

FGM

Report of the Education and Children's Services
Scrutiny Sub-committee

March 2016



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FORWARD Cllr Jasmine Ali, Chair of the Education & Children's Services scrutiny committee

The Southwark Education and Children's Scrutiny Committee is concerned with the high instances of Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) affecting women in our local communities.

Female genital mutilation, also known as female genital cutting or female circumcision, is the ritual removal of some or all of the external genitalia. The procedures are very different according to the ethnic group and the practice is rooted in gender inequality.

FGM has been outlawed or restricted in most countries that it is carried out in, but the laws are poorly enforced. Moves have been made since the early 1970s to stop this practice. In 2012 the United Nations General Assembly recognized the practice of FGM as a human rights violation. They voted unanimously to intensify efforts to prevent it.

More recently this issue has been given media attention. There is also increased willingness of women to come forward. There is of course an impact on our role, and on our legal responsibility for safeguarding.

Southwark is significant

Recent research reaffirms that Southwark has the highest rate of FGM in the country. The evidence we considered told us that a staggering 10.4% of children in Southwark will have a mother who has been genitally mutilated. They are significantly but not exclusively from Somalia, Sierra Leone and Nigeria.

Stop FGM

The scrutiny committee is committed to preventing this practice and we have invited a wide section of professionals and the local communities to be part of the scrutiny committee's deep dive into the issue of FGM in Southwark. Our year-long research is driven by a commitment to better protect our women and children so that they are safe from FGM and those who have undergone FGM can access support services.

The following report details intelligence from leading experts and professional's like Dr Comfort Momoh from Guys and St Thomas', Alison Macfarlane – Professor of Perinatal Health and author of a recent report highlighting Southwark as having the highest incidence of FGM, Angela Craggs from Southwark Police, Clarissa Cupid of Southwark Clinical Commissioning Group and April Bald, Southwark Council social care lead on current work.

We held a 'scrutiny in a day' session and heard from community and voluntary groups, and then followed this up with a workshop from Coventry University on an EU wide community based behavior change action research programme. Our review activities and diverse participants all helped us develop our recommendations, the method and results of which are set out below.

The following report charts the results of the Education and Children's scrutiny committee's attempt to spotlight the services and partnerships set up to prevent FGM in the London Borough of Southwark, offer support to women who have undergone

FGM and make a serious contribution to ending genital mutilation of all women and children.

INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

- 1.1 This is the draft report of the review of Female Genital Mutilation (FGM). The Education and Children's Services Scrutiny Sub-Committee decided to conduct a review on 12 July 2014, and this was carried over to the following year. The aim of the review is to make recommendations to the Cabinet, the Southwark Children's Safeguarding Board and NHS Southwark Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG)
- 1.2 The review set out to address these issues in particular.
 - Promote good practice in tackling FGM
 - Bring together statutory partners and the community in finding solutions to safeguarding girls from FGM
 - Establish a clearer picture of the prevalence and risk to Southwark girls
- 1.3 The sub-committee chose this subject because FGM poses the risk of significant harm being done to Southwark girls. Southwark has the highest prevalence of FGM in the country. A report published in July 2015 by City University London & Equality Now found that the highest prevalence rates in were in London boroughs, estimated to be 4.7% of women in Southwark. An estimated 10.4% of mothers of girls born to Southwark mothers are FGM survivors.
- 1.4 World-wide 100-140 million of girls and women have undergone some form of FGM. An estimated 6,000 are at risk per day worldwide and about 2 million or more undergo FGM each year. The European Parliament estimates that up to half a million women living in the EU have been subjected to FGM, with a further 180,000 at risk.
- 1.5 The work to tackle FGM globally has been going on for 35 years, however over that last few years there has been much greater publicity around the practice of FGM in the UK and London in particular. Awareness is much greater now and discussion of the issues is far less of a taboo. However the practice still raises difficult issues around sexuality, race, immigration, culture, poverty, privilege, gender equality, abuse, and violence within family systems. All these issues need to be dealt with if the practice is to be ended and girls protected.

