



FORCED MARRIAGE

A SURVIVOR'S HANDBOOK

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SECTION I

INTRODUCTION

Everyone has the right to choose whether to marry, whom they marry and when they marry. You are not wrong for having made the brave decision to escape a forced marriage. Everyone has the right to live in safety and make their own decisions.

HOW TO USE THIS HANDBOOK

This handbook provides practical support and information for anyone who:

- is at risk of a forced marriage
- has experienced a forced marriage
- has escaped from a forced marriage

This includes those returning to the UK from overseas.

You may feel that you have lots of questions and difficult decisions to make. It can be a confusing time, and you might not be sure how to get all the information you need. We have tried to think of everything you might need to know more about. We have provided telephone numbers and websites where you can get more details. There are a range of issues that are covered in this handbook that you will want to think about in the future.

Each year we speak to a large number of survivors of forced marriage. 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.

This handbook may not be able to answer all your questions, but it will act as a good starting point to help you build your new life.

Life after forced marriage can seem daunting or overwhelming. We understand that you are facing a new and potentially frightening situation. But it can help to think about what you want from the future. What are your hopes, dreams and ambitions? You might feel that you are describing an impossible dream, but it will help to focus on what you need to do to build your new life and put you in control of the decisions you make.

Make some notes or write a description of your new life as you would like it to be. This will help you visualise your goals and ultimately achieve them. Looking back at these notes will help you stay focused and motivated.

THE FORCED MARRIAGE UNIT

The Forced Marriage Unit (FMU) was set up in 2005 to support British nationals being forced into marriage overseas and to assist anyone in the UK, regardless of nationality, faced with the prospect of being forced into a marriage. We can also help anyone who has been forced into a marriage, including those who are now being forced to sponsor a visa for their spouse.

Our dedicated team of trained caseworkers understand the issues surrounding forced marriage. We give advice and support to around 1,500 people every year, so we understand the pressures you have experienced.

We also know how difficult it can be to talk about your situation. We offer support and information to anyone who has experienced forced marriage, or is worried about being forced into marriage. You can speak to us in confidence. We won't contact your family, or share information about you with other third parties such as police or social services without your consent, unless you are aged under 18 or if there is an imminent risk of harm. We are here to help you without any judgement.

You can speak to us on **0207 008 0151**

A MESSAGE FROM ANOTHER SURVIVOR

“

My wedding day should have been the happiest day of my life but all I could do was cry. I didn't want to go through with it but felt I had no choice, my family would disown me. Things got really bad and I just felt as if life was so unfair and no one cared about what I thought or what I felt. Why should I be forced to live with someone I didn't even like, let alone love? I left my whole life in the UK behind and didn't get to finish my degree. What was the point of even living anymore?

After I tried to take my own life the first thing I thought about was the shame I'd brought on my family. The same people who had driven me to this. I knew then that I had to stand on my own two feet and make a change. I still love my family but it was time to put myself first. I decided to speak to the Forced Marriage Unit. I didn't always like the options they gave me but I knew I had to do something. It was such a relief to be able to talk to someone who was completely on my side without any judgement and without the fear that they would tell my family. For the first time I realised that I had the right to choose what I wanted to do. I was overwhelmed at first but with the help of the Forced Marriage Unit, my confidence grew.

Sometimes I get upset about what happened to me but now I know I made the right decision to leave and live my own life. I wake up each day looking forward to it and I get excited about the future and meeting someone who I want to be with. When I first left my forced marriage I had so many questions. This book contains all sorts of useful information and points you in the right direction. I hope it answers some of the questions you have.

You may feel lonely now but there are so many people out there who can help you. ”





SECTION 2
YOUR SAFETY

Your first concern should be your safety. If you have left or escaped the threat of a forced marriage, you may need 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 your relatives, friends or community networks, for example local taxi drivers, to try to find you. You should only tell people you trust completely about your plans. Perpetrators can be extremely resourceful.

If you think your family will report you missing you should contact the police to let them know what has happened. They can then tell your family that you are safe and well, but they won't tell them where you are.

The local police will be able to advise you regarding your safety. You can call them on 101 to arrange to speak to an officer about your situation (you may wish to ask to speak to somebody from their safeguarding unit). If you ever feel in immediate danger you should call 999.

The Forced Marriage Unit can put you in touch with agencies that can help to protect and safeguard you, such as the police and social services, but we cannot guarantee your safety.

There are helpful personal safety tips at:

- www.refuge.org.uk – search for safety plan
- www.suzylamplugh.org/Pages/FAQs/Category/personal-safety

If you are under 18 and worried about your safety, you can also contact the NSPCC on 0808 800 5000 or visit www.nspcc.org.uk

Childline also supports children and young people. You can speak to someone on 0800 1111 or go to www.childline.org.uk

GETTING A NEW IDENTITY

Personal information could be used by family members to trace someone who has escaped a forced marriage. You may have to change or conceal personal information to stay safe.

Mobile devices and social media accounts

Take extra care when using your phone as it could be tracked. This is only supposed to happen if you have given your permission but if someone has had access to your phone, they may have enabled tracking without you realising. Think about changing your mobile phone number as soon as possible. Be careful when using social media accounts such as Twitter and Facebook and make sure you switch off the location settings. If you need to call someone who is not trusted make sure you dial 141 before calling them, this will block your number.

Bank account and statements

You should also think about changing your bank account details including the address where statements will be sent and any password including for online banking. If others had access to your account in the past, it may be necessary to open a new account.

Identification documents

You will need identification to open bank accounts, find your NHS number and claim benefits. If you have left your family home, you may have left your ID documents behind. Getting a copy of your birth certificate is a good place to start. You can apply for a copy through the local register office, by post or online at <https://www.gov.uk/order-copy-birth-death-marriage-certificate>

Changing your name

You can change your name legally using the Deed Poll service. You do not need a solicitor's help, and the process can either be completed online or by post. You may have to pay a fee to change 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, search for Deed Poll at <https://www.gov.uk/change-name-deed-poll>. If you are not a British national, or are a dual national, please check with your embassy or consulate whether your Deed Poll would be recognised by your other country of nationality and, if so, whether it needs to be witnessed by a UK solicitor or notary public.

