



FRONTLINE AGENCIES: IMPORTANT POINTS

RESPECT THE PERSON'S CHOICES: Disclosures of fear should not be dismissed – for many people, seeking help from an agency is a last resort and therefore all disclosures should be taken seriously.

DO NOT INVOLVE THE FAMILY: Involving families in such cases is dangerous. It may increase the risk of serious harm.

DO NOT USE COMMUNITY LEADERS, NEIGHBOURS, AND RELATIVES AS INTERPRETERS: People may feel embarrassed to discuss personal issues in front of them and sensitive information may be passed on to others and place the victim in danger.

INTERVIEW THEM IN A PRIVATE PLACE: Never speak to them in the presence of “friends.”

EXPLAIN THEIR OPTIONS: Options victims have include seeking legal protection; leaving their family, starting a new life and possibly having to remain in hiding or live a life of ostracism and isolation; prosecute their family; or return to the family and hope the situation can be resolved. All the risks must be explained. There may be serious risk of harm if they choose to return to the family. To leave and start a new life can make them extremely vulnerable.

FUTURE CONTACTS: Establish whether they can be contacted in confidence at work, school, college, or through a trusted friend or organisation. If they have moved, do not meet the person at their new address, refuge or friend's house as you may be followed.

CONFIDENTIALITY: Confidentiality and information sharing are going to be extremely important for anyone in a threatened situation.

DO NOT ENCOURAGE, INITIATE OR FACILITATE FAMILY COUNSELLING, MEDIATION, ARBITRATION AND RECONCILIATION: Mediation and arbitration can place someone at risk of further emotional and physical abuse whether these are offered by Sharia councils, Muslim Arbitration Tribunals, imams and religious or professional groups.

PERSONAL SAFETY ADVICE: If someone is planning to leave or the perpetrators suspect they might leave, they should take measures to ensure their safety and assess risk.

UNDER 18 EX-MUSLIMS: Ultimately, the first concern should be for the welfare of the young person. They may be at risk of significant harm if they are returned to their family. In these situations, police and Children and Young People's Services should feel confident about justifying their actions, because experience shows that if information is shared with their family and friends it may place the person in danger.