



Transnational Marriage Abandonment (TMA) training - handout

Facts

Transnational Marriage Abandonment (TMA) happens when a sponsor, usually a spouse or partner, or their family members, abandons their visa-holding spouse or partner abroad, often without financial resources, with the aim of preventing them from returning to the UK and accessing support.

There are 3 types of TMA:

- spouses migrate to the UK upon marriage to join their partners and are then subjected to abuse that compels them to leave and return to their country of origin
- spouses come to the UK following marriage and are then abused and taken back to their country of origin, through coercion or deception, and the perpetrator returns to the UK with/without the children
- perpetrators go abroad for the purposes of marriage but then fail to sponsor their partners to the UK.

TMA often relies on the collusion of family members and spouses, involving multiple perpetrators. It can also involve other forms of domestic abuse, sexual violence, domestic servitude and dowry abuse.

TMA creates social stigma due to views on gender, marriage and family honour and often causes destitution and homelessness.

Law

Since January 2024, victims of transnational marriage abandonment can apply for a visa to return to the UK through a dedicated visa route. If an applicant meets the eligibility criteria, they can apply for a visa from their home country. If successful, the visa grants them indefinite leave to remain, allowing victims to return to the UK.

An applicant applying from outside the UK must have been abandoned outside the UK but **it makes no difference if the visa has expired.**

Harms

Physical abuse
Psychological harm / emotional abuse
Isolation
Self harm or suicide
Alcoholism and drug use
Loss of children / impact on children
Modern slavery / domestic servitude
Women left with no source of income
Insecure immigration status in UK
Shame of being “returned” to home country/unable to return to parents
Loss of dowry
Damaged reputation because the woman is no longer seen as ‘pure’
Deemed unmarriageable
Damage to family’s reputation with direct impact on female relatives

Reasons

Dowry abuse
To 'fix the man up'
Modern slavery / domestic servitude
To gain spousal visa
To have children
To get the community 'off their back'

Safeguarding

If someone is in immediate danger, call **999**.

If you are concerned that a child may be at risk of / experiencing abuse, then you need to make a **report** to the MASH (Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub)/ Children's Social Care or the equivalent in your area.

If you think someone is being taken abroad, or has already been taken abroad:

Call the **Forced Marriage Unit (FMU)** on 020 7008 0151

If you talk to a child or adult victim, please bear in mind the following:

- Find a private space
- Use independent translators (if needed)
- Avoid judgemental language
- Maintain a record of your conversation
- Don't promise not to share information

***NB.** Never approach the family (unless advised by Social Care).

Remember to safeguard siblings and acquaintances.

Remember cultural norms when risk assessing.

Always seek legal advice.

Tips for professionals

Explain the right to return and help the victim get legal advice
Provide holistic support to meet the many needs victims will have
Signpost to VAWG/DV agencies
Take a detailed statement to support the victim, including current situation and financial information
Support planning the victim's return to the UK
Always seek legal advice!

Professionals might be asked to support victim survivors with statements.

A statement by the victim survivor should include:

- Where the victim was born, family members, residence etc
- history of immigration to the UK and current status
- history of abuse and abandonment
- current situation - current risks, cultural, economic and emotional impact (including on any children), health problems, housing situation, finances etc
- any proceedings e.g. divorce or children, initiated in the UK
- reasons for any delays in seeking help to return to the UK

Statements should be collected directly from the victim and should be reviewed by them before being shared.

Evidence that can support a case:

- copies of travel documents (may need to apply)
- letters from family/friends/agencies providing support

- Police reports/GP records

Helpline numbers

Police: 999

The Forced Marriage Unit (FMU) offers advice and support to victims of forced marriage and TMA as well as guidance to professionals.

Helpline open 9am - 5pm Monday to Friday

Tel: **020 7008 0151**

Email: fmufco@fco.gov.uk

Southall Black Sisters - 020 8571 0800

[SBS No Recourse Fund - Southall Black Sisters](#)

Muslim Women's Network - 0800 999 5786

[Muslim Women Network \(mwnuk.co.uk\)](http://mwnuk.co.uk)

Karma Nirvana - 0800 5999 247

[Karma Nirvana](#)

Sharan Project - 0844 504 3231

[Sharan | Supporting South Asian Women in the UK](#)

Halo Project - 01642 683 045

[Get Help \(haloproject.org.uk\)](http://haloproject.org.uk)

Rights of Women - 020 7251 6575

[Home | Rights of Women](#)

Email: bookings@sundialcentre.org

Website: www.sundialcentre.org