

EU FEM ROADMAP
FORCED / EARLY MARRIAGE

Forced/Early Marriage (FEM) Roadmap for Frontline Professionals



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Chart 1: Potential warning signs or indicators of forced/early marriage¹

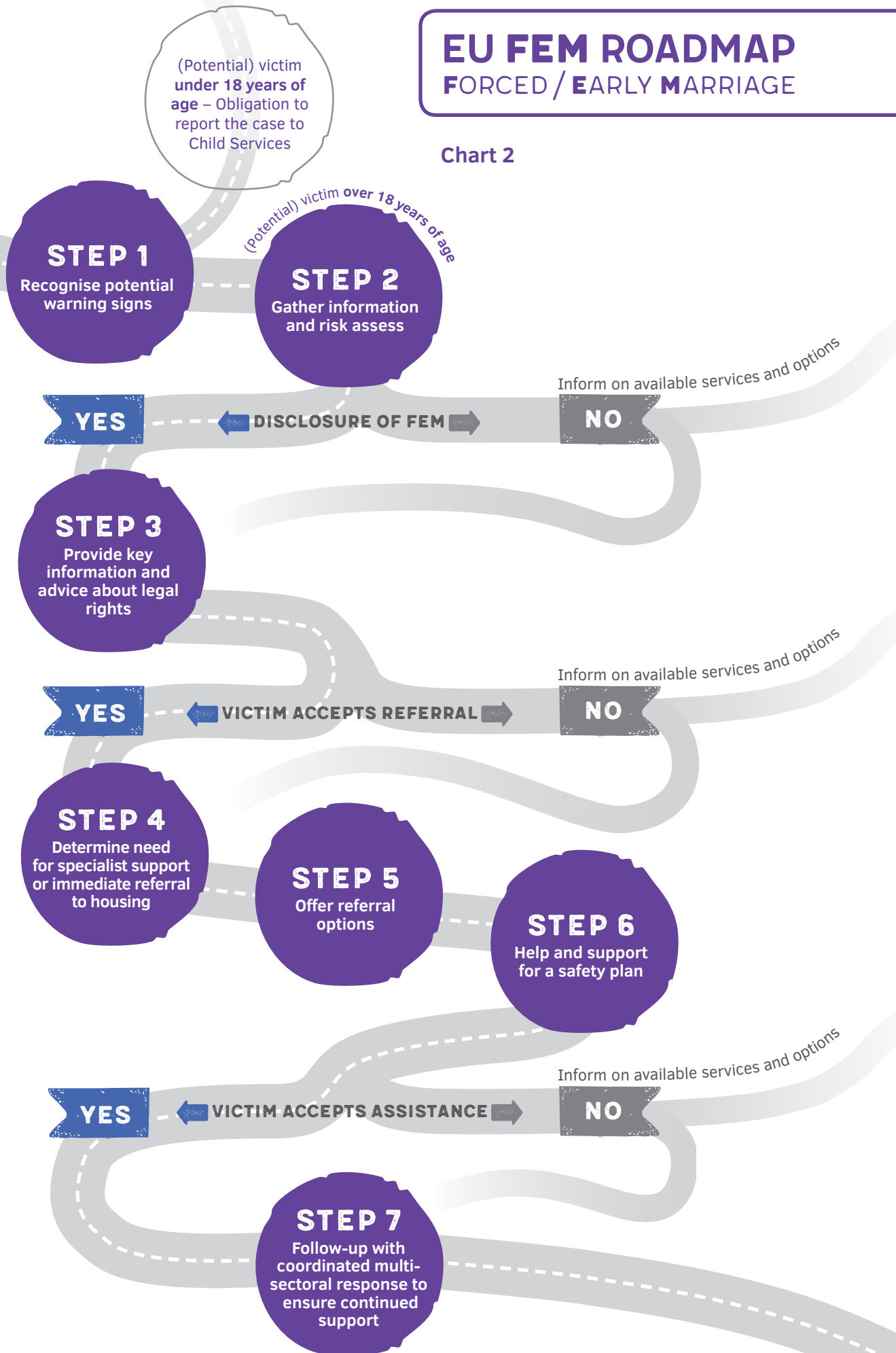


¹ HM Government. Right to Choose. Multi-agency statutory guidance for dealing with forced marriage. June 2014.

