

## UNITED KINGDOM OF GREAT BRITAIN AND NORTHERN IRELAND

### Response to the UN Secretary General's invitation to provide information on: Intensifying global efforts for the elimination of female genital mutilation

#### *Intensifying global efforts for the elimination of Female Genital Mutilation (A/RES/73/149):*

##### Domestic Response

#### **Most recent data on Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) prevalence including, if available, among immigrant and refugee populations, and information on root causes and factors contributing to the practice:**

The UK government collects a range of data on FGM; however, we do not hold information on the prevalence of FGM in immigrant and refugee populations.

The Government's [statutory guidance](#) on FGM sets out a range of different justifications which are sometimes given for the practice of FGM, some of which include: preserving a girl's virginity or chastity; a rite of passage; upholding family 'honour'; hygiene and cleanliness; and giving a girl social acceptance, especially for marriage.

The Ministry of Justice (MOJ) publishes quarterly statistics on the number of FGM Protection Orders (FGMPOs) issued by the family courts in England and Wales. FGMPOs are being used to good effect, with 547 being granted since their introduction in 2015 to the end of December 2019.

NHS Digital collects data on women and girl victims of FGM who are being cared for by the NHS in England, to build a picture of prevalence to support work to prevent and treat FGM. [The FGM Enhanced Dataset](#) records occasions when FGM was encountered within a healthcare setting and is published quarterly and annually. The most recent set of annual statistics was published in July 2019 and shows that, between April 2018 and March 2019, there were 4,120 newly recorded<sup>1</sup> cases of FGM, and 11,575 total attendances<sup>2</sup> where FGM was identified or a procedure for

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<sup>1</sup> 'Newly recorded' includes those cases where patients have had their information collected in the FGM Enhanced Dataset for the first time. This does not necessarily mean that it was the woman or girl's first attendance for FGM, but that it was the first time her data was collected. In addition, it does not mean that the FGM took place within the last year or that it took place in the UK.

<sup>2</sup> 'Total attendances': all attendances where FGM was identified or a procedure for it was undertaken (individuals may have one or more attendances). Includes both newly recorded and previously identified cases.

FGM was undertaken. In total, 6,415 individual women and girls had an attendance related to FGM during this period.

To improve understanding of the prevalence of 'honour-based' abuse, including FGM, we amended the police Annual Data Requirement to require police forces, from April 2019, to record where a crime has been committed in the context of preserving the 'honour' of a family or community. The collection includes, but is not limited to, crimes of FGM.

The Department for Education publishes statistics on the number of children that have been referred to and assessed by children's social services in England. The most recent set of annual statistics shows that from 2018 to 2019 there were 1,000<sup>3</sup> cases where FGM was identified at the end of an assessment (0.2% of assessments).

### **Measures taken to protect women and girls from FGM, including when the practice occurs outside the country of residence:**

[The Female Genital Mutilation Act 2003](#), and [The Serious Crime Act 2015](#) made FGM and ancillary practices illegal, introduced civil FGM Protection Orders, introduced anonymity for victims of FGM, and established a mandatory reporting duty, requiring professionals to report 'known' cases of FGM in under 18s to the police.

In 2019, the Home Office held a series of roadshows across England and Wales to train professionals in the use of FGM Protection Orders. The aim was to encourage professionals to always consider them in any safeguarding plans.

In cases where a potential victim of FGM has already been taken abroad, the joint Home Office and Foreign and Commonwealth Office Forced Marriage Unit can assist British nationals (including dual nationals).

### **The role of stakeholders in eliminating the practice of FGM, including of: traditional leaders; faith-based and religious institutions; families and communities; youth; men and boys; grassroots and women's organizations; as well as health sector workers, particularly their ability to prevent FGM, including medicalization, and manage FGM complications:**

We recognise the vital role stakeholders play in the UK to raise awareness and identify best practice in tackling FGM.

