



Ask Arita



Preventing crime, protecting the public and helping those in need



Arita's photo story

DAY 3

MY FAMILY ARE SO ANGRY WITH ME. BUT I REALLY LIKE JADE...

Cousin

Who was that girl earlier?

You were holding hands.

I've got to tell your mum.



I NEED TO TELL JADE MY SECRET



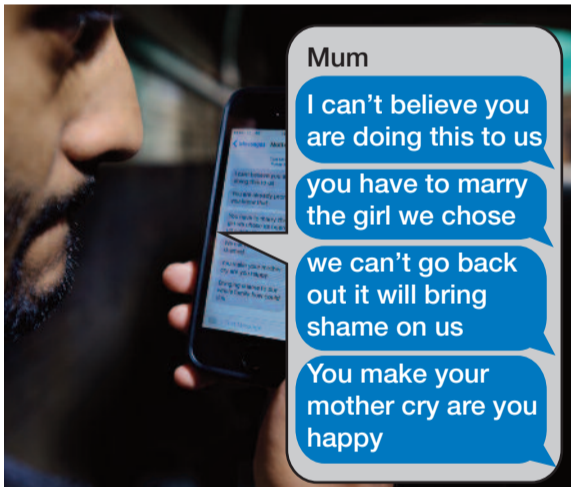
Mum

I can't believe you are doing this to us

you have to marry the girl we chose

we can't go back out it will bring shame on us

You make your mother cry are you happy



IS THIS NORMAL?

Dear Arita

I'm going to a work colleague's wedding this autumn and she is really happy and excited to be getting married, but it's something her parents arranged for her. Is this normal? Should I say something to someone about getting this stopped?

Sandra, Coventry

ARITA SAYS Hi Sandra, it sounds as if your friend is really excited about getting married and is really looking forward to it! An arranged marriage is very different to a forced marriage. In an arranged marriage parents or families often take a leading role in choosing a partner for their son or daughter, but both people getting married are truly consenting and are very happy with the arrangement. Arranged marriages are a tradition that have gone on for thousands of years in many different cultures and there are many successful arranged marriages. A forced marriage is where one or both parties do not want to marry and is now a criminal offence. From what you have described, your friend is entering into an arranged marriage and is extremely happy to do so. Wish her well!

My daughter has gone off the rails – how can I get her back?

Dear Arita

I have lived in the UK for 20 years and I own a number of successful businesses here. My children were all born here, and my eldest daughter is now 17 years old. She is the apple of my eye, but I recently found out she had a boyfriend – something which I am very strongly against. My wife and I want her to get married one day, and help advise her on who would be best to choose. I shouted at my daughter when I found out about the boy, and she has run away to a friend's house and is refusing to come home. I regret shouting at her but I can't be happy about their relationship. I want her to come home but when she does I'm torn about what to do.

Zain, 45, Sandwell

ARITA SAYS Zain, it is quite clear that you have a strong love for your daughter and you want the very best for her. You chose

to bring your family up in the UK and as a consequence, your daughter was born here and is a UK national. Your daughter is free to make her own choices about relationships and decide who she wants to marry. Your daughter has kept the fact that she has a boyfriend away from you as she rightly suspected that you would disapprove. As a consequence she has now run away from home and I imagine that she is as equally as upset and devastated by the whole situation as you are. Your daughter clearly wants to make her own relationship choices and would undoubtedly want you to be part of her life going forward. Any kind of emotional or physical pressure that you place on your daughter to marry amounts to a criminal offence for which you or any other party involved can be arrested, and if convicted, the crime can be punishable by 7 years in prison.

If I leave who will protect my mum?

Dear Arita

I'm 26 and live at home with my parents. My mum and dad keep fighting as my dad wants me to marry his friend's son, but my mum (and me) think I should be able to choose who I marry. My dad says I'm getting too old and need to be married soon, but I'm not ready. This is causing huge fights in the family and my dad has hit and beaten me and my mum lots of times when we are arguing about it. I want to move out and get away from him and this idea of marriage he has, but I don't want to leave my mum as I know he will take his anger at me out on her.

Zara, 26, Wolverhampton

FM facts!

You can apply for a forced marriage protection order on the GOV.UK website. For help filling out the forms, go to the Citizens Advice Bureau. You can apply for a FMO for yourself, or on behalf of someone else if you're one of the following:

- A relative or friend
- A voluntary worker or someone else official who's been asked for help
- Any other person with the permission of the court

ARITA SAYS Zara, what your father is doing to both you and your mother is against the law. He is physically assaulting you both and exerting pressure on you to get married, which also amounts to a criminal offence. What he is doing is wrong and you should not be subjected to this behaviour. Please go to the police immediately. Specialist help is available for both you and your mum, to support you to make your own decision

about what you want to do, and to help you understand how you can access housing and money if you choose to move away from your family.

Charities of the week

If you're at risk of forced marriage or scared you might be there are so many places you can go to get help. This week we're highlighting:

The Jan Trust

A multi-award winning charity who cater for disadvantaged and marginalised women from minority and hard-to-reach groups. They work on a range of issues, including forced marriage.

Web: www.againstforcedmarriages.org

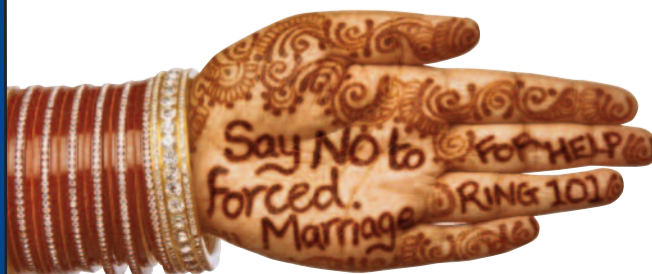
Tel: 0800 141 2994

The Sharan Project

A UK based charity who provide support and advice to vulnerable women, particularly of South Asian origin, who have

left home forcefully or voluntarily. The Sharan Project is run by a group of South Asian experts who understand the challenges and barriers faced by those who have been disowned and or forced to leave home. Web: www.sharan.org.uk
Tel: 0844 504 3231

It's not culture...



...it's crime

For help call 101



SHOULD I PAY ATTENTION TO MY MUM'S THREATS?

Dear Arita

I'm 16 and I was born in the UK. My mum was born abroad but has lived here for years and brought my family up here. She's always been strict, but just lately things have got really bad. She hates my friends and has told me I'm not allowed to hang out with them anymore, or wear make-up or clothes that I like from places like Topshop and Forever 21. She says if I keep doing these things she'll send me 'home' to marry someone I don't even know, and I'll end up a housewife. I think these are just threats and I don't think she would really do this to me, but I'm too scared to risk it. At the same time I don't want to lose my friends. Help!

Kiran, 16, Birmingham

ARITA SAYS Kiran, you are at the time in your life when you are trying out new things and are exploring your identity and this can often be a frustrating time for a lot of parents and children. However, there is clearly a conflict between your mum's cultural beliefs about what she perceives as your negative westernised behaviour and your own desires to fit in, being born and brought up within the UK. Parents can sometimes use marriage as a means of controlling what they deem to be shameful, westernised behaviour and this is wrong and it is also now a criminal offence. You must contact the police immediately who will assist and support you and will let you know all your choices which could include a forced marriage protection order, which will act as a warning to your mother to change her behaviour in relation to marriage, or risk arrest.

Need Help?

If you are worried about forced marriage, please call West Midlands Police on 101 or 999 in an emergency.