Report launch

JAN Trust is launching the report ‘CONSENT MATTERS – Towards effective prevention of forced marriages within the Pakistani community in the UK’ in which we argue against the criminalisation of forced marriages and for a grass-root led approach.

JAN Trust

JAN Trust is an award winning charity based in Haringey that was founded in 1989 with the aim of improving the lives of Black, Asian, minority ethnic, refugee and asylum seeking (BAMER) women and youth by empowering them to overcome the barriers to inclusion they face.

Over the years the charity has developed and expanded rapidly into a distinguished, well trusted and reputable organisation serving communities throughout Haringey, London, the UK and internationally.

JAN Trust aims to support BAMER women to integrate into society by providing a variety of training, services and activities.

Additionally, we provide advice & guidance to women as well as raising awareness and preventing violence against women.

Over time, JAN Trust has expanded to serve communities of diverse ethnic backgrounds and we have engaged with approximately 50,000 women and 13,000 youth from over 80 ethnicities since we were established in 1991.

Our work has been recognised by a number of key dignitaries including the Deputy Prime Minister Nick Clegg, the former Prime Minister Gordon Brown, Rt Hon Eric Pickles MP Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government, Mayor of London Boris Johnson, and Lord Sheikh.

MUJBOOR project – against forced marriages

In the past 20 years JAN Trust has supported thousands of forced marriage victims and the cases have been rising. As a result, we created the Mujboor (Urdu for forced/desperation) project in April 2011 to effectively eradicate forced marriages.
The project is based on a strategy of dialogue and cooperation with the communities at risk in order to tackle the issue from ground-level.

The report

The report highlights the key issues associated with forced marriages and suggests ways towards effective prevention. We believe that the criminalisation of forced marriages will push this cultural practice deeper underground and will result in victims being placed under even greater pressure from their family and community to remain silent, as well as at a severe risk of retaliation attacks if they do seek help.

In 2011, 78% of victims were female, 56% of victims were under the age of 21 and 29% of victims were under the age of 17, with the Pakistani community making up 56% of cases handled by the Forced Marriage Unit (FMU). Therefore, JAN Trust consulted with over 1,000 grass roots Pakistani women over a period of 3 years from 2008-2011. 85% of women stated that a forced marriage had occurred in their family but crucially, 77% said that they would not approach the police for further help if faced by or in a forced marriage. These women stressed that they did not want to incriminate their relatives as this often leads to a complete break with their family and community and can also result in a higher risk of retaliation acts after bringing public ‘shame’ on the family.

This is particularly important in light of the government’s move to criminalise forced marriages as JAN Trust predicts that the already high levels of underreporting will rise substantially. In order to limit underreporting and the severity of its impact on victims and affected communities, we are calling for a grass-roots led approach to combating forced marriages.