



Family Law Act 1996

1996 CHAPTER 27

[^{F1} PART 4A **E+W**

FORCED MARRIAGE

Textual Amendments

- F1** Pt. 4A inserted (25.11.2008 except in regard to the insertion of s. 63N) by [Forced Marriage \(Civil Protection\) Act 2007 \(c. 20\)](#), [ss. 1, 4\(2\)](#); [S.I. 2008/2779](#), [art. 2\(a\)](#) (as amended (22.4.2014) by [Crime and Courts Act 2013 \(c. 22\)](#), [s. 61\(3\)](#), [Sch. 11 para. 210](#) Table; [S.I. 2014/954](#), [art. 2\(e\)](#) (with [art. 3](#)) (with transitional provisions and savings in [S.I. 2014/956](#), [arts. 3-11](#)))

Forced marriage protection orders

63A Forced marriage protection orders **E+W**

- (1) The court may make an order for the purposes of protecting—
 - (a) a person from being forced into a marriage or from any attempt to be forced into a marriage; or
 - (b) a person who has been forced into a marriage.
- (2) In deciding whether to exercise its powers under this section and, if so, in what manner, the court must have regard to all the circumstances including the need to secure the health, safety and well-being of the person to be protected.
- (3) In ascertaining that person's well-being, the court must, in particular, have such regard to the person's wishes and feelings (so far as they are reasonably ascertainable) as the court considers appropriate in the light of the person's age and understanding.
- (4) For the purposes of this Part a person (“A”) is forced into a marriage if another person (“B”) forces A to enter into a marriage (whether with B or another person) without A's free and full consent.

Status: This version of this part contains provisions that are prospective.

Changes to legislation: Family Law Act 1996, Part 4A is up to date with all changes known to be in force on or before 20 July 2024. There are changes that may be brought into force at a future date. Changes that have been made appear in the content and are referenced with annotations. (See end of Document for details) View outstanding changes

- (5) For the purposes of subsection (4) it does not matter whether the conduct of B which forces A to enter into a marriage is directed against A, B or another person.
- (6) In this Part—
- “force” includes coerce by threats or other psychological means (and related expressions are to be read accordingly); and
 - “forced marriage protection order” means an order under this section.

63B Contents of orders **E+W**

- (1) A forced marriage protection order may contain—
- (a) such prohibitions, restrictions or requirements; and
 - (b) such other terms;
- as the court considers appropriate for the purposes of the order.
- (2) The terms of such orders may, in particular, relate to—
- (a) conduct outside England and Wales as well as (or instead of) conduct within England and Wales;
 - (b) respondents who are, or may become, involved in other respects as well as (or instead of) respondents who force or attempt to force, or may force or attempt to force, a person to enter into a marriage;
 - (c) other persons who are, or may become, involved in other respects as well as respondents of any kind.
- (3) For the purposes of subsection (2) examples of involvement in other respects are—
- (a) aiding, abetting, counselling, procuring, encouraging or assisting another person to force, or to attempt to force, a person to enter into a marriage; or
 - (b) conspiring to force, or to attempt to force, a person to enter into a marriage.

63C Applications and other occasions for making orders **E+W**

- (1) The court may make a forced marriage protection order—
- (a) on an application being made to it; or
 - (b) without an application being made to it but in the circumstances mentioned in subsection (6).
- (2) An application may be made by—
- (a) the person who is to be protected by the order; or
 - (b) a relevant third party.
- (3) An application may be made by any other person with the leave of the court.
- (4) In deciding whether to grant leave, the court must have regard to all the circumstances including—
- (a) the applicant's connection with the person to be protected;
 - (b) the applicant's knowledge of the circumstances of the person to be protected; and
 - (c) the wishes and feelings of the person to be protected so far as they are reasonably ascertainable and so far as the court considers it appropriate, in the light of the person's age and understanding, to have regard to them.

