

EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES COMMITTEE

FEMALE GENITAL MUTILATION

SUBMISSION FROM POLICE SCOTLAND

As the lead for Public Protection for Police Scotland, I wish to provide the following written submission in advance of the above committee meeting on Thursday, 19 June 2014.

Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) is a gender-based crime, which has devastating consequences for women and girls. Police Scotland is committed to working in partnership to tackle FGM and in the case of infants and children recognise it as child abuse, which requires to be considered in the context of child protection.

Whilst the prevalence of FGM in Scotland is unknown, it is recognised that there are a significant number of women and children from affected communities resident in Scotland. It is hoped that the scoping project currently being carried out by the Scottish Refugee Council on behalf of the Scottish Government will contribute to a better understanding of the scale of the problem.

Police Scotland's view is that legislation alone will not eliminate FGM. The lack of any prosecution in Scotland since the introduction of legislation in 1985 supports this while highlighting issues of under reporting. It is recognised that there are many barriers to reporting FGM both within communities and organisations that require to be overcome. There is also a lack of knowledge and awareness of FGM, that requires to be addressed both at a national and local level.

Since the establishment of Police Scotland we have implemented and introduced new national posts, structures and procedures in connection with Public Protection, which will drive and improve our response to Honour Based Violence (HBV), Forced Marriage (FM) and Female Genital Mutilation (FGM).

A Detective Chief Superintendent post has been established within the Specialist Crime Division of Police Scotland with responsibility for Public Protection. This post is supported by a Detective Superintendent with responsibility for child and adult protection that is further assisted by two Detective Chief Inspectors and a Detective Sergeant who performs the role of national co-ordinator for HBV, FM and FGM.

Across the 14 Divisions of Police Scotland senior officers have been identified to perform the role of HBV Champions within their local police area with a nominated deputy to ensure a consistent police response to reports of HBV, FM and FGM.

In addition, three national meeting structures have been introduced by Police Scotland with the strategic aim of developing positive and proactive practice in the fields of HBV, FM and FGM aimed at preventing crimes and improving service delivery to those affected.

The Police Scotland HBV Working Group is an overarching multi-agency strategic group chaired by the Public Protection, Detective Chief Superintendent and attended by representatives from the Scottish Government, Crown Office Procurator Fiscal Service, Royal College of Midwives, and the Royal College of Nursing. As a result of this group a Police Scotland national action plan has been developed to meet the strategic objectives.

The Police Scotland HBV Forum is chaired by the Adult and Child Protection Detective Superintendent and is attended by the National HBV Co-ordinator and the 14 Divisional Champions or nominated deputy. The purpose of this forum is to drive local policing activity in line with the national action plan.

A Partners Group has also been established comprising of representatives from third sector organisations with experience and expertise in HBV, FM and FGM. This group is used on a consultancy basis and is called together as required, allowing Police Scotland to obtain the valued views and opinions from partners on HBV, FM and FGM matters.

To improve the police response to HBV, FM and FGM, comprehensive training and awareness raising continues to be delivered to probationary officers as well as frontline and specialist officers. An annual conference is held at the Scottish Police College to promote awareness and understanding, engagement with partners and share best practice and learning points.

A Standard Operating Procedure has been introduced providing officers with advice and direction when dealing with HBV, FM or FGM incidents, including risk assessing and safety planning.

Police Scotland has introduced a national Vulnerable Person Database (VPD). Where concerns have been identified in respect of children and adults, they are recorded, risk assessed and shared with relevant partners. Any concerns identified to Police Scotland in respect of a child or adult at risk of HBV, FM or FGM will be entered onto this database and this will contribute to establishing the extent of HBV, FM and FGM incidents reported to Police Scotland.

A national FGM register has been established, indicating that since the 1 April 2013 there have been 14 referrals submitted to Police Scotland relating to 16 children at risk of FGM. These referrals have been investigated and whilst no criminality was identified interventions have been made on a multi-agency basis to reduce the risk to the children concerned.

I am supportive of the work being undertaken by the Equal Opportunities Committee in respect of FGM and have nominated Detective Superintendent William Guild and Inspector Nadine Aliane to attend the Committee on the 19 June 2014 to represent the Police Scotland position.

Chief Superintendent Lesley Boal
on behalf of Malcolm Graham, Assistant Chief Constable
Police Scotland
16 June 2014