



FORCE MARRIAGE POLICY

Date: May 2026

FORCED MARRIAGE POLICY

Contents

1. Introduction to the Policy
2. How this Policy Benefits the Home
3. Definitions & Legislation
 - 3.1 Definitions
 - 3.2 Key Legislation and Statutory Guidance (table)
4. The Policy
 - 4.1 Policy Statement – Zero Tolerance
 - 4.2 Recognising Signs of Forced Marriage
 - 4.3 Dealing with Concerns – Immediate Actions
 - 4.4 Reporting Procedures (Including Forced Marriage Unit)
 - 4.5 Support for Children
 - 4.6 Roles and Responsibilities
5. How the Home Trains its Staff About this Policy
6. Related Policies and Guidance
7. Policy Approval and Review Details

1. Introduction to the Policy

This policy sets out the framework, principles, and procedures that **Byram House** follows to protect children and young people from the risk of forced marriage. The policy applies to all staff, agency workers, volunteers, and contractors working at Byram House, whether at 62 Deighton Road, 66 Deighton Road, or elsewhere.

The Home is Byram House, which comprises the two residences at 62 Deighton Road and 66 Deighton Road. This policy applies equally across both residences.

Forced marriage is a violation of human rights and a form of child abuse. A forced marriage is one in which one or both parties do not, or cannot, consent to the union, and where pressure or abuse is used to compel them. This is distinct from an **arranged marriage**, where both parties freely consent to the arrangement.

The criminal offence of forced marriage, covering England and Wales, was introduced under the **Anti-social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014**. Any person who uses violence, threats, deception or coercion to cause a person to marry – or who arranges a marriage for a child under 18 – commits a criminal offence carrying a maximum penalty of **seven years' imprisonment** and/or a fine.

The objectives of this policy are to:

- Comply with the **Anti-social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014**, the **Serious Crime Act 2015**, and **Working Together to Safeguard Children 2026**.
- Raise awareness among staff and children about the signs of forced marriage.
- Establish clear protocols for reporting and responding to concerns.
- Ensure that children are protected without delay, and that families are not approached in ways that could escalate risk.
- Provide support to victims in a child-centred, trauma-informed way.

2. How this Policy Benefits the Home

This Forced Marriage Policy benefits Byram House in the following ways:

- **Legal Compliance** – It meets duties under the **Anti-social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014**, the **Marriage and Civil Partnership (Minimum Age) Act 2022** (which raised the minimum age of marriage to 18), **Working Together to Safeguard Children 2026**, and the **Social Care Common Inspection Framework (SCCIF) 2026**.
- **Child Protection** – It ensures that forced marriage concerns are treated as serious safeguarding matters, with prompt referral to children’s social care, the police, and the Forced Marriage Unit.
- **Clarity for Staff** – It sets out the legal distinction between arranged and forced marriage, the list of warning signs, and the prohibition on approaching the family independently.
- **Multi-Agency Working** – It establishes clear referral pathways to the local MASH, police, and the Forced Marriage Unit (FMU).
- **Victim Support** – It commits to providing emotional, psychological, and (where necessary) legal support to children at risk.
- **Inspection Readiness** – The SCCIF 2026 requires the home to identify and respond to hidden harms, including honour-based abuse and forced marriage. This policy provides clear evidence.
- **Training Framework** – It sets out annual training for staff on forced marriage awareness and reporting procedures.

3. Definitions & Legislation

3.1 Definitions

Term	Definition
------	------------

Home	Byram House, comprising 62 Deighton Road and 66 Deighton Road.
Company	IMS Care LTD.
Byram House	The name used throughout this policy to refer to the home and its staff.
Forced Marriage	A marriage conducted without the full consent of both parties, where duress (physical or emotional pressure, threats, violence, deception) is a factor. Duress cannot be justified on religious or cultural grounds.
Arranged Marriage	A marriage where families take a lead in selecting a partner, but both parties freely consent. This is not a forced marriage.
Child Marriage	A marriage in which one or both parties are under 18. The Marriage and Civil Partnership (Minimum Age) Act 2022 raised the minimum legal age of marriage in England and Wales to 18 . Any marriage involving a child under 18 is now a forced marriage (as the child cannot legally consent).
Honour-Based Abuse (HBA)	A form of abuse (including forced marriage, female genital mutilation, and honour killings) committed to protect or defend perceived honour of a family or community. In 2025, the government announced a new statutory definition to strengthen protection for victims.
Forced Marriage Unit (FMU)	A joint Home Office and Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office unit that leads on forced marriage policy, outreach, casework, and operates a public helpline.
Forced Marriage Protection Order (FMPO)	A civil order made by the family court to protect a person at risk of forced marriage or to remove them from an existing forced marriage. Breach of an FMPO is a criminal offence.