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 Her Majesty's Passport Office and in some cases the police.

For more information go to

<https://www.gov.uk/report-a-lost-or-stolen-passport>

You can apply for a new British passport by post, online or in person (if you make an appointment at your nearest passport office). Full details and an application form are available on: www.gov.uk/renew-adult-passport or www.gov.uk/apply-first-adult-passport. If you have changed your name, you will need to provide proof of your new name, such as your paperwork from the Deed Poll service.

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 go to <https://www.gov.uk/national-insurance>

If you are scared that you may be in danger, the police will make an assessment and 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.

FORCED MARRIAGE PROTECTION ORDERS

If you are concerned about your safety you can also apply for a Forced Marriage Protection Order (FMPO). A FMPO is a legal document issued by a judge, which is designed to protect you according to your individual circumstances. It contains legally binding conditions and directions that require a change in the behaviour of a person or persons trying to force another person into marriage.

The aim of the order is to protect the person who has been, or is being, forced into marriage. Orders can be made in an emergency to protect someone straight away. If someone is issued with one it doesn't mean that they have committed a crime, but if they disobey it, then they can be arrested.

A FMPO could be served on your family members in the UK and it could, for example, instruct them not to take you overseas and, if you are overseas, to ensure that you are brought back safely to the UK.

If you are in a country where the law states that you need someone else's permission to leave, a FMPO could state that the person responsible must grant permission for you to leave.

For more information go to <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/forced-marriage-protection-orders-fl701>

Copies of the leaflets can be found in Arabic, Farsi, Bengali, Punjabi and Urdu.

CRIMINALISATION

The government made forced marriage a criminal offence in 2014 to better protect victims and send a clear message that this practice is unacceptable and will not be tolerated in the UK. In 2017 we made sure that victims of forced marriage will not be publicly identified for the rest of their lives.

In 2018, there were three convictions for the forced marriage offence. The first was in Birmingham where a mother was convicted for forcing her daughter into a marriage in Pakistan. The second and third convictions were a mother and father convicted for forcing their daughter into a marriage in Bangladesh. In 2020 there was a further conviction – of a man in Birmingham convicted of attempting to force his niece into marriage.

Those convictions show that these appalling crimes do not have to stay hidden. They demonstrate that perpetrators can be brought to justice and that survivors like you will be protected.

Going to court

You can tell the court if you are worried about going to court or giving evidence in court. The court has powers to protect vulnerable or intimidated witnesses. If you are not confident speaking English, the court can also arrange an interpreter for you.



SECTION 3
REFUGE AND
HOUSING

After your immediate personal safety, your next priority is likely to be finding somewhere to live. Remaining in the same area as your family can be dangerous, so we often recommend that survivors are relocated to ensure their safety. If you are in any doubt you should change your phone.

REFUGES AND SAFE ACCOMMODATION

Many people who have left a forced marriage find that staying in a refuge is a reasonable short-term solution. There are a number of refuges and other safe accommodation-based support services for domestic abuse victims across the country.

A refuge is a safe house for victims of domestic abuse. 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. Your rent at the refuge may be covered in full by housing benefit, if you are able to claim this (see section on benefits). Staff at the refuge can give you more information about housing, legal and financial matters. They can also help you find out if you are entitled to any financial help, and tell you how to get your name on the local council housing list. There are many refuges across the country and it is important to consider where in the UK you will be safe from family members.

You can contact a refuge yourself by calling the freephone **24-hour National Domestic Abuse Helpline on 0808 2000 247**. Alternatively, someone from the Forced Marriage Unit, the police, your local authority, social services or a support organisation dealing with forced marriage (see list at the end of the handbook) may also be able to refer you to a refuge.

There are many women's refuges across the country. Fewer refuges are open to men. Male victims should call the National Domestic Abuse Helpline 0808 2000 247 or the Men's Advice Line on 0808 801 0327 to get information about refuges. You can also call the Karma Nirvana honour-based abuse/forced marriage helpline on 0800 5999 247.

Both men and women can call Shelter's free 24-hour housing advice line on 0808 800 4444. Citizen's Advice also provides free, confidential information and advice, which may help you in assessing further options. More information is available on their website at <https://www.citizensadvice.org.uk/>. You could also contact local voluntary services such as Women's Aid at <https://www.womensaid.org.uk> to find out what support they can offer you.

BAME support organisations are available to help BAME women and girls obtain specialist refuge accommodation and support. See the list at the end of this handbook.

Local authorities have a general duty to make provision for children who are vulnerable and in need of assistance in their local area. A child is a person under the age of 18. You can call our caseworkers if you want help approaching your local authority.

OTHER HOUSING OPTIONS

If you have nowhere to stay, you can contact your local authority, which will have a Housing Solutions Team. They may be able to provide you with temporary accommodation. You can also add your name to your local council housing list.

Housing Solutions Teams are there to assist people who are homeless, including victims of domestic abuse and forced marriage. You can go to any local authority Housing Solutions Team; it doesn't have to be the one in the area where you live or used to live. They may be able to provide you with temporary accommodation.

You should be aware that if you want to live with your boyfriend or girlfriend, it is possible that the local authority will not be able to house you together – depending on your needs and local circumstances. You might have to live apart for a while.

If you go to a Housing Solutions Team, it is a good idea to take along all of your documentation because you will be asked to produce evidence of your identity. Someone from the Homeless Persons Unit will interview you about your housing needs and you will be told whether or not they can provide you with temporary accommodation, possibly in a refuge, hostel or bed and breakfast.

For more information, go to **www.gov.uk/emergency-housing-if-homeless**

In the longer term, you have different options about where to live. If you are working, you may want to rent a private property, or you may want to think about buying or renting a property through a home ownership scheme or applying for a local authority home.

Following the introduction of the Homelessness Reduction Act, local authorities must now take reasonable steps to try to prevent and/or relieve a person of their homelessness. You must be eligible for assistance, which is dependent on your immigration status.