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- (5) An application under this section may be made in other family proceedings or without any other family proceedings being instituted.
- (6) The circumstances in which the court may make an order without an application being made are where—
 - (a) any other family proceedings are before the court (“the current proceedings”);
 - (b) the court considers that a forced marriage protection order should be made to protect a person (whether or not a party to the current proceedings); and
 - (c) a person who would be a respondent to any such proceedings for a forced marriage protection order is a party to the current proceedings.
- (7) In this section—

“family proceedings” has the same meaning as in Part 4 (see section 63(1) and (2)) but also includes—

 - (a) proceedings under the inherent jurisdiction of the High Court in relation to adults;
 - (b) proceedings in which the court has made an emergency protection order under section 44 of the Children Act 1989 (c. 41) which includes an exclusion requirement (as defined in section 44A(3) of that Act); and
 - (c) proceedings in which the court has made an order under section 50 of the Act of 1989 (recovery of abducted children etc.); and

“relevant third party” means a person specified, or falling within a description of persons specified, by order of the Lord Chancellor.
- (8) An order of the Lord Chancellor under subsection (7) may, in particular, specify the Secretary of State.

Offence of breaching order **E+W**

63CA

- (1) A person who without reasonable excuse does anything that the person is prohibited from doing by a forced marriage protection order is guilty of an offence.
- (2) In the case of a forced marriage protection order made by virtue of section 63D(1), a person can be guilty of an offence under this section only in respect of conduct engaged in at a time when the person was aware of the existence of the order.
- (3) Where a person is convicted of an offence under this section in respect of any conduct, that conduct is not punishable as a contempt of court.
- (4) A person cannot be convicted of an offence under this section in respect of any conduct which has been punished as a contempt of court.
- (5) A person guilty of an offence under this section is liable—
 - (a) on conviction on indictment, to imprisonment for a term not exceeding five years, or a fine, or both;
 - (b) on summary conviction, to imprisonment for a term not exceeding [^{F3}the general limit in a magistrates’ court], or a fine, or both.
- (6) A reference in any enactment to proceedings under this Part, or to an order under this Part, does not include a reference to proceedings for an offence under this section or to an order made in proceedings for such an offence.

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- (7) “Enactment” includes an enactment contained in subordinate legislation within the meaning of the Interpretation Act 1978.]

Textual Amendments

- F2** S. 63CA inserted (16.6.2014) by [Anti-social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014 \(c. 12\)](#), [ss. 120\(2\), 185\(1\)](#) (with [ss. 21, 33, 42, 58, 75, 93, 120\(6\)\(7\)](#)); S.I. 2014/949, art. 5(a) (with art. 10)
- F3** Words in [s. 63CA\(5\)\(b\)](#) substituted (7.2.2023 at 12.00 p.m.) by [The Judicial Review and Courts Act 2022 \(Magistrates’ Court Sentencing Powers\) Regulations 2023 \(S.I. 2023/149\)](#), regs. 1(2), 2(1), [Sch. Pt. 1](#)

Further provision about orders

63D Ex parte orders: Part 4A E+W

- (1) The court may, in any case where it considers that it is just and convenient to do so, make a forced marriage protection order even though the respondent has not been given such notice of the proceedings as would otherwise be required by rules of court.
- (2) In deciding whether to exercise its powers under subsection (1), the court must have regard to all the circumstances including—
 - (a) any risk of significant harm to the person to be protected or another person if the order is not made immediately;
 - (b) whether it is likely that an applicant will be deterred or prevented from pursuing an application if an order is not made immediately; and
 - (c) whether there is reason to believe that—
 - (i) the respondent is aware of the proceedings but is deliberately evading service; and
 - (ii) the delay involved in effecting substituted service will cause serious prejudice to the person to be protected or (if a different person) an applicant.
- (3) The court must give the respondent an opportunity to make representations about any order made by virtue of subsection (1).
- (4) The opportunity must be—
 - (a) as soon as just and convenient; and
 - (b) at a hearing of which notice has been given to all the parties in accordance with rules of court.

