

## Impact case study (REF3)

<b>Institution:</b> University of Nottingham		
<b>Unit of Assessment:</b> UOA20 – Social Work and Social Policy		
<b>Title of case study:</b> Improving policy, practice and public understanding in safeguarding people with learning disabilities from forced marriage.		
<b>Period when the underpinning research was undertaken:</b> 2010 - 2018		
<b>Details of staff conducting the underpinning research from the submitting unit:</b>		
<b>Name(s):</b>	<b>Role(s) (e.g. job title):</b>	<b>Period(s) employed by submitting HEI:</b>
Rachael Clawson	Associate Professor of Social Work	April 2008 – present
Rachel Fyson	Professor of Social Work	September 2005 - present
<b>Period when the claimed impact occurred:</b> 1 <sup>st</sup> August 2013 – 31 <sup>st</sup> December 2020		
<b>Is this case study continued from a case study submitted in 2014? N</b>		
<b>1. Summary of the impact</b>		
<p>Rachael Clawson and Rachel Fyson's ground-breaking research on forced marriage of people with learning disabilities is the first of its kind either in the UK or internationally. Their work has influenced policy through its impact on practice guidelines in the UK. It has led to new statutory guidance, to changes in how the Government collects data on forced marriage, and to improved frontline practice. It has also made a substantial contribution to raising public and professional awareness of forced marriage of people with learning disabilities, both in the UK and internationally.</p>		
<b>2. Underpinning research</b>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ <b>2009:</b> £20,000 <i>Forced Marriage of People with Learning Disabilities – Understanding Motivators and Consequences</i> – funded by Home Office/Foreign and Commonwealth Office Forced Marriage Unit: Domestic Programme Fund. R. <b>Clawson – PI.</b></li> </ul> <p>This study was the first anywhere in the world to examine the phenomenon of forced marriage of people with learning disabilities. It used snowball sampling to identify professionals with experience of involvement in such cases and resulted in the hypothesis that men with learning disabilities were as likely as women to be subject to forced marriage, with the main motivator being family members seeking long-term care for their loved one (R2, R3). The impact of this work was that Clawson wrote the Government guidelines (R1) on preventing forced marriage of people with learning disabilities and the Forced Marriage Unit (FMU) agreed to start recording whether victims of forced marriage were disabled.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ <b>2012:</b> £9,976 <i>Forced Marriage and Learning Disabilities Practice Guidance: Having a National Impact?</i> – funded by Home Office/Foreign and Commonwealth Office Forced Marriage Unit: Domestic Programme Fund. R. <b>Clawson – PI.</b></li> </ul> <p>This study examined the extent to which adult safeguarding boards (the statutory bodies charged with oversight of adult safeguarding within each local authority) were aware of, and engaging with, the Government guidelines (R1). It found that few had incorporated the guidelines into local policy or practice (R4). As a result, in 2014, the guidelines were incorporated into new statutory guidance, therefore requiring local authorities to comply.</p>		

- **2014:** £11,000 *The Hidden Truth* - funded by Home Office/Foreign and Commonwealth Office Forced Marriage Unit: Domestic Programme Fund. R. **Clawson – PI.**

Findings from the earlier research led the FMU to fund a third initiative, organising and facilitating eight conferences across England to raise awareness of the issue of forced marriage of adults with learning disabilities amongst frontline practitioners with a safeguarding role. Professionals, including police, law, social work, health, education and NGO staff attended these events, resulting in raised awareness of the practice guidelines.

- **2016-18** £232,953 *Forced Marriage of Adults with Learning Disabilities: Developing Knowledge, Policy and Practice to Keep People Safe* – NIHR School for Social Care Research. R. **Clawson – PI.**

This primary research further developed knowledge, policy and practice to safeguard people with learning disabilities from the risk of forced marriage. It involved analysis of FMU data and engagement with diverse stakeholders to explore their understandings of consent, capacity and forced marriage. The work not only confirmed the unexpected gender distribution first hypothesised in 2009 but also identified a five-fold heightened risk of forced marriage for people with learning disabilities (R5, R6). It also revealed a lack of understanding about the legal meaning of consent and capacity. Findings have led to a website with open resources for use by lay and professional stakeholders to raise awareness of forced marriage of people with learning disabilities and support better understanding of relevant legal issues (B). It has also resulted in political engagement with these issues and interest from other Government departments including the Attorney General and General Registry Office.