The local authority will work with you to develop a personalised housing plan. The plan will identify the reasonable steps that the service user and the local housing authority will take to ensure you are able to retain or obtain suitable accommodation.

The local housing authority must also provide free advice and information about homelessness and its prevention. This advice and information must be available to all in the area, even those individuals who are not eligible for assistance. The advice and information must meet the needs of people within the area including, in particular, the needs of certain groups including victims of domestic abuse.

For more information and advice about housing visit:

www.shelter.org.uk

www.mungos.org

www.refuge.org.uk

www.womensaid.org.uk

www.mensadviceline.org.uk

www.stonewallhousing.org (LGBTQ+)







SECTION 4
FINANCES AND
BENEFITS

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. You should always check **GOV.UK** for the latest information specific to your circumstances.

OPENING A BANK OR BUILDING SOCIETY ACCOUNT

If you are eligible for benefits, you will need to have your own bank or building society account before you can claim them, unless you have problems opening or managing an account. If you get a job, your employer will want to pay your salary straight into your account.

You can find some useful information about choosing the right bank account by visiting **www.citizensadvice.org.uk** then going to the section on 'Debt and money' and then to 'Banking.'

REPAYING DEBTS

If you are worried about your debts, try not to panic, but do not ignore the problem. Talk to the people or organisations you owe money to and let them know if you are 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 will be able to give you advice on managing your debts – there is a useful online guide at **www.citizensadvice.org.uk**

The Money and Pensions Service can also provide you with free unbiased financial advice. For more information, go to **<https://singlefinancialguidancebody.org.uk>**. The Money Advice Service is a part of this and can be found at **<https://www.moneyadviceservice.org.uk/en>**. They also operate a phone helpline from Monday to Friday 8am to 6pm on 0800 138 7777.

CLAIMING BENEFITS

If you have a low income, you may be eligible to claim certain benefits to help with living costs. To get them, you will need to complete a means test which involves an assessment of your income and savings. If you now live with a partner, civil partner, husband or wife, their income and savings are also taken into account.

Most benefits are paid by the Department for Work and Pensions. Some common benefits are explained below. You can also go to www.gov.uk/benefits-calculators to use the independent benefits calculator which can help you assess what benefits you may be entitled to. For more information go to <https://www.gov.uk/browse/benefits>

Universal Credit

Universal Credit is a payment to help you with your living costs, which can include housing costs and childcare costs if you are on a low income or out of work. It is paid to you monthly - or twice a month for some people in Scotland. For more information, please go to: <https://www.gov.uk/universal-credit>.

If you need help to pay your bills or cover other costs while you wait for your first Universal Credit payment, you can apply to get an advance.

Universal Credit replaces the following benefits:

- Child Tax Credit
- Housing Benefit
- Income Support
- income-based Jobseeker's Allowance (JSA)
- income-related Employment and Support Allowance (ESA)
- Working Tax Credit

If you currently receive any of these benefits, you cannot claim Universal Credit at the same time.

Universal Credit is being introduced in stages across the UK. You do not need to do anything until you hear from the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) about moving to Universal Credit, unless you have a change in circumstances.

You can apply for Universal Credit online at **www.gov.uk/apply-universal-credit**. You will be asked for your bank, building society or credit union account when you claim. If you do not have one of these, you can call the Universal Credit helpline on 0800 328 5644. More information about how Universal Credit is paid and how you can claim is available at **<https://www.gov.uk/universal-credit/how-to-claim>**.

Citizens Advice (England and Wales) and Citizens Advice Scotland can also help you to make a claim for Universal Credit. Citizens Advice can also support you when moving from an existing benefit to Universal Credit if there has been a change in your circumstances.

You can contact Citizens Advice on 0344 411 1444 in England or 08000 241 220 in Wales, or at **www.citizensadvice.org.uk**

You can contact Citizens Advice Scotland on 0800 023 2581 or at **www.cas.org.uk**

New Style Job Seekers Allowance (New Style JSA)

If you're unemployed and looking for work, or work less than 16 hours a week, you may be able to obtain New Style JSA.

New Style JSA is a fortnightly payment that can be claimed on its own or at the same time as Universal Credit. You can find more information at **<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/new-style-jobseekers-allowance>**.

To get New Style JSA you need to have undertaken paid work and have sufficient National Insurance contributions in the two tax years before the year in which the claim is made.

New Style Employment and Support Allowance (New Style ESA)

If you are not able to work due to a health condition or disability, you may be eligible for New Style ESA. You can find more information at

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/new-style-employment-and-support-allowance>

To get New Style ESA you'll usually need to have been an employee or self-employed and paid National Insurance contributions in the last two to three years. National Insurance credits can also count.

Housing Benefit (due to be replaced by Universal Credit)

You could get Housing Benefit to help you pay your rent if you are on a low income, unemployed or claiming benefits, and if certain criteria apply. Housing Benefit can pay for part or all of your rent. How much you get depends on your income and circumstances. You can apply for Housing Benefit whether you are unemployed or working. For more information go to

<https://www.gov.uk/housing-benefit>

Further help and advice is available at your local Jobcentre or online at

<https://www.gov.uk/browse/benefits>

Child maintenance

Child maintenance is financial support towards your child's everyday living costs when you've separated from the child's other parent.

Where parents are not able to make an arrangement between themselves, you may be able to use the Child Maintenance Service. The service will try to find the other parent to sort out child maintenance for you, work out how much the other parent should pay and take action if payments are not made.

The application fee for the Child Maintenance Service is currently £20. You do not have to pay this if you are a victim of domestic abuse.

