

04th June 2018

Dear Colleagues,

As we approach the summer holidays, Thames Valley Police is raising awareness of Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) by contacting professionals who work closely with children who could potentially fall victim to this crime.

FGM involves the partial or total removal of the external female genitalia, or other damage to the genital organs, for supposed cultural, religious or non-medical reasons. This practice inflicts severe physical and psychological damage to the child which can last a lifetime.

Around 66,000 girls and women living in England and Wales have undergone FGM, with a further estimated 20,000 girls under the age of 15 at risk. It is routinely practiced in some African and Middle Eastern countries - in some places up to 98 per cent of young women have undergone the FGM procedure.

Whilst not all people from these regions will practice FGM, and indeed there are many people in these communities in the UK who are working to eradicate this harmful and abusive practice, professionals should be aware of this issue for girls from these regions.

FGM is a grave violation of the human rights of girls and women. In all circumstances where it is practiced on a child it is a violation of the child's right to life, their bodily integrity, as well as their right to health.

FGM is child abuse and is a crime in the UK. It is an offence for a UK national or permanent UK resident to carry out FGM, or help and enable someone else to carry out FGM. This applies even when the victim is taken to a country where this practice is legal. It is also an offence for a person to fail to protect a girl aged under 16, they are responsible for and in frequent contact with, from FGM. Anyone found guilty of an FGM offence or aiding and abetting an offence faces up to 14 years in prison.

On 31 October 2015 a new mandatory reporting duty for FGM came into force. It requires regulated health and social care professionals and teachers in England and Wales to report 'known' cases of FGM in under 18's to the police. Known cases are those where a girl informs the person that an act of FGM has been carried out on her, or where the person observes physical signs appearing to show FGM has been carried out.

Whilst it is thought the crime predominantly takes place outside the UK, we believe it is vastly under-reported. As we approach the summer holidays, a particularly high risk time for potential victims of this practice, we ask that you remain vigilant to any

Please help us to raise awareness of this crime by sharing this information with any relevant professional agencies. Safeguarding is everyone's business and we must work together to help and protect those most at risk.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Tim De Meyer', with a long horizontal stroke extending to the left.

Tim De Meyer
Assistant Chief Constable
Valley Crime & Criminal Justice

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Anthony Stansfeld', with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Anthony Stansfeld
Police and Crime Commissioner for Thames