### 3. References to the research

- R1. HM Government (2010). *Forced Marriage and Learning Disabilities: Multi-Agency Practice Guidelines*, London: Home Office (written by R. **Clawson**), available at [https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/322307/HMG\\_MULTI\\_AGENCY\\_PRACTICE\\_GUIDELINES\\_v1\\_180614\\_FINAL.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/322307/HMG_MULTI_AGENCY_PRACTICE_GUIDELINES_v1_180614_FINAL.pdf)
- R2. **Clawson**, R. (2013). Safeguarding people with learning disabilities at risk of forced marriage: Issues for inter-agency practice, *Social Work and Social Services Review*, 16(3), 20-36. <https://doi.org/10.1921/swssr.v16i3.540>
- R3. **Clawson**, R & **Fyson**, R (2017) Forced marriage of people with learning disabilities: a human rights issue, *Disability & Society*, 32(6), 810-830. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/09687599.2017.1320271>
- R4. **Clawson**, R. (2016). Safeguarding people with learning disabilities from forced marriage: the role of Safeguarding Adult Boards, *Journal of Adult Protection*, 18(5), 277-287. <https://doi.org/10.1108/JAP-03-2016-0004>
- R5. **Clawson**, R., Patterson, A., **Fyson**, R. & McCarthy, R. (2020) The demographics of forced marriage of people with learning disabilities: findings from a national database. *Journal of Adult Protection*, 22(2), 59-74. <https://doi.org/10.1108/JAP-09-2019-0029>
- R6. McCarthy, M., **Clawson**, R., Patterson, A., **Fyson**, R. & Khan, L. (2020) Risk of forced marriage amongst people with intellectual disabilities in the UK: perspectives of South Asian carers. *Journal of Applied Research in Intellectual Disabilities* <https://doi.org/10.1111/jar.12798>

#### 4. Details of the impact

The cumulative impact of research and associated knowledge exchange activities is evident in engagement, policy and practice, both in the UK and internationally. **Engagement** involves **increased awareness** of the issues amongst diverse stakeholder groups, including **politicians and policymakers, practitioners**, and the wider communities through **media coverage**. Direct impacts include **changes to policy** and evidence that the resources, developed by Clawson and Fyson, are being used in **practice** to prevent forced marriages.

**Increased awareness.** Over the past decade, Clawson and Fyson have spoken about forced marriage of people with learning disabilities at over 60 events, attended by over 3,000 professionals, families, policy makers, politicians, academics and people with learning disabilities (A1). Knowledge exchange work has been further enhanced by the *'My Marriage My Choice'* website which provides **free resources** (B) including: guidance and workbooks to enhance the knowledge of people with learning disabilities, family carers and professionals; tools for professionals to use when assessing capacity to consent to marriage; and a 30-minute film available in **English, Hindi, Urdu and Sylheti** (B). The film was **launched in the Houses of Parliament** and has been screened at 14 events, attended by 237 people, with post-show discussions that **challenged misunderstandings around capacity to consent** (B, A2).

**Engagement of politicians and policymakers.** The film was launched in the Houses of Parliament, sponsored by an MP; this resulted in questions in the **House of Commons** (C) and invitations from other politicians followed. In October 2018, Clawson met with the **Attorney General**, QC, MP and Head of Policy at the **Crown Prosecution Service** who has asked for the existing toolkit (B) to be developed into guidance for prosecutors about working with people with learning disabilities and other vulnerable adults. In November 2018, Clawson met with **Home Secretary** and the MP **Minister for Communities, Safeguarding and Vulnerability** who were interested in the research findings.

These political connections led to **international policy links**, including participation in the European Symposium on Female Genital Mutilation and Forced Marriage hosted by the Home Office in 2018; and a Foreign & Commonwealth consular reception in 2018. Interest in this research has been shown by the **Australian** Attorney Generals' Office (who Fyson met in 2016); the **Canadian** High Commission (who Clawson met in 2019 and 2020); and the **Swedish** Health Minister (who Clawson met in 2019). These connections have led to impacts on international cases (D).

**Media coverage** (E) has raised public, professional and political awareness of this issue. The research, and its implications, have been widely reported in both mainstream and specialist media, in the UK and internationally. Clawson has been interviewed on multiple occasions for news media. **Television** includes live interviews on ITV Evening News and NottsTV. **Domestic radio** includes BBC Radio 4 (2012; 2013); BBC Asian Network (2009, 2012, 2013 and 2018); Gem FM (2018); and BBC Radio Leicester (2018). **International radio** includes BBC World Service (2009) and TBS eFM South Korean primetime radio news (2016). **Mainstream UK newspapers** includes The Times, The Sunday Times, The Daily Telegraph, The Guardian and The Independent. **International news media** includes outlets in India, Pakistan and Bangladesh. **Specialist media** includes Eastern Eye; The Conversation; Learning Disability Today; and Community Care. Clawson has also written Community Care Inform guidance on Forced Marriage of People with Learning Disabilities (F).