63E Undertakings instead of orders E+W

- [^{F4}(1) In any case where the court has power to make a forced marriage protection order, the court may accept an undertaking from the respondent instead of making the order.
- (2) But a court may not accept an undertaking under subsection (1) if it appears to the court—
 - (a) that the respondent has used or threatened violence against the person to be protected, and

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- (b) that, for the person's protection, it is necessary to make a forced marriage protection order so that any breach of it by the respondent may be punishable under section 63CA.]
- (4) An undertaking given to the court under subsection (1) is enforceable as if the court had made the order in terms corresponding to those of the undertaking.
- (5) This section is without prejudice to the powers of the court apart from this section.

Textual Amendments

F4 S. 63E(1)(2) substituted for s. 63E(1)-(3) (16.6.2014) by [Anti-social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014 \(c. 12\)](#), **ss. 120(3)**, 185(1) (with [ss. 21, 33, 42, 58, 75, 93, 120\(6\)](#)); S.I. 2014/949, art. 5(a) (with art. 10)

63F Duration of orders **E+W**

A forced marriage protection order may be made for a specified period or until varied or discharged.

63G Variation of orders and their discharge **E+W**

- (1) The court may vary or discharge a forced marriage protection order on an application by—
 - (a) any party to the proceedings for the order;
 - (b) the person being protected by the order (if not a party to the proceedings for the order); or
 - (c) any person affected by the order.
- (2) In addition, the court may vary or discharge a forced marriage protection order made by virtue of section 63C(1)(b) even though no application under subsection (1) above has been made to the court.
- (3) Section 63D applies to a variation of a forced marriage protection order as it applies to the making of such an order.
- (4) Section 63E applies to proceedings for a variation of a forced marriage protection order as it applies to proceedings for the making of such an order.
- (5) Accordingly, references in sections 63D and 63E to making a forced marriage protection order are to be read for the purposes of subsections (3) and (4) above as references to varying such an order.

^{F5}(6)

^{F5}(7)

Textual Amendments

F5 S. 63G(6)(7) repealed (16.6.2014) by [Anti-social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014 \(c. 12\)](#), **ss. 120(5)(a)**, 185(1) (with [ss. 21, 33, 42, 58, 75, 93, 120\(6\)](#)); S.I. 2014/949, art. 5(a) (with art. 10)

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Arrest for breach of orders

F6 63H Attachment of powers of arrest to orders **E+W**

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Textual Amendments

F6 S. 63H repealed (16.6.2014) by [Anti-social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014 \(c. 12\), ss. 120\(5\)\(b\), 185\(1\)](#) (with ss. 21, 33, 42, 58, 75, 93, 120(6)); S.I. 2014/949, art. 5(a) (with art. 10)

F7 63I Arrest under attached powers **E+W**

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Textual Amendments

F7 S. 63I repealed (16.6.2014) by [Anti-social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014 \(c. 12\), ss. 120\(5\)\(c\), 185\(1\)](#) (with ss. 21, 33, 42, 58, 75, 93, 120(6)); S.I. 2014/949, art. 5(a) (with art. 10)

63J Arrest under warrant **E+W**

^{F8}(1)

- (2) An interested party may apply to the relevant judge for the issue of a warrant for the arrest of a person if the interested party considers that the person has failed to comply with [^{F9}a forced marriage protection order] or is otherwise in contempt of court in relation to the order.
- (3) The relevant judge must not issue a warrant on an application under subsection (2) unless—
 - (a) the application is substantiated on oath; and
 - (b) the relevant judge has reasonable grounds for believing that the person to be arrested has failed to comply with the order or is otherwise in contempt of court in relation to the order.
- (4) In this section “interested party”, in relation to a forced marriage protection order, means—
 - (a) the person being protected by the order;
 - (b) (if a different person) the person who applied for the order; or
 - (c) any other person;

but no application may be made under subsection (2) by a person falling within paragraph (c) without the leave of the relevant judge.