3.2 Key Legislation and Statutory Guidance (presented in a table)

Legislation / Guidance	Key Provisions	Relevance to this Policy
Anti-social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014 – Section 121	Creates the criminal offence of forced marriage in England and Wales. It is an offence to use violence, threats, coercion or deception to cause a person to marry, or to arrange a marriage for a child under 18. Maximum penalty: 7 years' imprisonment.	The home must report any suspected forced marriage to the police and children's social care.
Marriage and Civil Partnership (Minimum Age) Act 2022	Raised the minimum legal age of marriage to 18 in England and Wales. Any marriage involving a child under 18 is now a forced marriage.	Staff must be aware that any suspicion of a child under 18 being married or taken to marry is a forced marriage.
Family Law Act 1996 – Part 4A	Provides for Forced Marriage Protection Orders (FMPOs) to protect individuals at risk. Breach of an FMPO is a criminal offence (up to 5 years' imprisonment).	The home may support a child in applying for an FMPO via social worker or legal representative.
Serious Crime Act 2015 – Sections 68, 69	Extends the criminal offence to cover conduct carried out outside the UK, and creates an offence of breaching an FMPO.	The home can seek police assistance for prevention and prosecution.
Working Together to Safeguard Children 2026	Replaced the 2023 edition (published March 2026). Expands the range of harms to include honour-, faith- or belief-based abuse , coercive control, and teenage relationship abuse.	Forced marriage is a child protection issue; the home must work with the local safeguarding partnership.

Social Care Common Inspection Framework (SCCIF) 2026	Effective 1 April 2026. Inspects how the home identifies and responds to hidden harms.	Inspectors will review forced marriage awareness, training, and referral records.
HM Government: Handling Cases of Forced Marriage (latest version 2024/2025)	Multi-agency statutory guidance for dealing with forced marriage cases; sets out roles and responsibilities of agencies.	The home must follow this guidance, including the prohibition on approaching the family independently.
Forced Marriage Unit (FMU) guidance	Provides advice for professionals, including safety advice, repatriation assistance, and details on FMPOs.	Staff must have FMU contact details and know when to refer.

4. The Policy

4.1 Policy Statement – Zero Tolerance

Byram House has a **zero-tolerance approach** to forced marriage. We recognise that forced marriage is:

- A violation of a child's human rights.
- A form of child abuse, including physical, sexual and emotional harm.
- A criminal offence under the Anti-social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014.

We will:

- **Protect** children from the risk of forced marriage through vigilance, education, and robust safeguarding procedures.
- **Identify** signs of forced marriage through staff training and awareness.
- **Respond** swiftly and appropriately, without approaching the family or community members independently.
- **Support** victims and potential victims in a child-centred, trauma-informed way.

4.2 Recognising Signs of Forced Marriage

Forced marriage can affect children of any gender, ethnicity, religion, or background. Staff should be alert to the following indicators (this list is not exhaustive):

Category	Signs
Family history	Older siblings who left education early and married early; family history of forced marriage.
Behavioural changes	Emotional distress, depression, anxiety, self-harm, suicidal ideation, eating disorders.
Restriction of freedom	Being kept at home ("house arrest"), not being allowed to socialise with friends, being accompanied to school or medical appointments.
School or education	Sudden or extended absence from school, being taken out of education, drop in academic performance.

Category	Signs
Travel	Vague or concerning talk of a family “holiday” overseas, especially to a country where forced marriage is known to occur; fear of being taken abroad and not allowed to return.
Parental conflict	Child being in serious conflict with parents over choice of partner, career, or lifestyle.
Direct disclosure	Child stating that they fear being forced to marry, or that a family member has told them they must marry a specific person.
Running away / missing	Child going missing from the home or running away.

4.3 Dealing with Concerns – Immediate Actions

DO NOT approach the family, relatives, or community members independently. This could place the child at immediate risk of further harm, including being moved, hidden, or taken abroad.

DO NOT attempt to mediate between the child and family.

DO NOT discuss the suspicion with anyone outside the safeguarding team (including other children).

Immediate steps for staff:

1. **Listen to the child** – in private, without judgement, and reassure them that they have done the right thing by speaking up.

2. **Do not promise confidentiality** – explain that you must share the information to keep them safe.
3. **Gather basic information** – child's full name, date of birth, any known details about the planned marriage (who, where, when, travel plans).
4. **Do not send the child back to the family** if there is an immediate risk.
5. **Report immediately** to the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) – verbally and in writing (on the same day).

4.4 Reporting Procedures (Including Forced Marriage Unit)

The DSL will take the following actions **without delay**:

If there is immediate risk to the child (e.g., planned travel overseas in the next 48 hours, threat of violence):

- Call **999** and request police assistance (the police have powers to protect the child and can use Forced Marriage Protection Orders).
- Also call the **Forced Marriage Unit (FMU)** on **020 7008 0151** (available 24 hours).
- If the child is overseas, the FMU can provide consular assistance to British nationals.