The Home Office hosted an international conference on 15-16 November 2018 in London on tackling forced marriage and FGM, in partnership with the Council of Europe. The conference demonstrated the UK's global leadership in our work to

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<sup>3</sup>This is an estimated figure as where a local authority has recorded between 1-5 cases the exact figure is not recorded (for data protection purposes).

tackle these crimes and brought together survivors, policy officials, and international experts to share best practice on effective interventions taking place. It generated further commitments from governments.

The Home Office's FGM Unit is driving a step-change in our nationwide outreach on FGM and has spoken at awareness-raising events across the UK. The Unit works closely with voluntary and community sector organisations and survivors to help inform and develop policy, and holds meetings with representatives from a range of different organisations. The Unit also continues to provide free resources to professionals, including training, best practice examples, information on legislation and policy, and a free e-learning course. It provides an online service allowing someone to find details of FGM-support organisations near to where they live. The UK government has also provided funding to a number of charities and organisations that support efforts to end FGM in the UK.

FGM survivors also played a key role in the development of the Government's 2018-19 communications campaign on FGM, which sought to raise awareness of the negative long-term health consequences, and encourage communities to report FGM via the FGM helpline run by the National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children.

The health system has a key role in supporting women and girls who have undergone FGM. NHS England and NHS Improvement have launched eight new pilot FGM clinics to support women with FGM who are not pregnant, focusing on 18-25 year olds. The community-based clinics provide basic healthcare services, and emotional and psychological support. There are existing well-established FGM pathways in maternity services. All healthcare professionals receive safeguarding training to spot the signs of FGM.

[The FGM Information Sharing System \(FGM-IS\)](#) is a national digital system which shares information from healthcare records of girls under 18 with a family history of FGM between authorised healthcare professionals and administrative staff across England. FGM-IS supports effective early intervention and ongoing safeguarding of girls potentially at risk of FGM.

### **Impacts of the COVID-19 outbreak in regards to FGM and measures undertaken to address these in the short, medium and long-term:**

We are working with police and charities to understand the likely impact. Help and advice are still available to everyone who needs it during the Covid-19 pandemic. The Forced Marriage Unit continues to offer assistance to support British nationals at risk of FGM while they are overseas, and the national Honour-Based Abuse Helpline, part-funded by the Government, continues to offer advice and support, as do other charities.

The UK government's national communications campaign on how victims of domestic abuse may access support during the pandemic advises those who are

concerned about someone who is at risk of, or who has experienced, FGM, to contact the NSPCC's National FGM Helpline. The Home Office's social media accounts have also shared information on FGM in order to raise awareness and reassure women and girls that support remains available during this difficult time.

Within the justice system, FGM Protection Orders remain available and are part of the work which the family courts have confirmed must continue to be carried out as a priority during this period.

### Overseas Response

The UK is a world leader in our support to the Africa-led movement to end FGM. In 2018, we announced a £50 million UK aid package – the biggest single donor investment worldwide to date – to tackle this issue across the most affected countries in Africa. This funding will focus on supporting grassroots activists and youth initiatives to lead change within their communities and hold governments to account.

DFID has recently allocated £3.5 million to the WHO and the UN to work with governments and health systems to end the medicalisation of FGM, tackle cross-border FGM, and implement laws in countries where FGM is already illegal but continues to be practised.

Since 2013, DFID-supported programmes have helped:

- Over 10,000 communities, representing over 27 million people, pledge to abandon FGM;
- Over 4 million girls and women to receive health, social, and legal services related to FGM;
- The Gambia, Nigeria, and Mauritania to make the practice illegal;
- Eritrea, Kenya, Mauritania, Senegal, Sudan, and Uganda to introduce their own national budget line for tackling FGM;
- Support over 900 grassroots organisations to end FGM;
- In Sudan to reduce social acceptance of FGM by an estimated 18% in two years, through DFID's trailblazing programme.