Textual Amendments

F8 S. 63J(1) repealed (16.6.2014) by [Anti-social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014 \(c. 12\), ss. 120\(5\)\(d\), 185\(1\)](#) (with ss. 21, 33, 42, 58, 75, 93, 120(6)); S.I. 2014/949, art. 5(a) (with art. 10)

F9 Words in s. 63J(2) substituted (16.6.2014) by [Anti-social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014 \(c. 12\), ss. 120\(4\), 185\(1\)](#) (with ss. 21, 33, 42, 58, 75, 93, 120(6)); S.I. 2014/949, art. 5(a) (with art. 10)

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63K Remand: general **E+W**

- (1) The court before which an arrested person is brought ^{F10} ... by virtue of a warrant issued under section 63J may, if the matter is not then disposed of immediately, remand the person concerned.
- (2) Schedule 5 has effect in relation to the powers of the court to remand a person by virtue of this section but as if the following modifications were made to the Schedule.
- (3) The modifications are that—
 - (a) in paragraph 2(1) of Schedule 5, the reference to section 47 is to be read as a reference to this section; and
 - (b) in paragraph 2(5)(b) of the Schedule, the reference to section 48(1) is to be read as a reference to section 63L(1).
- (4) Subsection (5) applies if a person remanded under this section is granted bail under Schedule 5 as modified above.
- (5) The person may be required by the relevant judge to comply, before release on bail or later, with such requirements as appear to the relevant judge to be necessary to secure that the person does not interfere with witnesses or otherwise obstruct the course of justice.

Textual Amendments

F10 Words in s. 63K(1) repealed (16.6.2014) by [Anti-social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014](#) (c. 12), [ss. 120\(5\)\(e\), 185\(1\)](#) (with [ss. 21, 33, 42, 58, 75, 93, 120\(6\)](#)); S.I. 2014/949, art. 5(a) (with art. 10)

63L Remand: medical examination and report **E+W**

- (1) Any power to remand a person under section 63K(1) may be exercised for the purpose of enabling a medical examination and report to be made if the relevant judge has reason to consider that a medical report will be required.
- (2) If such a power is so exercised, the adjournment must not be for more than 4 weeks at a time unless the relevant judge remands the accused in custody.
- (3) If the relevant judge remands the accused in custody, the adjournment must not be for more than 3 weeks at a time.
- (4) Subsection (5) applies if there is reason to suspect that a person who has been arrested—
 - ^{F11}(a)
 - (b) under a warrant issued on an application made under section 63J(2);
is suffering from [^{F12}mental disorder within the meaning of the Mental Health Act 1983].
- (5) The relevant judge has the same power to make an order under section 35 of the Mental Health Act 1983 (c. 20) (remand for report on accused's mental condition) as the Crown Court has under section 35 of that Act in the case of an accused person within the meaning of that section.

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Textual Amendments

- F11** S. 63L(4)(a) repealed (16.6.2014) by [Anti-social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014 \(c. 12\)](#), **ss. 120(5)(f), 185(1)** (with **ss. 21, 33, 42, 58, 75, 93, 120(6)**); S.I. 2014/949, art. 5(a) (with art. 10)
- F12** Words in s. 63L(4) substituted (3.11.2008) by [The Mental Health Act 2007 \(Consequential Amendments\) Order 2008 \(S.I. 2008/2828\)](#), arts. 1(2), **5** (subject to art. 1(3))

Jurisdiction and procedure

63M Jurisdiction of courts: Part 4A **E+W**

(1) For the purposes of this Part “the court” means the High Court or [^{F13} the family court].