EVIDENCE CONSIDERED

Activities

- 2.1 The review first received a paper from Southwark social care and Southwark NHS setting report setting out current work being carried out by local statutory agencies to tackle FGM.
- 2.2 Following this a Scrutiny in A Day was held on 16 September 2015 to spend the day intensely looking at FGM and how to bring it to an end in Southwark. The first half of the day was devoted to looking at the current work of the NHS, social care, the police, followed by a presentation on recent research on prevalence. The afternoon was particularly dedicated to exploring community engagement as an important tactic in ending FGM, with the help of national and local voluntary providers specializing in ending FGM, alongside statutory agencies, frontline workers and the community.
- 2.3 The day was opened by leading FGM health professional, Dr Comfort Momoh, a pioneering midwife who in 1997 opened one of the first African Well Women clinics in St Thomas Hospital, which treats women with FGM. She now works internationally to support women with FGM and to prevent the practice.
- 2.4 A joint presentation was received from Southwark social care, NHS and Police on current work to tackle FGM, including examples of work being done to protect girls. Officers explained the statutory framework to safeguard girls and the plans of the created FGM steering group, a partnership established in June 2015 to tackle FGM.
- 2.5 Alison Macfarlane, Professor of Perinatal Health, City University London, then presented the recently published report on rates of FGM, 'Prevalence of Female Genital Mutilation in England and Wales: National and local estimates'. She provided an explanation of how the data had been arrived at and an overview of FGM prevalence and maternity rates in England & Wales, London and Southwark, drawing from data published in the report. She also provided further additional data, including the ethnic breakdown of the Southwark population at risk, including details of the types of FGM women & girls may be affected by.
- 2.6 The afternoon was focused on hearing from a woman who had experienced FGM, and the work of national FGM charities working to end FGM and the work of the local voluntary sector to tackle FGM. This was followed by a fishbowl discussion with the voluntary sector, officers from social care & the police, the committee and a broad range frontline practitioners (teachers, midwives) and community workers. The day ended with workshops exploring next steps and the scope for conducting action research with the community to end FGM.
- 2.7 Following the Scrutiny in a Day a workshop with the committee and some of the participants from the day was held on REPLACE 2 with Coventry University's Professor Hazel Barrett & Dr Katherine Brown. The programme is led by the university and is an EU wide community based behaviour change

programme to end FGM. The programme academics presented on the programme work since 2010 and the recently publish toolkit to conduct community participatory work with local communities.

Report contributors

Council & community partners:

- 2.8 Dr Comfort Momoh MBE , African Well Woman’s Clinic at Guy’s and St Thomas Foundation Trust in London, a support service for women and girls who have undergone FGM
- 2.9 Alison Macfarlane, Professor of Perinatal Health, City University London, joint author of the report on ‘Prevalence of Female Genital Mutilation in England and Wales: National and local estimates’
- 2.10 Angela Craggs, Southwark Police FGM lead
- 2.11 Clarisser Cupid, Southwark Clinical Commissioning Group FGM lead
- 2.12 April Bald, Southwark Council social care FGM lead
- 2.13 Toks Okeniyi, FORWARD.
- 2.14 Agnes Baziwe & Shani Hassan, African Advocacy Foundation
- 2.15 Florence Emakpose, World of Hope
- 2.16 Hawa Sesey, FGM Campaign
- 2.17 Louise Robertson, 28 Too Many
- 2.18 Professor Hazel Barrett & Dr Katherine Brown, Coventry University
- 2.19 Kevin Dykes, Sarah Totterdell , Ebony Riddle Bamber – Community Engagement

Education & Children’s Services scrutiny committee & officer support

- 2.20 Councillor Jasmine Ali, Chair
Councillor Lisa Rajan, Vice-Chair
Councillor Sunny Lambe
Councillor James Okosun
Councillor Sandra Rhule
Councillor Charlie Smith
Councillor Kath Whittam
Kay Beckwith
Martin Brecknell
Lynette Murphy-O’Dwyer
Abdul Raheem Musa
George Ogbonna
- 2.21 Julie Timbrell, scrutiny project manager and report author

Health impacts and the cultural reasons for FGM

3.1 Dr Comfort Momoh opened the 'Scrutiny in a Day' in September 2015. She is a midwife who set up the African Well Woman's Clinic at Guy's and St Thomas Foundation Trust in London in 1997. This pioneering service supports women and girls who have undergone FGM. She has won national and international recognition for her both her work with women FGM, and her work to end the practice in a generation.

