

EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES COMMITTEE
FEMALE GENITAL MUTILATION
SUBMISSION FROM WOMEN'S SUPPORT PROJECT

Tackling Female Genital Mutilation

1. Introduction

Women's Support Project works to raise awareness of the cause and extent of violence against women (VAW).

The Project is currently funded by the Scottish Government to build capacity for delivery of training and awareness work on VAW. This work includes supporting local VAW Partnerships, Domestic Abuse Forums and relevant national networks to broaden out their work across the spectrum of violence against women, and working to address gaps in knowledge and resources.

Specific areas of ongoing work include:

- Provision of support, developmental opportunities and resources to those involved in training, including developing and maintaining the National Training Resources website
www.womenssupportproject.co.uk/vawtraining/
- Disseminating information on resources and good practice via national networks and organisations. Advising on training approaches, programmes and resources, including embedding information on VAW in training such as Child and Adult Protection courses.

In the past year we have identified gaps in relation to responding to Female Genital Mutilation (FGM).

2. Summary of national activity to date

Please note that the following information is based on contact with a range of organisations and forums. However resources for this area of work have been limited and did not allow for a national scoping exercise. Therefore it may well be that some past activity is not included below, particularly where such activity has taken place in-house.

- FGM has been an offence in the UK since 1985 and the Scottish Government introduced further legislation in 2005. There was significant training and awareness activity in 2005-06, largely coordinated through the former Violence Against Women Training Consortia.
- To date there has been very few referrals to police and child protection, and no prosecutions in Scotland (nor throughout the UK).
- In contrast France, which has a roughly equivalent population of people from communities that traditionally practice FGM, has had around 100

prosecutions. This difference has caused a lot of media interest and speculation as to whether Scotland/UK is “soft” on tackling FGM.

- Police Scotland has expressed keen interest in working closely with other agencies to address FGM, including engaging with children and young people.
- The Scottish Government Equality Team has undertaken work on FGM, including awareness sessions and development of information leaflets for use at airports and ports.
- Two organisations have received Scottish Government funding to provide specific services on FGM: Dignity Alert Research Forum (DARF) and Saheliya. DARF has focused on public education work and has recently ‘re-launched’ after a period without staffing. Saheliya provides individual health based support to women. Until recently Saheliya services were limited to Edinburgh but in 2013 additional resources were secured for two part-time posts in Glasgow. Shakti, DARF and Saheliya have some capacity to respond to requests for awareness and training work.
- Shakti and Hemat Gryffe Women’s Aid offer events highlighting harmful cultural practices, including FGM, and these have often been delivered in conjunction with DARF. For example Edinburgh Child and Adult Protection Committees commissioned Shakti to run three awareness-raising sessions from Nov 2012 – Feb 2013.
- Shakti previously had an Educational post which engaged with children and young people on harmful cultural practices. The funding came to an end in 2012 and they are currently seeking alternative funding.
- A range of other organisations have organised events or information sessions on FGM, including VAW Training Consortia and VAW Partnerships. These have often involved inviting a speaker from an FGM specific organisation such as DARF, Forward or Equality Now.
- National Child Protection guidelines include reference to FGM as does materials from the national programme on Gender Based Violence and Health (CEL_41).
- Greater Glasgow and Clyde NHS have a FGM post within maternity services, which we believe is the only specialised FGM post in Scotland. A sexual health consultant in Edinburgh has carried out a FGM health analysis.
- Health services for FGM treatment and reconstruction are available in Glasgow and Edinburgh but this information does not seem to be well known amongst referral organisations.

3. Activity undertaken by Women’s Support Project since April 2013

a) Training needs

Women’s Supported contacted all VAW Partnerships to ask about local provision of FGM training or awareness work. Twenty responses were received, indicating that:

- 8 areas had previously organised awareness events on FGM
- Most areas include some mention of FGM within Child and Adult Protection Training, or within a brief ‘introduction to GBV/ VAW’.

- No area has a specific training course on FGM although 2 areas are currently considering this need.
- 13 areas felt there was an unmet need in terms of awareness raising and training on FGM. One area mentioned the need for “specialist, systematic training” and several others indicated the need to target key services for more in-depth training on FGM

In conjunction with WithScotland, we contacted all Child Protection Committees to ask about training offered on FGM. To date we have received eleven responses, indicating that:

- All Child Protection Committees recognise FGM as a child protection issue, as outlined in the national child protection guidelines.
- 5 out of the eleven areas responding have organised some level of awareness raising event or input, mainly from DARF, Shakti or local VAW organisation, whilst one area relies on information on their website.
- No area currently has specialised FGM training but two areas have this in their work plan. Several areas offer a session on harmful cultural practices, or cultural awareness or similar.
- 8 areas indicated unmet need in terms of awareness and training and in two of these areas it is felt that this need can be met locally.

b) Resources

We have collated resources on FGM, including audio-visual materials and have promoted these through the VAW Network and on the National Training Resources website. Many of the resources available refer to English legislation and child protection procedures and would be of more value if adapted for use in Scotland.

c) Media

We have responded to a number of requests for information from the media, including BBC, Herald and Guardian. We have some concerns, firstly at the extent to which anecdotal information has been presented as ‘evidence’ of FGM taking place in Scotland, and secondly at calls for mandatory reporting and tracking of girls in FGM practicing communities, since this could become as barrier to work with communities if not handled sensitively. The Guardian is planning an international campaign against FGM and we expect this to be launched on 6th February, which is recognised as International Day Against FGM.

d) FGM Strategic Group

In conjunction with the Scottish Refugee Council we have established a multi-agency FGM strategic group for Glasgow and West of Scotland. It is anticipated that this group will contribute to and support national development work on FGM.

4. Women's Support - planned national development work up to 31st March 2015

Women's Support Project has received Scottish Government Equality Funding to lead on the following work areas:

- Develop resources for use in training and public education, including production of a Scottish DVD resource
- Produce practitioners guidance highlighting key points, good practice, and resources and services
- Produce information leaflet for use in communities, highlighting the law on FGM and services for women survivors of FGM

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3 February 2014