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Chart 2



Referral pathway for frontline professionals

STEP 1 Recognise potential warning signs

Most young people refrain from seeking out professional help out of family loyalty and they do not want to have to choose between their parents and their right to choose who they will marry. For those who do reach out, victim support professionals such as social workers who work in women's shelters, violence prevention centers, etc. find themselves confronted with victims or potential victims of FEM who are often subjected to other forms of violence and therefore might seek help for these problems. See Chart 1 for potential warning signs and indicators.

- If the victim is under 18, a frontline professional is obligated to refer to Child Services and all measures put in place to safeguard the child
- If the victim is over 18, continue to the next step

STEP 2 Gather information and risk assess

The frontline professional should aim for a personal conversation with the potential victim, taking the following steps into account:

- Speak with the victim in a secure/private place where the conversation cannot be overheard; if an interpreter is needed, take steps to ensure that the interpreter is not connected with the individual or community
- Listen to the victim's complete story; take it seriously
- Reassure the victim that confidentiality (i.e. not contacting the family) is priority
- Do not contact or attempt any mediation/reconciliation with family members as this might escalate the situation
- Make a note of all the information available at the time, including a photograph and description of the victim
- Identify any potential criminal offences (e.g. family violence) and refer to the police services;
- Record any current contacts with other professionals, health, social services, etc.
- Provide information to the victim about their rights and choices and respect their wishes when possible, remembering that in certain instances information may be shared without consent if victim in danger
- Obtain informed consent prior to initiating any referral
- Establish a safe way of maintaining contact with the victim in the future

Disclosure of FEM

This can either happen through a report from the victim, a report from a confidant (such as neighbours, teachers, friends etc.), or the frontline professional detects a FEM case whilst working with the potential victim on other problems, since most victims of FEM are subjected to other forms of violence and therefore might seek help for those problems.

STEP 3 Provide key information and advice about legal rights

Listen and communicate with the (potential) victim in order to obtain a better picture of the situation and to gather as much information as possible, so that you can correctly assess the case. The following information should be gathered if possible:

- Full contact details (name, address, phone number, email)
- Copies of important documents such as passport, birth certificate, registration of residency, residency permit
- Warn the victim of the risk in taking any family trips to the home/foreign country and that if the victim suspects and knows of any such plans, that she/he should inform you beforehand; the danger of being abducted/ taken away to parents' country of origin on pretext of a holiday and being forced into marriage should be made clear and all available address/phone numbers in the home country (also those of relatives, cousins and so on) should be noted; in case of abduction the Ministry of Foreign Affairs should be immediately contacted and will provide support if the victim is a citizen

Determining the level of risk

Once the frontline professional has collected as much information as possible about the victim and the situation, professional judgement is needed in order to analyse the information gathered and determine the significance of risk and vulnerability factors in the overall presentation of the victim.

The greater the number of risk factors present, the greater the risk to the victim and the likelihood of risk factors re-occurring should also be considered.

There are three levels of risk:

Requires immediate protection: the risk factors identified indicate further serious violence or forced marriage is imminent and immediate action is required to prevent this from occurring, for example a protection order or prohibition to leave the country ordered by a judge

Elevated risk: there are a number of significant risk factors present that are likely to continue, indicating the need to initiate risk management processes that include safety planning

At risk: some risk factors are present but structures are already in place to manage the risk or the risk can be managed through advocacy, victim support and referral

Risk of abduction, being forced to go overseas¹

There have been cases where families take their child away under the guise of a family holiday but instead they confiscate their passports on arrival and force them into a marriage.

Victim support professionals may advise to:

- Leave behind an address of where victim is staying, a mobile number on which to be contacted, a copy of passport, flight details, a copy of the plane ticket and a clear photograph
- Take a second mobile phone, topped up and kept hidden from the family
- Write down the address and telephone number of the embassy from the country of residence and keep it hidden and contact a member of the embassy for help if needed
- Inform the victim that because she/he is dependent on the parents or family, she/he will receive assistance to find a refuge, safe house, and advice

STEP 4 Determine need for specialist support or immediate referral to shelter

This is done based on the risk assessment described above combined with professional judgement.

STEP 5 Offer referral options

Inform the (potential) victim of options and services available and the types of assistance/support that could be provided by other specialists, especially the possibility of a crisis accommodation in case the situation at home should escalate.