3.2 Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) was introduced by Dr Comfort Momoh as abuse, and both a health and Human Right issues for girls and women.

3.3 There are different types of FGM. The WHO has classified FGM into four types:

Type 1: Clitoridectomy – partial or total removal of the clitoris (a small, sensitive and erectile part of the female genitals) and, in very rare cases, the prepuce (the fold of skin surrounding the clitoris)

Type 2: Excision – partial or total removal of the clitoris and the labia minora with or without the excision of the labia majora (the labia are the 'lips' that surround the vagina)

Type 3: Infibulation – narrowing of the vaginal opening through the creation of a covering seal. The seal is formed by cutting and repositioning the inner, or outer, labia, with or without removal of the clitoris

Type 4: Other – all other harmful procedures to the female genitalia for non-medical purposes, e.g. pricking, piercing, incising, scraping and cauterising the genital area

3.4 Whilst some women report no ill effects at the most extreme can FGM can be deadly: 10 % of girls die from the procedure, and a quarter of women will experience significant disability.

3.5 The health impacts of FGM include the initial shock, pain and trauma, which can lead to later flash backs and psychological problems. Girls are often held down to perform the process and as a result of the ensuing struggle there can be fractures and dislocation of limbs and injury to adjacent tissues. Immediately following the procedure the cuts can lead to infection and failure to heal, with urinary retention. Longer term FGM can cause problems in childbirth and recurrent Urinary Tract Infections and fistulae (rectum or vaginal).

3.6 As well as the adverse health impacts many women will also will suffer lifelong psychological & emotional trauma, as well as loss of sexual function & enjoyment.

3.7 FGM is popularly associated with the Islamic religion, however FGM is widespread in many countries, including Christian and Jewish communities, and is rarely practiced in some Muslim countries. FGM is not a religious requirement, although on occasions religious institutions have supported its continuation. In Britain the Muslim Council of Britain has issued a strong statement explicitly condemning the practice: "FGM is not an Islamic requirement. There is no reference to it in the holy Qur'an that states girls must be circumcised. Nor is there any authentic reference to this in the Sunnah, the sayings or traditions of our prophet. FGM is bringing the religion of Islam into disrepute."¹

3.8 FGM is more correctly described as a cultural practice that has many and complex meanings. FGM is a long-standing tradition, which has become inseparable from ethnic and social identity among many groups. Reasons given for practice vary and include:

- Tradition
- Religion
- Prevent Rape
- Income for circumcisers
- Preservation of virginity
- Promote cleanliness
- Aesthetic reasons : cultural perceptions of beauty
- Punishment

3.9 The age that girls usually undergo FGM is between infancy and 15, and it is most frequently performed on girls aged between ages 5-8, however occasionally it is carried out later.

3.10 FGM is associated with the curtailment of women's sexuality, and is frequently bound up with gender identity and with social rites of passage of girls to women. A woman who has not undergone FGM in some communities may be considered less marriageable and not having attained full status as a woman. In communities with a wide spread practice she and her family risk deliberate social exclusion to enforce the practice.

3.11 Dr Comfort Momoh emphasized that it is important to tackle FGM in a multifaceted way, as in some countries, such as Egypt, the procedure has become increasingly medicalized to counter wider appreciation of the adverse health outcomes. She also mentioned that practicing communities often raise the rapidly growing western fashion of designer vaginas, and how that can be very similar to Type 1, however they complained it is not described as FGM because it is associated with more privileged, white communities. Dr Comfort Momoh said that any procedure carried out for purely aesthetic reasons would be classed as Type 4.

3.12 She emphasised that FGM is a procedure that needs to be seen as violence against women, abuse and one that endangers safety, liberty, bodily and sexual integrity, as well as physical health, but in relating to communities sometimes it is better to use less loaded terms, such as cutting or female circumcision.

