

## About child marriage – laws and regulations in Sweden

**In Swedish law everyone under the age of 18 is considered a child. It is forbidden to marry a child. Foreign child marriages are generally not recognised as valid in Sweden**

Children have the right to go to school and to an education, to have opportunities for leisure interests and to develop as an individual. Living in a marriage means responsibilities that a child should not have. Early marriages might also lead to physical and mental ill health.

### **This is what applies in Sweden**

All children, both girls and boys, have the same rights. The following also applies:

- Children under the age of 15 have an absolute right to be protected from sexual acts.
- Everyone must have access to information about sex, pregnancy and childbirth.
- A pregnant girl or woman has the right to an abortion if she wishes to terminate a pregnancy.
- Having sex with someone against their will is rape, even within marriage.
- Everyone who is married has the right to separation or divorce, even if their partner does not want it.

When reaching the age of 18, a person has the right to decide for him/herself.

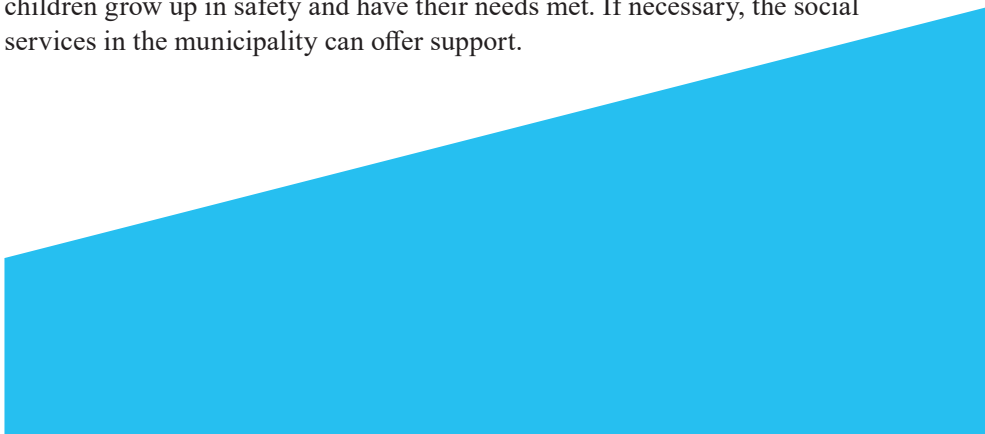
### **Foreign child marriages will not be valid in Sweden**

From January 1st 2019, any marriage between couples younger than the age of 18 will not be valid in Sweden.

Certain exceptions can be made to make the marriage valid. For example, both parties have to be over the age of 18 when they apply for marriage registration in Sweden. The couple also have to have been married before January 1st 2019, or are able to claim “exceptional reasons” for validation. Exceptional reasons can for example be that an invalid marriage can result in serious consequences to both parties. Applications for serious exceptions will be assessed on an individual basis.

### **The parents or a guardian have the responsibility for a child**

Primarily it is the parents, as guardians, who have the responsibility for ensuring that children grow up in safety and have their needs met. If necessary, the social services in the municipality can offer support.



Everyone under the age of 18, who is seeking asylum without parents or guardian, is considered to be an unaccompanied child. A guardian is appointed, for example to help the child to manage their contacts with the authorities and handle his/her finances. A person who is reported as being married to a child does not have the decision-making power over the child that a guardian has.

### **Sex with someone under the age of 15 is a crime**

Children under the age of 15 have an absolute right to be protected from sexual acts. It is a crime to have sex with someone under the age of 15. This also applies if the child is reported to be married. Anyone who has sexual intercourse or performs other sexual acts with a child under the age of 15 is guilty of rape of a child. The crime can lead to imprisonment for between two and ten years.

### **Contact with Swedish authorities**

The Swedish Migration Agency handles all asylum applications. The social services are responsible for investigating the needs of a child and for providing support and protection. The authorities must cooperate with the child and with the person who has responsibility for the child. They must ensure that the child can express his/her opinion, such as where to live and what he/she wants to happen.

Everyone working with children and young people, such as schools and health services, is under a legal obligation to immediately report any concerns to the social services if they suspect a child is being treated badly.

### **If you are new in Sweden**

Your case officer at the Swedish Migration Agency or the social services can give you more information about what applies in Sweden.

On the website [www.informationsverige.se](http://www.informationsverige.se) you can find information about Swedish society in several languages.

**Information till barn:**

**[www.kollpasoc.se/barnaktenskap](http://www.kollpasoc.se/barnaktenskap)**