**Changes to Government policy and guidance.** This work has led directly to changes in Government policy. Clawson wrote the initial Government practice guidelines in 2010 (G1) and these were **incorporated into the statutory guidance** issued in 2014, which now explicitly addresses forced marriage of people with learning disabilities (G2 and G3). The 2014 statutory guidance is currently under review (January 2020) and Clawson has been asked help write the updated version (H), which will include a link to the resources on our *'My Marriage, My Choice'* website (B).

Within the FMU, this work has led to **changes in recording practices**, so for each reported case of forced marriage the presence or absence of disability is now recorded (I). Most recently, Clawson has been campaigning for a **legislative change** in: i) how registrars should be trained to identify cases of incapacity to agree to marriage, and ii) that notices of forthcoming marriages and civil partnerships should be published online (the Guardian, 9.10.2020, E). This campaign was embraced by the FMU (H) and the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State of Justice, who confirmed that Clawson's work on predatory marriages has already been introduced to policy officials in the Ministry of Justice (J.) The UK Law Commission is currently reviewing the law on weddings. In November 2020, Clawson submitted a **report to the Law Commission's consultation** on this matter.

**Impact on practice.** The above policy changes have had a **substantial capacity building impact and transformed daily practice for professionals** who are safeguarding vulnerable people in the **UK and internationally** (A3, D). Clawson is often called upon to give case advice to the FMU (H). Engagement with professionals from a diverse range of backgrounds including not only those working in health and social care but also police forces, immigration judges and marriage registrars (A3) has led to impacts on frontline practice. Such changes in practice have, in turn, led to an **increased number of cases reported to the FMU (R5)**, meaning that **more people are being safeguarded**.

For example, a Senior Occupational Therapist of the North Staffordshire Combined Healthcare NHS Trust shared that she's been using the 'My Marriage My Choice' web-based resources in her tutorial activities and has been encouraging her students to further promote these resources. The films and the resource booklets for clients and families are also **used in everyday practice** with individual clients (A3). The Deputy Chair of Enable Disability and Carers Community DCC at West Midlands Police (WMP) explained: "...The toolkit is also included in our WMP aide memoire for officers and staff and has been shared regionally with other forces..." "Without question this research and toolkit will **have a huge impact upon the safeguarding response to dealing with forced marriage and learning disabilities from both police forces and partners alike as there is nothing like it**" (A3).

The Designated Migration Officer at the Canadian High Commission referred to a refused application due to the sponsor's (in)capacity to consent to marriage, acknowledging that: "*I referred the Hearings Officer to **your internet tools** and he found them **extremely helpful...we won that appeal and therefore we have prevented a Canadian Citizen from being forced to live with an unwanted spouse. It would be easy to forget that there are individuals involved but this is an example of where your work has made a huge difference to an actual victim**" (D).*

## 5. Sources to corroborate the impact

A. Summary of feedback: 1. Summary of feedback from public film screenings; 2. Summary of awareness raising events feedback; 3. Testimonials from practitioners who have used the guidance and training materials.

### B. My Marriage My Choice **website**

(<https://www.nottingham.ac.uk/research/groups/mymarriagemychoice/>) including awareness-raising **film**

(<https://www.nottingham.ac.uk/research/groups/mymarriagemychoice/film/index.aspx>) in 4 different languages and **training materials**

(<https://www.nottingham.ac.uk/research/groups/mymarriagemychoice/guidelines-resources/index.aspx>). Screenshots are also available.

### C. Questions raised in Parliament: Hansard record

(<https://hansard.parliament.uk/commons/2018-06-21/debates/85AB0D40-AB9C-47F5-A7B3-0C35B2E93AF4/ForcedMarriages>). Screenshot is also available.

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- D. Email from the Canadian High Commission.
- E. Summary of UK and international media coverage.
- F. Community Care Inform Practice Guidance (2019): Forced marriage of adults with learning disabilities (draft version).
- G. HM Government guidelines: 1. HM Government (2014) The Right to Choose: Multi-agency statutory guidance for dealing cases of forced marriage. (see, especially, **pp 8, 10** and 18.); 2. HM Government (2014) Multi-agency practice guidelines: Handling cases of Forced Marriage (see, especially, **pp 4, 6-9, 13 and 54-60**).
- H. Statement Letter from the Home Office's Forced Marriage Unit.
- I. Statement Letter from the Learning Disability Lead at the Forced Marriage Unit.
- J. Letter from the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Justice.