
To: Scrutiny Co-ordination Committee

Date: 03rd April 2019

Subject: Female Genital Mutilation

1 Purpose of the Note

- 1.1 The purpose of this briefing note is to provide an update to the Scrutiny Co-ordination Committee regarding our work to prevent Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) in Coventry

2 Recommendations

- 2.1 The Business, Economy and Enterprise Scrutiny Board are recommended to:
- 1) Support the work outlined in the paper.
 - 2) Identify any additional recommendations for the Cabinet Member

3 Information/Background

3.1 What is Female Genital Mutilation?

- 3.2 Female genital mutilation (FGM), also known as female circumcision or female genital cutting, is defined by the World Health Organisation (WHO) as "all procedures involving partial or total removal of the external female genitalia or other injury to the female genital organs for non-medical reasons."
- 3.3 Female genital mutilation is classified into four major types outlined in (see Appendix One). The practice is mostly carried out by traditional circumcisers, who often play other central roles in communities, for example, attending childbirths. Procedures are mostly carried out on young girls sometime between infancy and aged 15, and occasionally on adult women.
- 3.4 Below is a link to a short video produced by the Home Office as part of their "protect our girls" campaign which was launched in October 2018.
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HkDuzLA8T9w>
- 3.5 FGM has been illegal in the UK since 1985. In 2003, the Female Genital Mutilation Act tightened this law to criminalise FGM being carried out on UK citizens overseas. Anyone found guilty of the offence faces a maximum penalty of 14 years in prison; but prosecutors had until recently struggled to secure any convictions.
- 3.6 This year saw the first successful prosecution for FGM in the UK. This landmark case has highlighted the need to continue the conversation and take a zero tolerance approach to the practice in order to safeguard and protect women and girls.
- 3.7 The case in question took place in East London in summer 2017. The timing of this conviction presented a platform to campaign against FGM on International Day of Zero Tolerance for FGM (6th February 2019). The Home Office launched a new campaign "Lets Protect our Girls" which includes a range of posters available in a different languages.
- 3.8 On the 6th February 2019 Coventry City Council led a social media campaign to raise awareness of FGM. This campaign was supported by members of the Coventry FGM Steering Group and the Safeguarding Boards.

- 3.9 The Coventry FGM Steering Group is led by Public Health and comprises of key stakeholders such as Health, Midwifery, LSCB, Police and the Voluntary Sector. This group have been developing a Strategic Statement regarding FGM. The purpose of the statement is to make clear the position of the Council and its wider networks on FGM. A final draft will be presented at the Harm Abuse Reduction Partnership (HARP) for agreement on behalf of the Police and Crime Board.
- 3.10 LSCB are also keen to champion the topic and have produced a One Minute Guide to FGM. The guide contains accessible, straight forward information and support to practitioners who may be working with families and young people at potential risk. The guide will be made available at the end of May 2019.
- 3.11 FGM training is currently available via the Safeguarding Board. The training is delivered annually and has recently been updated to reflect the local picture. There are plans to include information regarding the recent prosecution in future training and to broaden the session to cover information about adults as well as children. The hope is to also attract adult practitioners to the course in the future.

4 The Current Position

- 4.1 It is estimated that 125 million women and girls worldwide have undergone FGM, and that 3 million girls are subjected to FGM every year. It is estimated that 137,000 women and girls are living with FGM in the UK and that 60,000 girls aged 13 and under are at risk of FGM. For more information on countries where FGM is prevalent please visit https://www.unicef.org/protection/files/00-FMGC_infographiclow-res.pdf
- 4.2 Between April 2017 and March 2018 the FGM Enhanced Dataset from NHS digital stipulates that in England there were 6,195 individual women and girls who had at least one attendance at either an NHS trust or GP practice where FGM was identified or a procedure related to FGM was undertaken.
- 4.3 In Coventry between April 2017 and March 2018 the Enhanced Dataset confirms there were 35 newly recorded individuals where FGM was identified or a procedure for FGM was undertaken. This number was down from 60 the previous year (2016-17) and 75 the year prior (2015-16).
- 4.4 Police data shows a similar picture. In 2015 41% of the total FGM referrals into the West Midlands Police force were for Coventry residents. The following year this reduces to 20% and in 2017 was down to 9%.

5 Local Services

- 5.1 Coventry Haven Women's Aid continue to offer a service to local women and children whom are victims, or are at risk of FGM. Services provided include refuge accommodation, training programmes for professionals and local communities and a trained network of community champions. Since April 2018 Haven have supported 70 new women who have disclosed FGM, an increase on the previous year (45). Ten new community champions have been recruited and fully trained. They come from 10 different countries where FGM is a known issue. Though the one-to-one support provided the service estimates that it has supported in preventing up to 89 cases of FGM; this is based on the number of service users with female children who have rejected the practice.

"FGM is not good. I have been through it. I am determined to save me daughter from it. I feel happy for the support I received from everyone that helped me to protect my daughters against FGM. I am grateful. Thank you" (service user Coventry Haven)

- 5.2 The petals web app continues to be publicised and used as a resource for both professionals and the community providing up to date information and advice in Coventry and beyond. The app was created by Coventry University and endorsed by the National

Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children ((NSPCC) in 2017. A link to the webapp is included here: <http://petals.coventry.ac.uk/>

- 5.3 Coventry City Council has recently secured circa £10,000 from the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government in the form of a 12 month one-off grant. MHCLG stipulates that we spend the grant on promoting awareness of FGM in the local area. The Coventry FGM Steering Group will shortly be asked to determine the best way in which this grant can be used.

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Appendix One – definitions of FGM

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Female genital mutilation is classified into four major types:

- I. Clitoridectomy - partial or total removal of the clitoris.
- II. Excision - partial or total removal of the clitoris and the labia minora, with or without excision of the labia majora.
- III. Infibulation - narrowing of the vaginal opening through the creation of a covering seal by cutting and positioning the labia minora and/or labia majora with or without excision of the clitoris (infibulation).
- IV. Other - all other harmful procedures to the female genitalia for non-medical purposes, e.g. pricking, piercing, incising, scraping and cauterizing the genital area.