To apply to the Child Maintenance Service, or to get impartial advice, you should call 0800 0835 130. More information is available at

<https://www.gov.uk/child-maintenance>

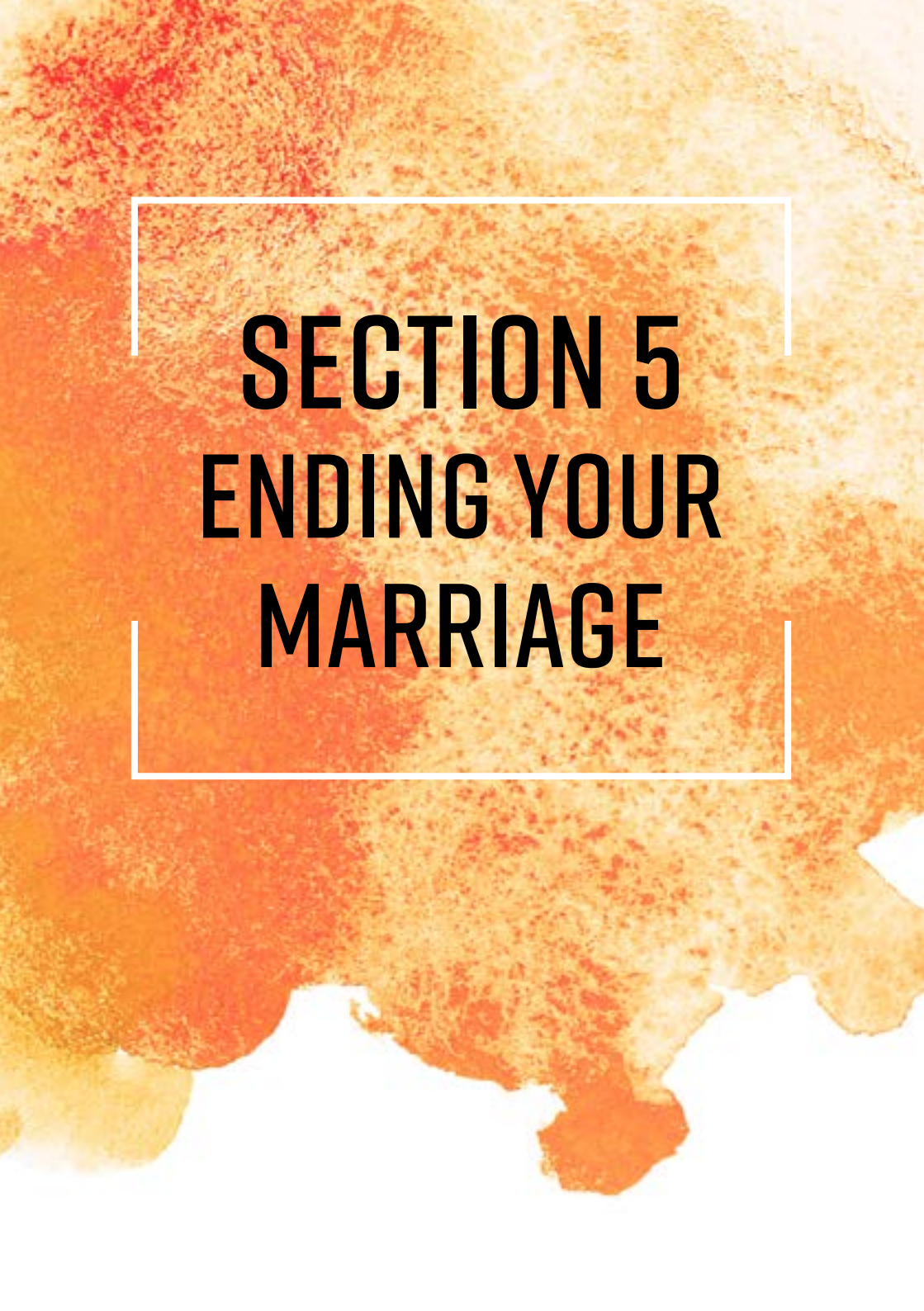
Child Benefit

You are eligible for Child Benefit if you are responsible for bringing up a child who is under 16, or who is under 20 if they stay in approved education or training. Child Benefit is paid every four weeks and there is no limit to the number of children for whom you can claim. Only one person can get Child Benefit for a child. For more information go to **<https://www.gov.uk/child-benefit>**

Healthy Start scheme

The Healthy Start scheme helps low-income pregnant women and parents with young children keep their families healthy by providing vouchers for free fresh milk, infant formula, fresh fruit and vegetables and vitamin supplements. Qualifying pregnant women and children over one and under four years old get one voucher every week, while children under a year old receive two vouchers per week. Vouchers can be spent at participating retailers, including small businesses, milk floats, supermarkets and pharmacies. Health professionals play an important role supporting applications for Healthy Start and providing advice on healthy eating and breastfeeding. More information can be found at

<https://www.healthystart.nhs.uk/>

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SECTION 5

ENDING YOUR

MARRIAGE

If you were forced into a marriage overseas, and that marriage is valid in the country where you got married, it is likely that it will also be valid in the UK. There are two ways to legally end your marriage: through an annulment or through a divorce.

GETTING AN ANNULMENT

If you think your marriage may not be a legal marriage, you can ask the court to 'annul' it. This means that, legally, the marriage has never happened. Marriages can be annulled if they are either:

- not legally valid i.e. 'void'
- defective i.e. 'voidable'

A marriage can be 'voidable' if:

- it has not been 'consummated' (this means you haven't had sex with the person you married since the wedding)
- one of you did not agree to the marriage (for example if you were forced into the marriage or did not have capacity to consent to the marriage)

You can get a marriage annulled at any time after the wedding (unlike a divorce where you have to wait a year). To annul a marriage you will need to fill in a nullity petition, which can be found online: www.gov.uk/how-to-annul-marriage. The judge will look at how long it has been since your wedding took place. If a judge thinks you took too long to make an application, the annulment may not be given. It is advisable to get some legal advice and consider your options.

GETTING A DIVORCE

Another way of dissolving a forced marriage is by getting a divorce. You might need to do this if your marriage took place more than three years ago, or if a solicitor thinks that there is not enough evidence for an annulment. To get a civil divorce, recognised by law, you should contact a solicitor.

There are various grounds that you may be able to use to apply for a divorce. In cases of forced marriage, the most likely ground for divorce is 'unreasonable behaviour'. For more information go to www.gov.uk/divorce

Religious divorces, such as a 'Talaq' or a 'Get', are not usually legally valid in the UK.