In all other cases (concern raised without immediate risk):

- Make a **referral to the local authority MASH** (Kirklees Front Door Safeguarding Hub) within **one working day**.
- The MASH will consult with the police and, if appropriate, refer to the FMU.
- The DSL will inform the child's **social worker** and the **Responsible Individual**.
- The DSL will consider whether an application for a **Forced Marriage Protection Order (FMPO)** is required (this is normally initiated by the local authority or police, but the home may provide supporting evidence).

In all cases:

- Record all concerns and actions taken in the child's **daily record** (Clear Care) and, where appropriate, an **incident report**.
- If the child is at significant risk of harm, Ofsted will be notified under **Regulation 40** (within 24 hours).

- **Do not inform the family** that a referral has been made unless explicitly authorised by the MASH or police – this could increase risk.

Prohibition on approaching the family: Under **HM Government's Handling Cases of Forced Marriage** statutory guidance, professionals **must not** approach the family or community members independently to "discuss" concerns or "mediate". This can trigger the family to move the child, destroy evidence, or expedite the marriage. The only safe action is a multi-agency response led by children's social care and police.

4.5 Support for Children

At Byram House, children are at the heart of our home. If there is a concern about forced marriage, the home will provide:

- **Ongoing emotional support** – through the child's Keyworker, with additional counselling or therapeutic support (e.g., CAMHS referral) if required.
- **Practical safety support** – the home's ISP will be updated to reduce risk (e.g., restrictions on travel, increased supervision, monitoring of family contact).
- **Advocacy** – the child will be offered access to an **independent advocate** to support them through the safeguarding process.
- **Legal support** – where necessary, the home will work with the social worker and police to ensure the child has access to legal advice (e.g., for FMPO applications).
- **Safety planning** – a multi-agency safety plan will be developed (led by children's social care) to protect the child from further risk.

The home will **not**:

- Blame the child or family.
- Attempt to resolve the situation through informal mediation or negotiation with the family.
- Send the child back to the family if there is an ongoing risk.

4.6 Roles and Responsibilities

Role	Responsibility
Registered Manager	Ensure all staff are trained on forced marriage awareness and this policy. Oversee the home's response and ensure referrals are made. Notify Ofsted under Regulation 40 where required.
All Staff	Be vigilant for signs of forced marriage. Follow the reporting procedures – do not approach the family independently. Report concerns to the DSL immediately.
Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL)	Take lead on all forced marriage concerns. Make referrals to MASH, police and FMU. Liaise with the child's social worker. Ensure the child's ISP is updated.
Forced Marriage Unit (FMU)	Provides advice, support, and consular assistance. Contact via the public helpline (020 7008 0151).

The Registered Manager must ensure that:

- The home maintains up-to-date contact details for the **Forced Marriage Unit, Kirklees MASH, and local police safeguarding team.**
- All new staff receive forced marriage awareness training during induction.
- The policy is reviewed annually.

5. How the Home Trains its Staff About this Policy

Byram House provides structured training to ensure all staff understand and can implement this Forced Marriage Policy effectively.

Training Element	Frequency	Method / Content
Induction	Upon appointment	Face-to-face training covering: definition of forced marriage (distinction from arranged marriage), the criminal law (Anti-social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014), the Marriage and Civil Partnership (Minimum Age) Act 2022 (age 18), warning signs, the prohibition on approaching families, referral pathways (MASH, police, FMU), FMU contact details, recording requirements, and the dual-site operation (62 & 66 Deighton Road).
Annual refresher	Every 12 months	Classroom or virtual session covering updates to legislation (Working Together 2026, SCCIF 2026, honour-based abuse definition), case studies, and refresher on referral pathways.
FMU awareness	At induction and annually	Staff are provided with FMU helpline number (020 7008 0151) and website (www.gov.uk/guidance/forced-marriage).

Staff are required to:

- Read and sign this policy annually.
- Complete all mandatory training.

- Never approach a child's family independently about forced marriage concerns.
- Immediately report any suspicion to the DSL.

6. Related Policies and Guidance

- Safeguarding Policy
- Child/Young Person Sexual Abuse and Exploitation Policy (CSE)
- Preventing Extremism and Radicalisation Policy (Prevent)
- Missing From Care Policy
- Notifications Policy (Regulation 40)
- Police Involvement Policy
- Data Protection Policy
- Children's Homes (England) Regulations 2015
- Anti-social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014 (Section 121)
- Marriage and Civil Partnership (Minimum Age) Act 2022
- Working Together to Safeguard Children 2026
- Social Care Common Inspection Framework (SCCIF) for Children's Homes 2026
- HM Government: Handling Cases of Forced Marriage (latest version)
- Forced Marriage Unit (www.gov.uk/guidance/forced-marriage)

7. Policy Approval and Review Details



Home	Byram House	
Reviewed by	Danyaal Iqbal / Mustafa Amin	Deputy Manager / Registered Manager
Approved by	Stacey Wagstaffe	Responsible Individual
Date	May 2026	