¹

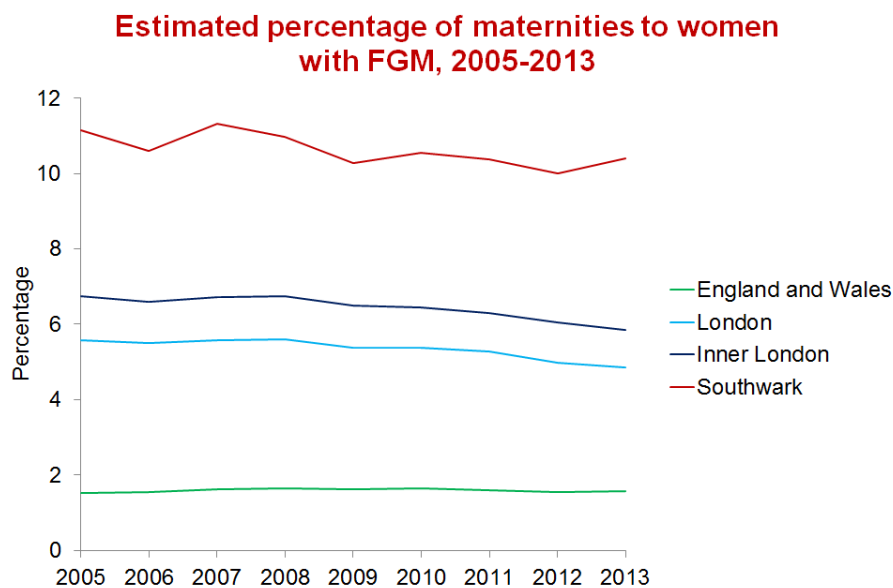
<http://www.theguardian.com/society/2014/jun/23/female-genital-mutilation-muslim-council-britain-unislamic-condemn>

Prevalence data and emerging community profile of practicing communities

3.13 The review set out to establish a clear picture of the prevalence of FGM locally and the risk to young girls. Scrutiny in a Day received a presentation from Alison Macfarlane, Professor of Perinatal Health on the recently published report by City University & Equality Now: 'Prevalence of Female Genital Mutilation in England and Wales: National and local estimates'. This provided data on both prevalence and maternity rates, using the latest census data from 2011 and other data sources, included FGM surveys in countries of origin and birth registrations. Local statutory agencies also provided data.

Maternity

3.14 Professor Alison Macfarlane's data indicated that Southwark is the borough with the highest percentage of girls born who have a mother with FGM. In Southwark, an estimated 10.4 % of girls born will have a mother with FGM, the highest percentage in England & Wales.



