



FAO All Head Teachers

My Ref: MK/IV/FGM/2019

Your Ref:

Please ask for: Imran Varachhia

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Date: 03rd June 2019

Dear Colleague,

Female Genital Mutilation, Forced Marriage and 'Honour' Based Abuse - Alert for all teachers from Sandwell's Domestic Abuse Strategic Partnership

The school summer holidays have traditionally been a time when children and young people have visited their family's country of origin believing that they are either going to visit relatives, be a guest at a wedding or be part of a 'special ceremony' or 'special occasion.'

Evidence informs us that some of these children and young people will become victims of forced marriage or female genital mutilation. They may take an extended summer holiday and return to school displaying different behaviours which may indicate that they have been forced to marry or have been subject to FGM. In certain circumstances, children and young people may be threatened and/or be at risk of so called 'honour' based violence.

We are asking all teachers to be particularly vigilant about these issues because:

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- Schools have a vital role to play in identifying potential victims and supporting those who have become victims;
- 15% of cases to the Forced Marriage Unit in 2016 involved victims below the age of 16 and 11% of cases involved 16 - 17 year olds;
- The West Midlands has the highest rate of reporting Forced Marriage (14%) after London (21%) in the UK;
- Approximately 23,000 girls under 15 in the UK are at risk of FGM.
- The age at which FGM is carried out varies. It may be carried out when a girl is new-born, during childhood or adolescence, just before marriage or during pregnancy.
- Individuals facing these issues are protected by UK legislation. Both issues are illegal. However, these issues are often unreported and currently rarely prosecuted.
- **These are child protection issues if they involve a young person under 18 years of age.**
- The impact of any of these experiences on a child or young person will affect their behaviour and educational progress.

For more detailed information about the warning signs that may signal that a child is at risk from these issues, please see the enclosed information sheet.

Thanking you for your vigilance and co-operation in this matter.

Yours sincerely,



David Stevens
DASP Chair



Marie Kelly
Chair of Sandwell Stopping FGM

How should you respond if you suspect this is happening to a young person or child?

- If you believe them to be in immediate danger, phone 999 and ask for Police intervention and support. West Midlands Police can also be contacted by calling 101 for non-emergencies.
- Report any suspicions to Sandwell's MASH (Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub) on 0121 569 3100 and follow Sandwell's Safeguarding Children policies.
- Follow the [Sandwell Policy and Procedures to Address Female Genital Mutilation](#) for:
 - Identifying when a child may be at risk of being subjected to FGM and responding appropriately to protect the child;
 - Identifying when a child has been subjected to FGM and responding appropriately to support the child and;
 - Measures which can be implemented to prevent and ultimately eliminate the practice of FGM.
- Phone the Forced Marriage Unit for advice and support on 020 7008 0151 or 020 7008 1500 (out of hours) Email: fmufco.gov.uk and <http://www.gov.uk/forced-marriage>
- Phone the NSPCC FGM 24 hour helpline on 0800 028 3550 Email fgmhelp@nspcc.org.uk
- Seek advice and support from Black Country Women's Aid 24 Hour Helpline 0121 553 0090

What else can you do?

- Familiarise yourself with existing multi- agency practice guidance for FGM and forced marriage: <https://www.gov.uk/forced-marriage> and <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/female-genital-mutilation-guidelines>
- Consider additional training. The Home Office have developed a FGM e-learning package for professionals called Recognising and Preventing FGM which can be accessed via this link <https://www.fgmelearning.co.uk/>

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- Sandwell MBC have developed an e-learning module called **Domestic Violence and Abuse, Forced Marriage, Honour Based Violence and Female Genital Mutilation Awareness**. To access please email:
jenny_tarrant@sandwell.gov.uk
- Sandwell are offering FGM, forced marriage and HBV training sessions for officers from all agencies. [Domestic Violence & Abuse – training courses](#)
- Visit the Sandwell MBC domestic abuse website
<http://www.sandwell.gov.uk/domesticabuse> for information about domestic abuse and support available in Sandwell