



## Project Azure

# The Metropolitan Police response to Female Genital Mutilation



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**Sexual Offences, Exploitation and Child**  
**Abuse Command**



## FGM IS A VAWG ISSUE AND IS CHILD ABUSE!!

- FGM is a gender based violence and serves as a complex form of social control of women's sexual and reproductive rights.
- When FGM conducted on a child under 18 it is CHILD ABUSE as it leads to severe physical & mental health consequences in short and long term.
- It can NEVER be excused, accepted or condoned.
- Professionals should NOT let fears for being branded 'racist' or 'discriminatory' weaken the protection and support required by vulnerable girls and women.

## FGM is a safeguarding issue

### What is Safeguarding:

Safeguarding is everyone's responsibility. It is the action we take to promote the welfare of children and protect them from harm. Safeguarding is defined in 'Working together to Safeguard Children 2015' as:

- protecting children from maltreatment
- preventing impairment of children's health and development
- ensuring that children grow up in circumstances consistent with the provision of safe and effective care and
- taking action to enable all children to have the best outcomes

It is broader than 'Child Protection' and it is about preventing harm rather than dealing with it after it has happened.

## The law

**The Female Genital Mutilation Act 2003 makes it illegal to:**

- Perform FGM in the UK.
- Aid, abet, counsel or procure a non UK National to carry out FGM on girls who are British Nationals or habitual residents of the UK abroad, whether or not it is lawful in that country
- To aid, abet, counsel or procure a girl to carry out FGM on herself
- Penalty of up to 14 years in prison or a fine

# Recent changes to legislation

- **Extension of extra-territorial liability to "habitual" UK residents**
- **Lifelong victim anonymity**
- **Parents' and guardians' liability for failing to protect a child from FGM**

**(Serious Crime Act 2015)**

- **Civil Protection Orders for FGM**
- **Mandatory reporting for regulated professionals – went live on 31<sup>st</sup> October 2015**

**There have been NO  
convictions under FGM  
legislation in the UK...**



## Barriers

Children are unlikely to 'tell on their parents' or were too young to remember

Many from parents not known to agencies

Once in a lifetime event

Honour Based Abuse

Community acceptance / Marriage

Language / Immigration status

Unaware of the law

Lack of understanding of health implications

## Reasons given for practising FGM:

**FGM seen as a natural and beneficial practice carried out by a loving family who believe it in the girls and communities best interests.**

- Brings status & respect to the girl
- Preserves virginity
- Cleanses and purifies girl
- Part of being a woman / Rite of passage
- Uphold family honour
- Aesthetically desirable / helps girl be clean and hygienic
- Rids family of bad luck/evil spirits
- Protects cultural identity – giving sense of belonging to community
- Social acceptance (marriageable)
- Fulfils religious requirement believed to exist
- Makes childbirth safer for infant
- Perpetuates custom / tradition



## HMIC 'The depths of dishonour: Hidden Voices and shameful crimes' – Dec. 15

- improved knowledge and understanding of HBV
- increased awareness and understanding to ensure more effective first responses
- consistent approach to risk assessment, protections of victims, and investigation & supervision of HBV crimes
- improved collection & handling of data / intelligence
- effective engagement with affected communities to promote intelligence being shared
- consistent approaches to partnership working (particularly with health, social care & education)

## NPCC Strategy 'Honour based abuse, forced marriage and FGM policing strategy' 2015 - 2018

### Strategy looks to:

- (a) build trust and confidence of affected communities,
- (b) reduce under-reporting,
- (c) proactively engage with communities, raising awareness and identifying victims / perpetrators,
- (d) demonstrate Police Services leadership on issues and
- (e) gain a better understanding of scale of problem.

### It is underpinned by 3 keys principles:

- Victims have a fundamental right to be believed
- Victims safety (safeguarding) and well-being at heart of response and investigation
- Victims personal details will be stored, managed, handled with integrity / confidentially

## NPCC Strategy 'Honour based abuse, forced marriage and FGM policing strategy' 2015 - 2018

**Prevention:** Making harmful practices dishonourable in our communities using 'community driven solutions' (C.D.S.) to tackle generational cycle of offending.

**Protection:** Keep people safe by removing, minimising or controlling risks and preventing crime.

**Prosecution:** Bring more offenders to justice through conviction.

**Partnership:** Collaborating to create safer future for younger generations.

# Project Azure

Increasing awareness and reporting of FGM is a key part of our response: we are working with healthcare and safeguarding professionals, to enhance referrals and information sharing relating to FGM.

- Accurate and consistent data – mandatory reporting / data recording / police reports
- Safeguarding seminars for Secondary Schools
- Operation Limelight
- Community engagement
- Awareness raising – Police and partners
- FGM SPOC's
- Guidance for Schools: Safeguarding young people from sexual violence and harmful practices.

# Project Azure – Where next?

- Increased focus on prevention activity in Schools
- Encouraging sharing of information on FGM from Safeguarding professionals
- Increased collaboration with UK Border Force and the broader Airport community
  
- Encouraging more intelligence on FGM so that we can tackle perpetrators
- Enhanced Partnership activity to prevent silo activity (e.g. NHS and Police units dealing with other forms of HBA)
- Encourage use of FGMPO's
  
- Community engagement – But we need your help: What can you do? What works? Where? Why?



# Project Azure

[www.fgmelearning.co.uk/](http://www.fgmelearning.co.uk/)

The Hook  
The Predator  
The Coordinator

**CAN YOU STOP IT?**

Q W E R T Y U I O P  
A S D F G H J K L return  
Z X C V B N M ! ?

Search 'Can You Stop It CSE' on Google Videos

**METROPOLITAN POLICE**

TOTAL POLICING

NEW SCOTLAND YARD

**CAN YOU SEE IT?**

[www.barnardos.org.uk/cse-can-you-see-it](http://www.barnardos.org.uk/cse-can-you-see-it)

Referral pathways:

Professor Alexis Jay  
Author, Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Exploitation in Rotherham

Michelle Lytle Skomal  
Author, Stop It Now! (Book)

Blackwell Lorraine  
PFI, Former Practitioner

**METROPOLITAN POLICE**

TOTAL POLICING

NEW SCOTLAND YARD



**Multi Agency approach is vital – We can't do this alone**

Family

Border force

School

Community

Doctor / Nurse

Social worker

Police Officer



## Where do you stand?

Thank you for listening...  
Any questions?

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