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'Take action on forced marriages' say MPs

By **Anika Bourley**

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Schools are not doing enough to openly tackle the problems of forced marriage for fear of upsetting parents or the community, a report by MPs warns today.

And schools should also be forced to teach children about domestic violence and honour-based crimes, the Home Affairs Select Committee said.

The committee's report was published today and follows a report released yesterday by the Muslim Arbitration Tribunal (MAT), which said more than 70 per cent of marriages in the Muslim community which involve a foreign spouse have some element of coercion or force.

The MPs' report said education on domestic violence issues in schools was "at best variable and at worse non-existent". It condemned that there was no statutory requirement for schools to educate on abuse issues.

The committee said it was "alarmed" by the "evident resistance" of some schools and local councils to displaying information on domestic violence.

It read: "In the case of forced marriage, some schools appear resistant to allow discussion of the issue, owing to fear of offending parents and communities.

"Whilst schools should retain discretion about the most appropriate way to display materials, it is clear from survivors' accounts that schools can provide a lifeline to vulnerable pupils by providing information on support services.

"We strongly recommend that the Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF) take steps to ensure that all schools are promoting materials on forced marriage, whilst allowing them to retain discretion on the details."

Keighley MP Ann Cryer, who sits on the committee, said many schools in the North of England remained wary of putting up posters to make it clear about available help.

She said: "I do not think any of the schools in my constituency would allow me to come in and talk about forced marriage although I am an authority on the subject. They would be absolutely terrified of upsetting parents and the community."

The report also calls for it to be compulsory to include the issues as part of the sex and relationships curriculum and the system where teachers ask for publicity material to be changed.

The DCSF should send out the materials to schools to ensure they have them.

MPs also called for ministers to look at an awareness campaign to raise its profile, similar to road safety campaigns such as Think!

Meanwhile, the MAT says in its report the issue of forced marriages has "loomed within the Muslim community without being noticed for the past two decades".

This year the Forced Marriage (Civil Protection) Act comes into force which will give victims and third parties the right to prevent a forced marriage.

e-mail: newsdesk@telegraphandargus.co.uk

7:15am Friday 13th June 2008

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Posted by: [albion, west riding](#) on **11:31am Fri 13 Jun 08**

There is too much fear of upsetting certain people in this country full stop.

[Quote](#) | [Report this post](#)

Posted by: [cityhall, bradford](#) on **2:55pm Fri 13 Jun 08**

Considering the importance of this report are we going to have a comment by Bradford Council ?

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Posted by: [Homer, West Yorkshire](#) on **3:07pm Fri 13 Jun 08**

I have to agree with Albion, I can understand avoiding racial attacks but people should be able to say what they please.

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Posted by: flowerbean on [4:51pm Fri 13 Jun 08](#)

bradford council speaks out on muslim practises. is it not the 1st of april??

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Posted by: Hatchetface, Leeds on [4:58pm Fri 13 Jun 08](#)

So, on the one hand we MUST respect Muslim culture and allow them to do as they please or suffer the wrath? And then on the other WE MUST step in and stop something that has been part of their culture since time began? Yeah right...get on with it, you made your beds you lie in it.

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Posted by: sam, bradford on [6:54pm Fri 13 Jun 08](#)

i knew as soon as i read this story that the usual bunch of racist losers would comment on it i bet u rush to the t&a website every day hoping for a story about muslims so you can get all your venom out and then go to your local bnp meetings, honestly guys get a life!

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Posted by: albion, west riding on [9:22pm Fri 13 Jun 08](#)

sam wrote:
i knew as soon as i read this story that the usual bunch of racist losers would comment on it i bet u rush to the t&a website every day hoping for a story about muslims so you can get all your venom out and then go to your local bnp meetings, honestly guys get a life!

We dont see many posts from you on other topics, do we?

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Posted by: mick, Bradford on [12:46am Sat 14 Jun 08](#)

Sam seems to think that any criticism of Islam is RACIST.
Could he/she explain how so?

Sam do you agree or disagree with the statment in the article?

*"...by the **Muslim** Arbitration Tribunal (MAT), which said more than 70 per cent of marriages in the Muslim community which involve a foreign spouse have some element of coercion or force."*

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