

Birmingham woman launches charity for unhappy brides

Sep 5 2008 By Kat Keogh

A BIRMINGHAM woman who was left homeless after escaping a forced marriage is hoping her charity will help save others from the same fate.

Kelly Kaur was just 16 when she left her home in Darlaston, Walsall, to avoid marrying a man chosen for her by her family.

Now a 39-year-old businesswoman, Kelly said she didn't know where to turn at the time.

"I was in a situation where my parents tried to marry me off to a man from India.



"I always thought you could say no to an arranged marriage, but it turned out I couldn't. I told the authorities, but they didn't want to get involved because it was a 'cultural thing'."

Kelly had to return home after her parents told police their daughter was under 16.

Both are now dead, and Kelly is a happily-married mother of two.

She has set up a new housing initiative to provide help for victims of domestic violence and forced marriages.

Throughcare Housing and Support will use Kelly's background in property to give those for those who have been affected by forced marriages access to a refuge.

The charity also provides education and support for vulnerable adults and children seeking asylum and young people leaving care.

Kelly, who now lives in Sutton Coldfield, said: "I'm not saying that arranged marriages don't work, but they should not be forced.

"We look to mediate with the family and talk to them. I think that if someone could have sat down with my parents and explained it to them it could have been different.

"You only leave home because no-one is listening to you. I have been through the same experience and I understand what they are going through."

The project will be marked with a gala event at Second City Suite in Birmingham, on September 12 featuring bhangra band Saqi Live and the Nachda Sansar dance troupe.

Kelly added: "It is completely unacceptable in this day and age for the continuation of ancient cultural practices that ignore human rights."

* For more information visit www.throughcare.com