Source: ONS data, analyzed by Alison Macfarlane, City University London

Prevalence

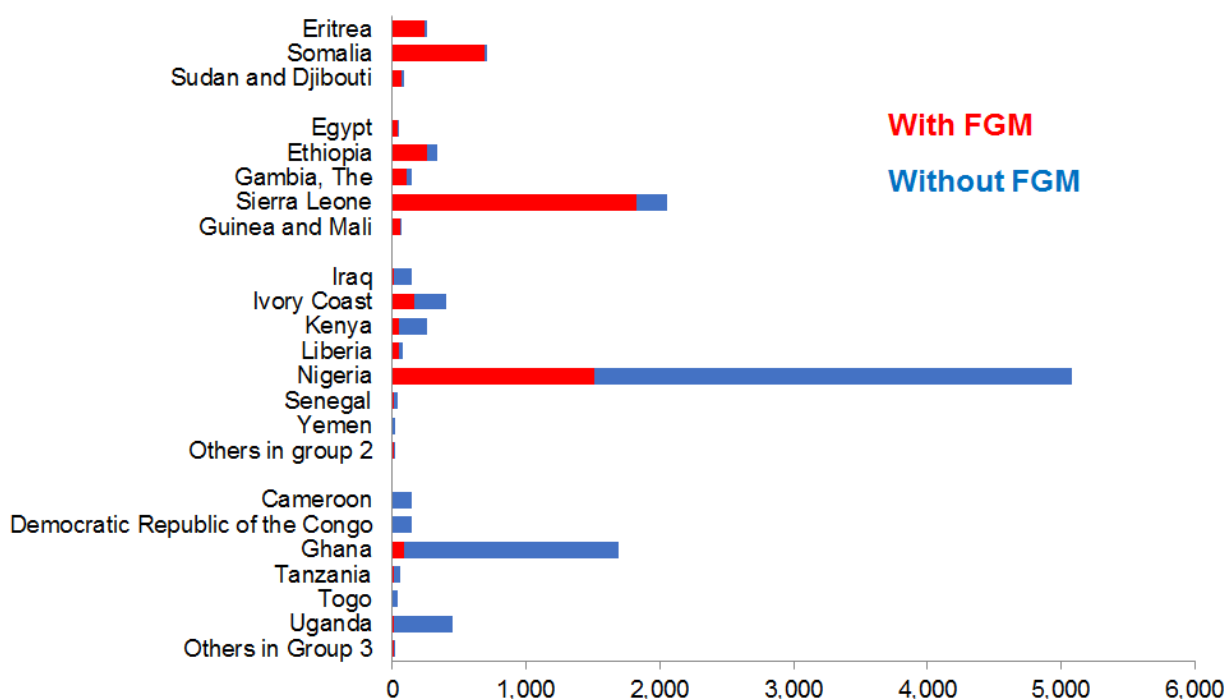
3.15 Southwark is also the local authority with the highest prevalence rates in England & Wales. An estimated 4.7 % of women and girls born outside the UK and living in Southwark will have undergone FGM. This amounted to an estimated 6,901 women and girls. Data presented by the local statutory agencies estimated that 2055 girls will be either affected by FGM or at risk.

3.16 Southwark is of course not exceptional here, as many other urban areas with high immigrant populations have estimated rates which are nearly as high. These figures do need to be treated with some caution they as are extrapolated largely from secondary sources. However the both the national report and data provided by local statutory agencies highlight that Southwark is an area where FGM is a significant issue.

Breakdown of prevalence by country of origin and type of FGM

- 3.17 The communities in Southwark practicing FGM are diverse: from different countries, practicing different types of FGM, with different religions and cultural traditions.
- 3.18 Professor Macfarlane provided some additional data for her presentation on the countries of birth of the communities practising FGM and this identified that the majority of women living in Southwark with FGM will be from Sierra Leone, Nigeria and Somalia, but there will be significant numbers of other women from other countries including Eritrea, Ethiopia, Sudan & Dhibouti, Egypt, The Gambia, Guinea and Mali, Ivory Coast, Kenya, Liberia and Ghana.
- 3.19 Women with FGM in Southwark come largely from the diaspora community originating from a group of countries from the Atlantic to the Horn of Africa, including parts of the Middle East. However FGM is practiced in other parts of the globe, particularly South East Asia. It is therefore important to keep in mind that there may well be some individuals and small pockets of communities who come from other countries.

Estimated numbers of women aged 15-49 permanently resident in Southwark with and without FGM by country of birth, 2011



Source: ONS data, analyzed by Alison Macfarlane, City University London

- 3.20 Women from Somalia, Sudan, Eritrea and Djibouti often have had the Type 3 FGM, the most severe form. Women from other countries are more likely to have had Type 2 or Type 1.

Grouping of countries by level and types of FGM

1.1	Almost universal FGM, over 30% WHO Type III	Sudan (north), Somalia, Eritrea, Djibouti
1.2	High national prevalence of FGM, WHO Types I and II	Egypt, Ethiopia, Mali, Burkina Faso, Gambia, Guinea, Sierra Leone
2	Moderate national prevalence of FGM, WHO Types I and II	Central African Republic, Chad, Cote D'Ivoire, Guinea Bissau, Iraq (Kurdistan), Kenya, Liberia, Mauritania, Nigeria, Senegal, Togo
3	Low national prevalence of FGM, WHO Types FGM I and II	Benin, Cameroon, Ghana, Niger, (Democratic Republic of Congo), United Republic of Tanzania, Togo, Uganda, Yemen

