national service offering counselling on marital and family issues for Asian men and women.

Careline **08451 228622**

A confidential counselling line (on any issue) for children, young people and adults.

Home Office **0870 606 7766**

A helpline for general immigration enquiries.

Mind **0845 766 0163**

A mental health charity working for a better life for anyone with experience of mental distress. Services include a general helpline.

National Domestic Violence Helpline **0808 200 0247**

A 24-hour freephone helpline.

NSPCC **0800 096 7719**

The Asian Child Protection Helpline.

Samaritans **08457 90 90 90**

A 24-hour helpline for any person in emotional distress.

Shelter **0808 800 4444**

A service providing emergency access to **refuge** services.

Victim Support **0845 30 30 900**

Provides support and information to victims of crime (whether or not you have reported the crime to the police).

SPECIALIST ORGANISATIONS THAT MAY BE ABLE TO HELP YOU

All Wales Saheli Association 029 2049 6920

Supports Asian and Muslim women and families.

Ashiana Project (London) 020 8539 0427

Ashiana Project (Sheffield) 0114 255 5740

Offers emotional and practical help and accommodation for women and children escaping violence.

Hemat Gryffe (Glasgow) 0141 353 0859

Provides safe, temporary accommodation, support and information to black and ethnic minority women experiencing domestic violence and forced marriage.

Himat (East London) 020 8509 3490

A group for south Asian gay and bisexual men in east London.

Karma Nirvana (Derby) 01332 604098

Helps male and female survivors of forced marriage and honour-based violence.

Newham Asian Women's Project (London) 020 8472 0528

Provides advice and support for Asian women and children experiencing domestic violence.

Roshni Asian Women's Aid (Nottingham) 0115 948 3450

Provides refuge for south Asian women and children experiencing domestic violence.

Safra Project

Supports lesbian, bisexual and transgender Muslims. For reasons of confidentiality, the Safra Project does not have a telephone number. For more information, email info@safraproject.org

Sodasa Project (Bradford) 01274 577571

Provides information, advice and support for women who experience domestic violence, particularly Asian and African women.

Southall Black Sisters (London) 020 8571 9595

Offers information, advice, advocacy, practical help, support and counselling to black and ethnic minority women experiencing domestic abuse and forced marriage.

RECOMMENDED READING

Some of us from the FMU have found these books helpful. We've also recommended them to some of the survivors we've spoken to. They might help you to remember that you're not alone and that you can build a better future for yourself.

Jack and Zena: A True Story of Love and Danger – by John McCarthy, Jack Briggs and Zena Briggs (2000, Victor Gollancz)

Shame – by Jasvinder Sanghera (2007, Hodder and Stoughton Ltd)

Burned Alive – by Souad (2005, Bantam)

In the Name of Honour – by Mukhtar Mai (2007, Virago Press)



Foreign &
Commonwealth Office



Forced Marriage Unit
Room G55, Foreign and Commonwealth Office
Old Admiralty Building, The Mall, London SW1A 2PA

Telephone: 020 7008 0151
(during office hours)

020 7008 1500
(for out-of-hours emergencies)

Email: fmu@fco.gov.uk