LEGAL HELP

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 are eligible and explore options at gov.uk/civil-legal-advice

You can also speak to a solicitor to discuss your options. We cannot recommend individual solicitors or firms but you can research these at www.lawsociety.org.uk

Additional information about legal help can be found at www.citizensadvice.org.uk

VISAS

If you have been forced to marry someone from overseas, you may also be forced to sponsor a spouse visa so the spouse can join you in the UK.

A person on a spouse visa must spend five years in the UK before they are eligible to live in the UK permanently. This is known as the 'probationary period'. If at the end of the probationary period you are still married, your spouse can apply to live here permanently – this is called indefinite leave to remain (ILR).

The Immigration Rules that need to be satisfied for the spouse settlement application are:

- You met each other before you married
- You are legally married to each other
- Your marriage is not polygamous or bigamous (this means you are not also married to anyone else and your spouse is not married to anyone else)
- Your spouse is not under 18 years of age and you are not under 18 years of age
- You both intend to live together permanently as husband and wife in the UK
- You are present and settled in the UK
- You can support yourselves and any dependants without any help from public funds (this means that you are not claiming any benefits)
- Suitable accommodation is available
- Your spouse provides an original English language test certificate

REFUSING TO SPONSOR A VISA

If you are being forced or pressured into sponsoring a spouse visa, the Forced Marriage Unit 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 Public Statement saying that you do not support his or her application. A caseworker in the Forced Marriage Unit can provide you with advice on how to write your statement. They will also talk you through what happens afterwards. If you feel that you cannot make a Public Statement, perhaps because of pressure from your family, we may still be able to help you.

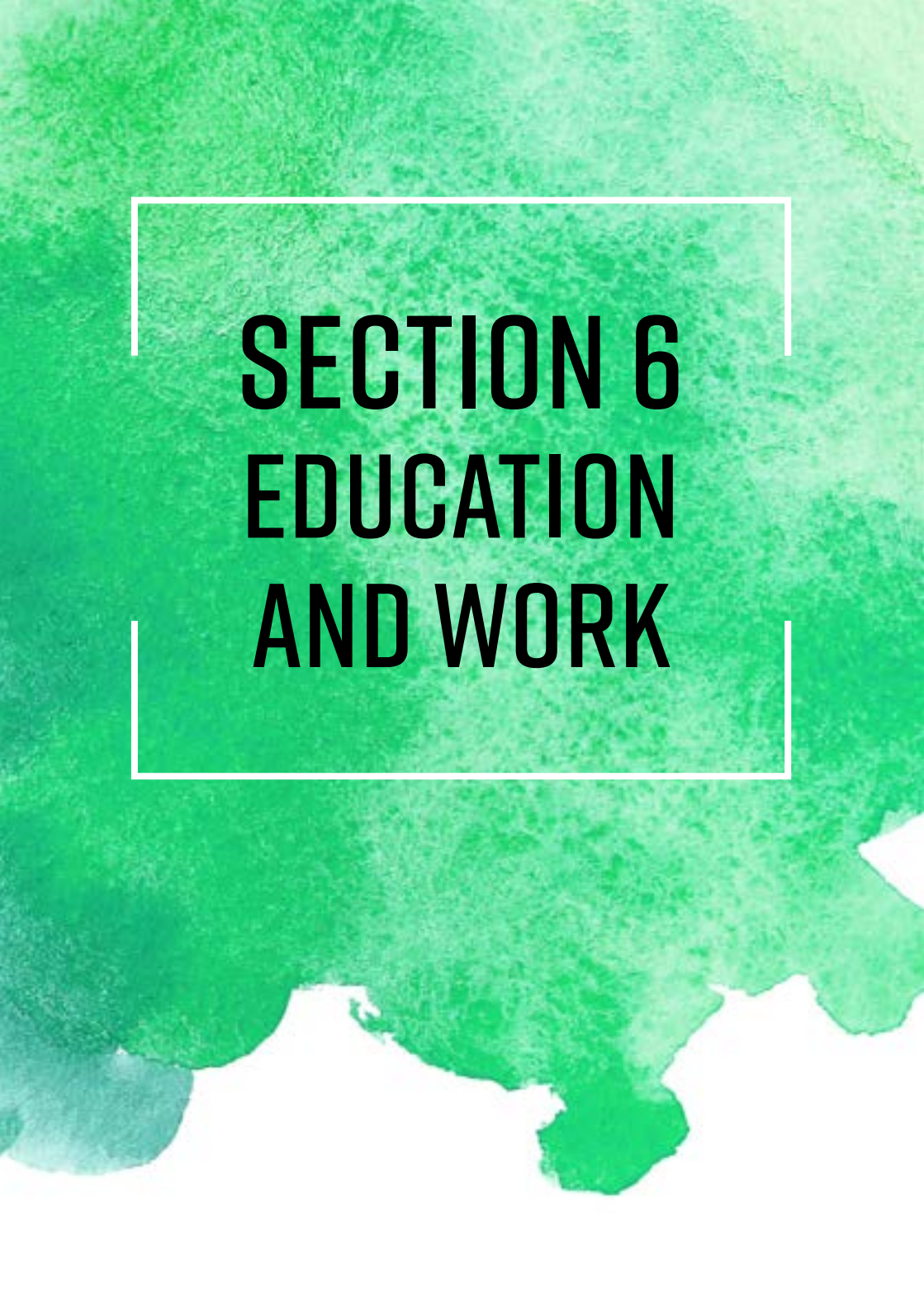
One of our caseworkers will be able to explain your options in more detail. If your husband or wife is already in the UK and you are being forced to sponsor their ILR, we or our UK Visas and Immigration (UKVI) colleagues may be able to help you. In some cases, spouse visas can be cancelled and your husband or wife may be asked to leave the country. Our caseworkers will be able to explain to you the situations where this might happen.