- Provide the victim with names and telephone numbers of specialists to call if the level of risk changes
- Identify a safe accommodation for short/long term housing combined with professional support, preferably for young women only, i.e. not a women's shelter
- If the victim accepts the assistance, accompany the victim to the proposed services so that the victim is not alone

¹ Multi-Agency statutory guidance for dealing with forced marriage 2014, London, UK. Multi-agency practice guidelines: Handling cases of Forced Marriage 2014, London, UK. Both available online at: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/forced-marriage>

STEP 6 Help and support to develop an individual safety plan

If you believe the victim to be in need of immediate protection and that a crime is likely to be committed, follow your organisation's standard operating procedure. In some Member States it is mandatory to inform the police and the victim's consent is not required in this instance, but you should make every effort to encourage the victim to increase personal safety and help the victim understand your role and responsibilities.

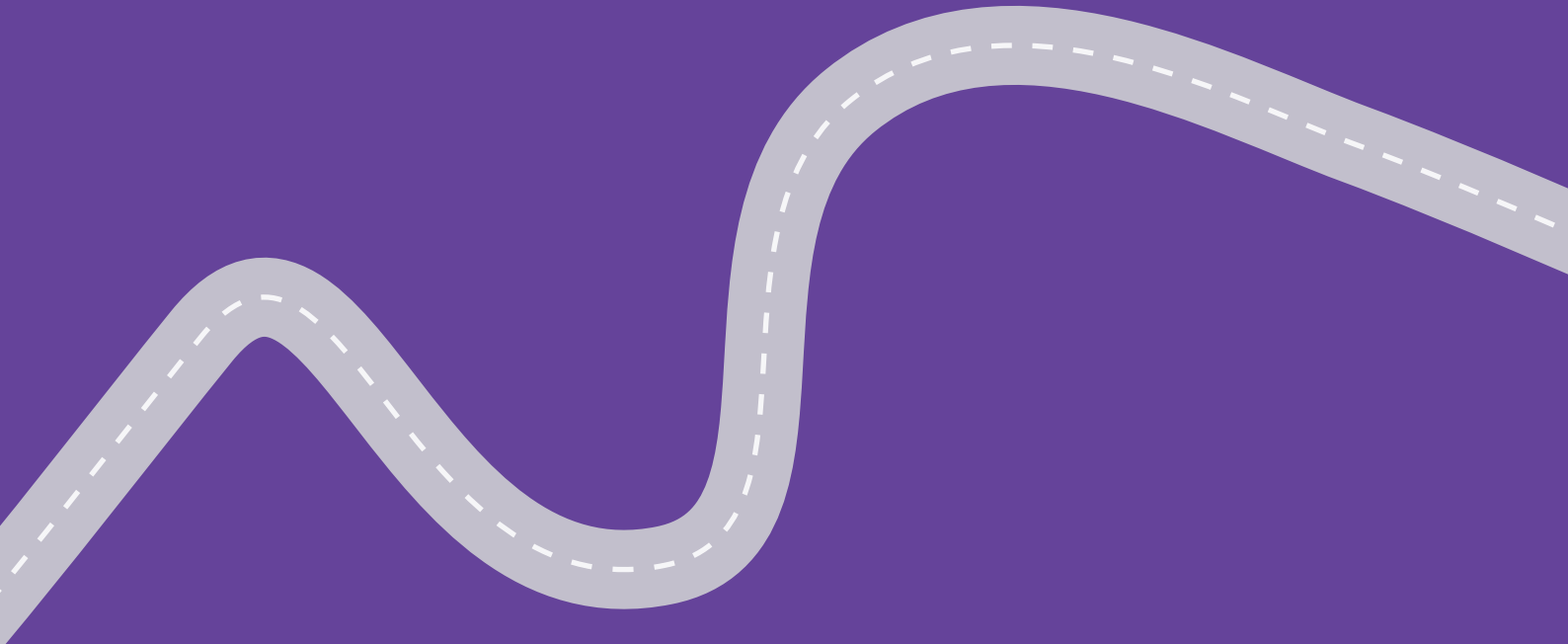
Essential components of a safety plan:

- List contact numbers for a FEM specialist or violence organisation
- List emergency contact numbers
- Identify a safe place for the victim to go if in danger, and how to get there
- Identify a friend, family member who can assist in an emergency, and how to contact them
- Identify a way for the victim to get access to money in an emergency
- Identify a place to store valuables and important documents so that the victim can access them when needed
- Identify any barriers present to implementing the safety plan (for example having mobility or communication difficulties)

A safety plan needs to be tailored to the particular circumstances and needs of the victim and this can change over time.

STEP 7 Follow-up with multi-sectoral support to ensure continued support.

As the problem of FEM is multifactorial, frontline professionals need to provide a multi-sectoral response to coordinate the protection and support for victims. The following sections provide specific guidance for professionals from each sector.



Funded by:



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