

NHS England (London Region)
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For further information or advice please
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19 July 2016

Dear Colleagues,

Re: Female genital mutilation (FGM) – extra awareness needed as summer holidays commence

As the school summer holidays commence many young girls are taken abroad by their families to have FGM performed. This allows time for the child to ‘heal’ over the long summer holiday period – mainly to avoid detection when they return to school.

I want to share with you a new NHS health campaign currently being shown on UK-based African satellite television channels and promoted across social media via Facebook. Patients can access the campaign video on www.nhs.uk/fgm along with other important information about FGM.

The campaign reaches out to patients and the public from UK resident FGM practicing communities, with a clear message that women and girls can and must come to the NHS to ask for help.

We need to prepare across the NHS to help those who come to us, be that in a GP surgery, in an appointment with a health visitor, or if a girl is asking to speak with her school nurse.

The NHS must also be even more vigilant in the coming weeks and take every possible action to ask questions if you are worried. Some of the signs to look out for are:

- Young girls attending for immunisations to travel to countries with high FGM prevalence;
- Young girls talking about travelling home for ‘special’ ceremonies or rituals;
- Families planning absence from school that would extend the summer holiday period.

I would also like to remind you of the duty to report cases of FGM to the police if a professional treats a girl under 18 if a) she tells them she has had FGM or b) if they see signs which appear to show she had FGM. This duty strengthens our existing safeguarding responsibilities, and can be easily met by telephoning the non-emergency police number 101. The duty came into force on 31 October 2015. For more information about this, training and support materials and other guidance please see the annexes.

Please share this letter and the guidance in the annexes widely across your organisations and with your partners. I would also ask that you share with your

online / digital and patient liaison teams, and ask that you join with the online campaign, by sharing, promoting and linking to the social media materials.

If anyone is in doubt about the need to be aware, the statistics published by the Health and Social Care Information Centre show that over 3,700 patients were treated for whom it was reported for the first time that the female had FGM between April and December; and these are the reports made, we know that more women and girls are not yet asking for help. A report, commissioned by the Home Office and published by City University and Equality Now, shows that no local authority in England is unaffected by FGM (ref).

Thank you for your invaluable support in protecting girls. We know that by talking and breaking down the taboo around FGM, we can reach and support many more girls and young women, who are part of the future of our health service, our communities, our country.

With best wishes

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'JC', with a stylized flourish extending from the bottom right.

Jane Clegg
Interim Regional Chief Nurse

Annex A – Resources

There is a comprehensive suite of training, support materials and guidance to support the NHS and professionals to tackle FGM.

Please circulate directly to your teams and also incorporate into training and development plans, making sure these changes are embedding into your safeguarding training from here on.

- [FGM Prevention eLearning](#)
Health Education England developed FREE training for all health professionals.
- [Multi-agency guidelines on FGM](#)
Advice for leads and professionals about FGM and how to introduce effective multi-agency arrangements
- [Female Genital Mutilation Risk and Safeguarding: Guidance for professionals](#)
A sample risk assessment model, developed from best practice across England, published by Department of Health.
- [Information on mandatory reporting for health professionals](#)
A suite of materials to help NHS professionals understand the new duty
- [FGM enhanced dataset: implementation summary for GP practices](#)
A guide to help GPs introduce data collection locally.
- [FGM statistics and data collection](#)
Health and Social Care Information Centre website where you can find the FGM statistics published so far, and more information about how to record and submit your data.
- NHS Choices – [FGM Guidance for professionals](#)
Find videos, guidance and leaflets you can use to support discussions with patients
- [Statement opposing FGM available in multiple languages](#)
Also known as the ‘Health Passport’, this can be used to support patients in understanding the efforts across the UK Government to end FGM
- FGM NSPCC Helpline for patients and professionals to ask for help and advice 0800 028 3550 or fgmhelp@nspcc.org.uk
- FGM Prevention Week [resource pack](#)