Destitution Domestic Violence (DDV) concession

Some spouses are forced to stay in abusive relationships because they are in the country on a spousal visa, and unable to access support services during the probationary period. The DDV concession helps victims of domestic abuse access public funds while they make a claim for ILR. These funds could be used to pay for a place in a refuge, for instance. This support is available for three months. There might also be other sources of support for those who did not enter the UK on a spousal visa.

Contact a properly accredited immigration solicitor or advisor for further advice and assistance.





**SECTION 6
EDUCATION
AND WORK**

STUDYING

Once your immediate priorities are taken care of, you may 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 is worth doing some research and thinking carefully about the type of study you would like to do. A good place to start is the National Careers Service website which also includes details of a free helpline:

<https://nationalcareers.service.gov.uk/find-a-course>

You may want to study full time, part time or at evening classes. 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 is a range of information and financial support available to help you get the skills and qualifications you need.

If you are under 18 years old

If you are under the age of 16, children's social services will work with the local authority to secure a school place so you can work towards sitting your exams.

If you are aged 16 or 17, you have the option to enrol at college to take AS/A levels or a technical or applied qualification. Technical or applied qualifications can:

- help you specialise in a specific technical job (level 3 tech levels)
- gain employment or progress to another technical level (level 2 technical certificates)
- continue general education at an advanced level through applied learning (applied general qualifications)

For more information go to **<https://www.gov.uk/further-education-courses>**

If you are 18 or over

If you are 18 or over, your educational options include a wide range of courses from basic maths and English courses, access courses, Higher National Diplomas (HNDs) or foundation degrees, or going to university. Universities and colleges are not just for school leavers. Every year, thousands of adults who have been out of education for some time choose to develop their skills by going into further or higher education. 'Mature students' are people who are 21 or over when they enter the first year of a higher education course. If you do not have the qualifications you need to get on to a higher education course, you can take an access course to get the skills you will need.

Access courses are aimed at adults (19 years or over) who want to get onto 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

If you are 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 parent such as a guardian) 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.

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

If you are starting an undergraduate course, you will have to meet a number of expenses at the beginning of the first term. There may be financial help available from your chosen institution and from the government. A summary of financial help for students taking courses at further education colleges is available at <https://www.gov.uk/further-education-courses/financial-help>

Basic skills

There is 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 is on offer in your area by calling 0800 100 900.

You can find information on all your learning options on the following websites:

<https://www.gov.uk/browse/education>

www.findcourses.co.uk

www.careerconnect.org.uk

www.bbc.co.uk/skillswise

Looking for work

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

A useful starting point for looking for work is www.gov.uk/browse/working/finding-job

Many jobs are now listed online at www.gov.uk/find-a-job

Jobcentre Plus can also help you find work opportunities, whether you want something full-time or part-time, temporary or permanent. Go to www.gov.uk/contact-job-centre-plus to speak to a local personal adviser. They will be able to help you find the kind of job that is right for you, whether you are 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.





SECTION 7
HEALTH

Call 999 in a medical emergency. This is when someone is seriously ill or injured and their life is at risk.

If it is not a life-threatening emergency and you or the person you're with doesn't need immediate medical attention, please consider other options before dialling 999:

- self care at home
- calling NHS 111
- talking to a pharmacist
- visiting or calling your GP
- going to your local NHS walk-in centre
- going to your local urgent care centre or your local minor injuries unit
- making your own way to your local accident and emergency (A&E) department (arriving in an ambulance doesn't mean you'll be seen any quicker)

More information can be found at <https://www.nhs.uk/service-search/other-services/Urgent-Care/LocationSearch/1824>

NHS 111

NHS 111 can help if you have an urgent medical problem and you are not sure what to do. The service is available at all hours every day of the week. To get help from NHS 111, go to **111.nhs.uk** or call 111.

You will be asked questions about your symptoms on the website, or by speaking to a fully trained adviser on the phone. You can ask for a translator if you need one.

Depending on your situation you can:

- find out what local service can help you
- be connected to a nurse, emergency dentist, pharmacist or GP
- get a face-to-face appointment if you need one
- be told how to get any medicine you need
- get self care advice

Domestic abuse

If you are concerned about domestic abuse go to <https://www.nhs.uk/live-well/healthy-body/getting-help-for-domestic-violence/>

If you are a woman you can:

- call the freephone National Domestic Abuse Helpline on 0808 2000 247 (open 24 hours)
- go to www.refuge.org.uk

If you are a man you can:

- call the freephone Men's Advice Line on 0808 801 0327 (Monday to Friday 9am to 5pm)
- contact Mankind on 01823 334 244 or at www.mankind.org.uk

