

## LSCB FGM Briefing for Schools in Kingston and Richmond

Recent media publication has drawn the public's attention to the recent abuse incidents where young girls have been subject to undergoing the procedure of Female Genital Mutilation (FGM). According to the World Health Organisation<sup>1</sup>, FGM is '*all procedures which involve the partial or total removal of the external genitalia or injury to the female genital organs whether for cultural or any other non-medical reasons*'. FGM can also be referred to 'female circumcision', 'female genital cutting' and 'Sunna'.

It is estimated that every year 2 million girls around the world are affected by FGM with girls being from Africa, Middle East and South East Asia but also some girls in the immigrant population of Europe, America and Australia. Girls aged between 4 and 14 are most at risk but older or younger girls could also be at risk.

According to Forward UK<sup>2</sup>:

- **60,000 girls under 15 are at risk of FGM in the UK**
- **137,000 girls and women are living with the consequences of FGM in the UK**

There are approximately 29 practising countries and in particular: **Somalia, Sierra Leone, Ethiopia, Sudan and Middle East - Egypt**

However, it is everybody's responsibility within the safeguarding community, especially schools in Kingston and Richmond, to be aware of the signs and symptoms of FGM in order to prevent this abuse from occurring. This briefing will hopefully help to provide you with some guidance and understanding around FGM.

### Local prevalence

Local prevalence estimates are at an early stage of development and there are a number of limitations relating to the methodology used. Initial estimates suggest that:

- **Children that may be at risk of FGM**  
38 (22 Richmond and 16 Kingston) female babies born in 2013 had one parent born in a country with an FGM prevalence of 20% or over
- **Women that may have undergone FGM**  
1020 women (461 Richmond and 559 Kingston) are estimated to have been subjected to FGM

### Why does FGM occur?

It is important to understand the reasons why FGM happens which can contribute in preventing this type of abuse from happening:

- Customs and tradition
- social acceptance, especially for marriage
- family honor
- a sense of belonging to the group and conversely the fear of social exclusion
- cultural identity – a tribal initiation into adulthood
- religion, in the mistaken belief that it is a religious requirement
- preserving virginity / chastity
- hygiene and cleanliness
- enhancing fertility

<sup>1</sup> <http://www.who.int/mediacentre/factsheets/fs241/en/>

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.forwarduk.org.uk/key-issues/fgm/>

## **Possible indicators that FGM may be about to take place:**

A child may be from a community where FGM is socially accepted and therefore may:

- Mention or talk about going on a 'special holiday' to a country where the procedure is prevalent
- May confide in yourself/someone else that she is about to have a 'special procedure' or celebration.
- May refer to the celebration or special occasion to 'becoming a woman'

## **Possible indicators that FGM may have already taken place:**

A child who belongs to a community where FGM is performed may:

- Spend a long periods of time away from the class during the day with bladder issues or menstrual problems
- Have prolonged absence away from school and on return there may be a change in behavior
- Want to be excused from physical education without a note from the GP to support
- Have difficulty in walking, standing or sitting down

## **The effects of FGM**

FGM can be very dangerous and cause young girls a lot of pain. The child may be in shock as they did not expect the procedure to occur or even worse cause bleeding and infections. There are also long term effects associated with FGM which can impact the child during their adulthood.

## **What do you do if you suspect FGM is about to take place or has already taken place**

- Ultimately FGM is a child protection issue and it is important that you follow your child protection procedure
- You must inform your designated child protection lead/designated safeguarding lead
- They must make a referral to Single Point of Access (SPA) in Kingston and Richmond:
  - **Kingston SPA - 020 8547 5008**
  - **Richmond SPA - 020 8891 7969**

## **Information for Schools regarding FGM:**

- <https://www.pshe-association.org.uk/content.aspx?CategoryID=1193>
- <http://www.safeguardingschools.co.uk/fgm/>
- <http://www.nhs.uk/Conditions/female-genital-mutilation/Pages/Introduction.aspx>

## **Further reading:**

- <http://kingstonandrichmondscb.org.uk/practitioners/domestic-violence-and-abuse-131/female-genital-mutilation-138.php>
- <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/female-genital-mutilation-guidelines>
- <http://www.londonscb.gov.uk/fgm/>
- <http://www.forwarduk.org.uk/what-we-do/resources/>
- <http://www.who.int/mediacentre/factsheets/fs241/en/>
- <http://www.nspcc.org.uk/preventing-abuse/child-abuse-and-neglect/female-genital-mutilation-fgm/>