^{F14}(2)

^{F14}(3)

^{F14}(4)

Textual Amendments

- F13** Words in s. 63M(1) substituted (22.4.2014) by [Crime and Courts Act 2013 \(c. 22\)](#), s. 61(3), **Sch. 11 para. 139(2)**; S.I. 2014/954, art. 2(e) (with art. 3) (with transitional provisions and savings in S.I. 2014/956, arts. 3-11)
- F14** S. 63M(2)-(4) omitted (22.4.2014) by virtue of [Crime and Courts Act 2013 \(c. 22\)](#), s. 61(3), **Sch. 11 para. 139(3)**; S.I. 2014/954, art. 2(e) (with art. 3) (with transitional provisions and savings in S.I. 2014/956, arts. 3-11)

PROSPECTIVE

^{F15} **63N Power to extend jurisdiction to magistrates' courts** **E+W**

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Textual Amendments

- F15** S. 63N repealed (22.4.2014) by [Crime and Courts Act 2013 \(c. 22\)](#), s. 61(3), **Sch. 11 para. 140**; S.I. 2014/954, art. 2(e) (with art. 3) (with transitional provisions and savings in S.I. 2014/956, arts. 3-11)

63O Contempt proceedings: Part 4A **E+W**

The powers of the court in relation to contempt of court arising out of a person's failure to comply with a forced marriage protection order or otherwise in connection with such an order may be exercised by the relevant judge.

^{F16} **63P Appeals: Part 4A** **E+W**

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Textual Amendments

F16 S. 63P repealed (22.4.2014) by [Crime and Courts Act 2013 \(c. 22\)](#), s. 61(3), [Sch. 11 para. 141](#); [S.I. 2014/954](#), art. 2(e) (with art. 3) (with transitional provisions and savings in [S.I. 2014/956](#), arts. 3-11)

Supplementary

63Q Guidance **E+W**

- (1) The Secretary of State may from time to time prepare and publish guidance to such descriptions of persons as the Secretary of State considers appropriate about—
 - (a) the effect of this Part or any provision of this Part; or
 - (b) other matters relating to forced marriages.
- (2) A person exercising public functions to whom guidance is given under this section must have regard to it in the exercise of those functions.
- (3) Nothing in this section permits the Secretary of State to give guidance to any court or tribunal.

63R Other protection or assistance against forced marriage **E+W**

- (1) This Part does not affect any other protection or assistance available to a person who—
 - (a) is being, or may be, forced into a marriage or subjected to an attempt to be forced into a marriage; or
 - (b) has been forced into a marriage.
- (2) In particular, it does not affect—
 - (a) the inherent jurisdiction of the High Court;
 - (b) any criminal liability;
 - (c) any civil remedies under the Protection from Harassment Act 1997 (c. 40);
 - (d) any right to an occupation order or a non-molestation order under Part 4 of this Act;
 - (e) any protection or assistance under the Children Act 1989 (c. 41);
 - (f) any claim in tort; or
 - (g) the law of marriage.

63S Interpretation of Part 4A **E+W**

In this Part—

“the court” is to be read with section 63M;

“force” (and related expressions), in relation to a marriage, are to be read in accordance with section 63A(4) to (6);

“forced marriage protection order” has the meaning given by section 63A(6);

“marriage” means any religious or civil ceremony of marriage (whether or not legally binding); and

“the relevant judge”, in relation to any order under this Part, means—

- (a) where the order was made by the High Court, a judge of that court; and
- (b) where the order was made by [^{F17}the family court, a judge of that court.]]

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Textual Amendments

- F17** Words in s. 63S substituted (22.4.2014) by [Crime and Courts Act 2013 \(c. 22\)](#), s. 61(3), [Sch. 11 para. 142](#); [S.I. 2014/954](#), [art. 2\(e\)](#) (with [art. 3](#)) (with transitional provisions and savings in [S.I. 2014/956](#), arts. 3-11)

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Changes and effects yet to be applied to the whole Act associated Parts and Chapters:

Whole provisions yet to be inserted into this Act (including any effects on those provisions):

- s. 63(2)(k) inserted by [2021 c. 17 s. 52\(2\)](#)