Sexual violence

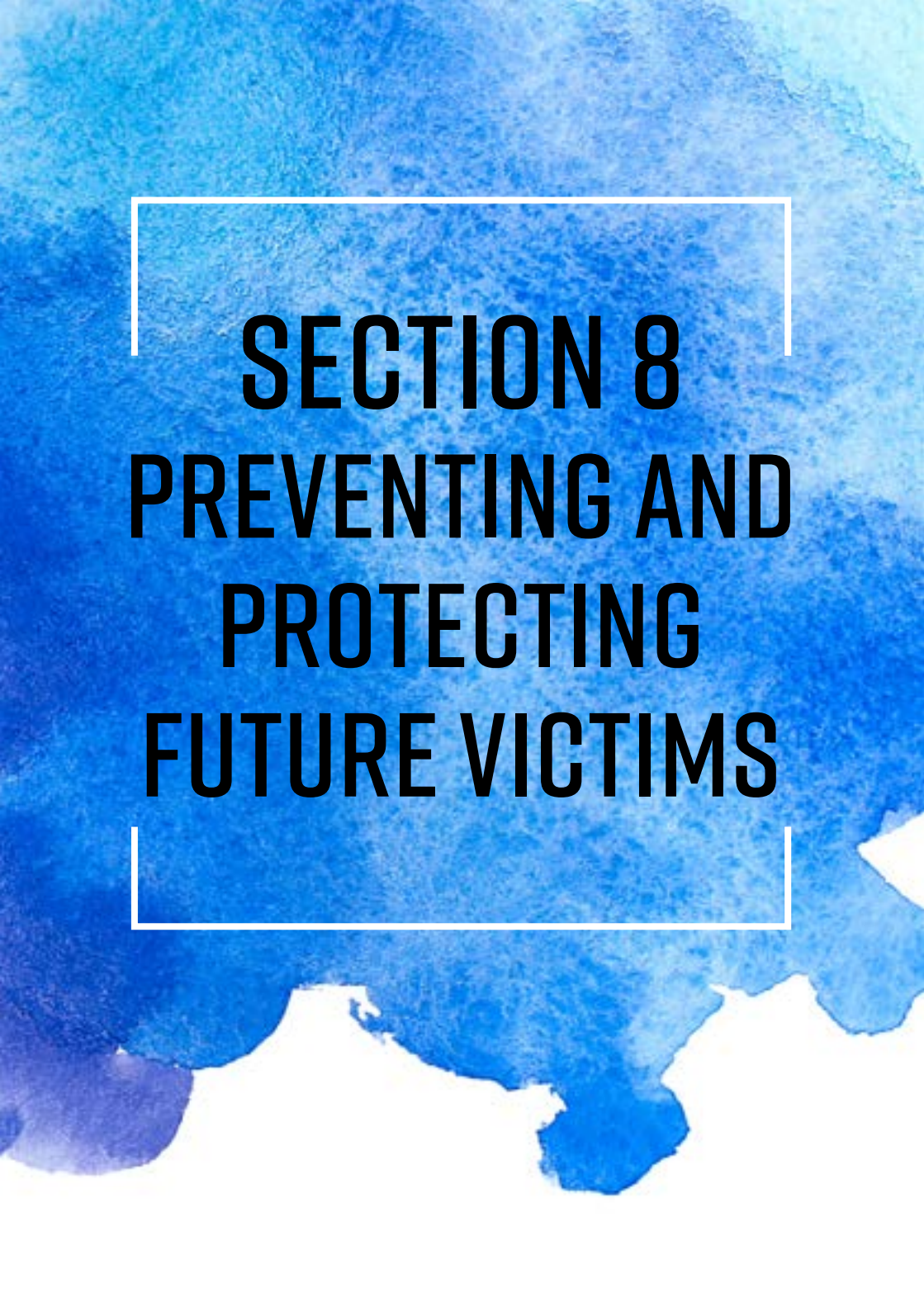
If you have experienced sexual violence or rape it is important to get help. The following link provides NHS guidance and can help you get support: <https://www.nhs.uk/live-well/sexual-health/>.

There are a number of sexual assault referral centres (SARCs) which offer medical, practical and emotional support: <https://www.england.nhs.uk/commissioning/health-just/sexual-assault-and-abuse/#sarcs>

Mental health

A mental health crisis often means that you no longer feel able to cope or be in control of your situation. Mental health is just as important as physical health, and whether you're stressed or depressed, there are people you can talk to and organisations that can help:

- **www.mind.org.uk** – or call 0300 123 3393
- **www.samaritans.org** – or call 116 123
- **<https://www.nhs.uk/using-the-nhs/nhs-services/mental-health-services>**



**SECTION 8
PREVENTING AND
PROTECTING
FUTURE VICTIMS**

If you have left or escaped a forced marriage, you may well find that your other siblings or family members may also be at risk of forced marriage or 'honour'-based abuse.

IN THE UK

The Forced Marriage Unit can help individuals in the UK even if they are not a British national. We can talk through their options and provide advice and support. For example, we could contact the police or social services if you want their assistance to help a sibling or friend leave the family home, or we could help them find refuge accommodation. Every situation is different and we will only take action if they want us to unless there is an imminent risk of harm. Safety is the top priority. For more information:

- visit the Forced Marriage Unit website at <https://www.gov.uk/stop-forced-marriage>
- call 0207 008 0151 to speak to one of the team
- email fmufco.gov.uk

VICTIMS WITH LEARNING DISABILITIES

If you know or suspect that somebody with a learning disability is being, or is going to be, forced into a marriage but you feel that they would lack the capacity to be able to consent to the marriage, or to understand the implications/ consequences of marriage, you should contact the Forced Marriage Unit on 0207 008 0151 or email fmufco.gov.uk. The Forced Marriage Unit can provide advice, including making a referral to social services to request a capacity assessment to be undertaken.

LGBTQ+

Some people from the lesbian, gay, bisexual and trans-gendered communities also experience pressure from their families to enter into marriages that they don't want. Forced Marriage Unit caseworkers understand the issues that people from LGBTQ+ communities can face; we are here to help talk through the options with you.

OVERSEAS

If you have concerns about a British national overseas you should contact the Forced Marriage Unit by calling +44 (0)20 7008 0151 or emailing **fmu@fco.gov.uk**. We can discuss options to help them, including how to help them get back to the UK safely. How we do this will depend on which country they are in and the laws of that country. Some countries' laws will mean that they will need permission to leave that country, possibly from a relative, or from the local authorities. Each person's case will be different and their safety is the priority.

If you are overseas, you can contact the nearest British High Commission or Embassy to discuss the options available: **<https://www.gov.uk/world/organisations>**. In some cases, consular staff may be able to assist individuals overseas to identify temporary safe accommodation while waiting to return to the UK.

TRAVEL ARRANGEMENTS

If the victim's British passport has been lost or taken away, the British High Commission, Consulate or Embassy can help arrange emergency travel documents, and can help arrange flights back to the UK. The British High Commission can help the victim work through funding options to pay for the cost of the flight.

ARRIVING IN THE UK

If the victim has a friend or relative who can meet them at the airport when they arrive back in the UK, the Forced Marriage Unit will let the contact know the flight details. If they are able to stay safely in the UK with a friend or relative the Forced Marriage Unit can act as a point of contact to help facilitate this.

With the individual's permission, the Forced Marriage Unit will also refer them to Southall Black Sisters (SBS), a charity which helps people who have returned to the UK following a forced marriage or intended forced marriage. There are other agencies which offer this type of service as well.

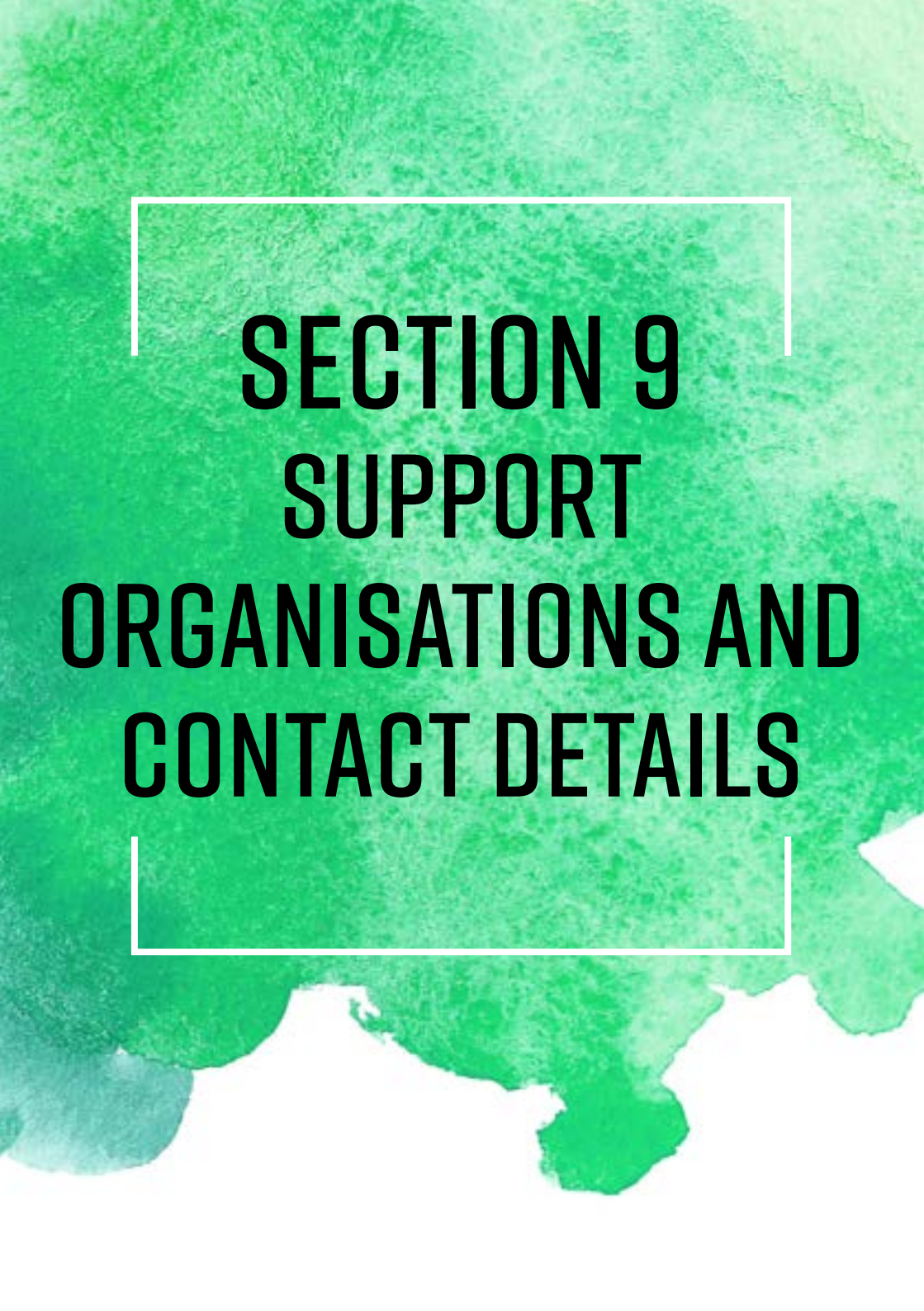
SBS can provide a range of services for people in this position, including:

- meeting them at the airport
- helping them access safe accommodation
- helping them access funding
- meeting their long-term needs such as permanent housing, welfare support and entering or re-entering education or employment
- helping with instituting and coping with legal proceedings
- ensuring that they access medical and counselling services

If the victim is an adult, and they do not have anywhere to stay, the Forced Marriage Unit may be able to help find refuge accommodation.

The National Domestic Abuse Helpline run by Refuge holds information about refuge across the UK. You can call them on 0808 2000 247

If they have any particular needs that have not already been mentioned, please tell the Forced Marriage Unit and we will do our best to make suitable arrangements for the victim's arrival.



SECTION 9
SUPPORT
ORGANISATIONS AND
CONTACT DETAILS

Police in an emergency	999
Police in a non-emergency	101
Ashiana Network (London) – specialist refuge, advice, support and counselling services for black and minority ethnic women and girls aged 14+	0208 539 0427
Childline	0800 1111
Imkaan – Black feminist organisation addressing violence against Black and minoritised women and girls	020 7842 8525
IKWRO – Women’s Rights Organisation (East London) – helps Middle Eastern and Afghan women and girls living in the UK	0207 920 6460
Forward (North London) – African women-led organisation working to end violence against women and girls	0208 960 4000
Freedom Charity	0845 607 0133
Karma Nirvana ‘honour’-based abuse/forced marriage helpline	0800 5999 247
London Black Women’s Project	0208 472 0528
Men’s Advice Line	0808 801 0327
National Domestic Abuse Helpline	0808 2000 247
Respond – for victims with learning disabilities	0207 383 0700

Samaritans	116123
Shakti Women's Aid (Edinburgh)	0131 475 2399
Sharan Project – charity providing support and advice to vulnerable women, particularly of South Asian origin, who have been or are at risk of being disowned due to abuse or persecution	0844 504 3231
Shelter – housing advice	0808 800 4444
Southall Black Sisters – an all-Asian organisation offering advice, counselling and other support	0208 571 9595
Stonewall Housing – LGBT housing advice	0207 359 5767
Switchboard LGBT+ helpline	0300 330 0630
Throughcare Housing and Support (Birmingham)	0121 554 3920