3.21 Professor Alison Macfarlane advised that in undertaking work to stop FGM it is vital to know as much about your community makeup as possible as reasons for carrying out FGM vary from country to country and even within different countries. In Sierra Leone some tribes will not practice FGM. Although infrequent in Ghana it is practiced by the Northern tribes. In Nigeria it is more common amongst Christian, rather than Muslim communities. While generally FGM is associated with lower educational levels, in Nigeria it is associated with higher levels of education. She recommended starting by making use of the data she has produced and then doing further investigations locally into the ethnic make-up of Southwark community in order to plan interventions. Louise Robertson, of 28 Too Many also advised getting to know the Southwark FGM practicing communities well; by collecting good data and understanding the varying social norms that sustain the practice.

Recommendation one

Develop a community profile of the FGM practicing communities in Southwark, with communities, drawing on available statistical data and community knowledge. Update this regularly as more accurate primary data becomes available and local knowledge of practicing communities develops.

Social Care, Police & NHS work to end FGM

3.22 Statutory agencies presented work they are doing to get better primary data, improve child protection and increase the likelihood of a prosecution of perpetrators. Local efforts have been stepped up with the instigation of a multi-agency steering group in June 2015 and they are working on developing multi agency arrangements to share information and improve safeguarding.

3.23 The police reported that the law has recently been updated and strengthened. The first legislation was the 'Prohibition of Female Circumcision Act 1985, with a

penalty of 5 years imprisonment. With the introduction of The Female Genital Mutilation Act in 2003 the penalty increased to 14 years imprisonment and added extra offences of assisting someone in the UK to arrange or assist FGM outside of UK, even if carried out by a person who isn't a UK national or resident. New measures since May 2015 mean parents and guardians can now be held liable for failing to protect a child from FGM.

3.24 Despite these changes there have been no convictions under FGM legislation in the UK. Obtaining one was cited in the committee and Scrutiny in a Day discussions as important to send a strong signal out that FGM is a crime that will not be tolerated. This was tempered with reflections on the need to engage with practicing communities and take a more nuanced approach than just pursuing the criminal justice route.

3.25 Legislation changes from May 2015 granted lifelong victim anonymity, and introduced civil Female Genital Mutilation Protection Order. These had already been employed in Southwark by September 2015 to help safeguard girls at risk and there was commitment from the steering group to expand their use. At the final Education & Children's services scrutiny committee meeting, held in March 2016, Strategic Director detailed their further use in two recent cases to safeguard children, including a high profile case involving the child of a west African diplomat². This was welcomed by the committee as indicative that Southwark is now more able to protect children by making better use of the new enforcement powers made available.

3.26 Mandatory reporting of FGM has been introduced for relevant professional. All clinical staff must now record in patient healthcare records when it is identified that a patient has had FGM and all acute hospitals must provide monthly returns of on FGM prevalence. Much better data is now coming through from health services: on 1st April 2014 the first FGM Prevalence Dataset was published. Local health data collecting has been improved and this will help provide more robust data on the local populations at risk in the future.

Community work to end FGM

3.27 35 years ago the World Health Organisation (WHO) called for end to FGM. The WHO, United Nations (UN), UNICEF, and other anti-FGM organisations have adopted various strategies in order to raise awareness and work towards ending FGM. These have centered on four main approaches:

- Bodily and sexual integrity;
- Human rights – as both an infringement of liberty & security and as discrimination & violence against women
- Legislative (outlawing the procedure)
- Health

3.28 More recently there has been increased investment in the a fifth approach of using community engagement to change the underlying beliefs that perpetuate the practice – Scrutiny in A Day sought to look at all these approaches and particularly dedicated the afternoon to exploring community engagement as an important tactic in ending FGM .

²

<http://www.theguardian.com/society/2016/feb/29/african-diplomat-child-uk-protection-order-female-genital-mutilation-fgm>

- 3.29 The afternoon was focused on hearing from a woman who had experienced FGM, the work of national FGM charities working to end FGM and the work of the local voluntary sector to tackle FGM in Southwark.
- 3.30 The Scrutiny in a Day heard moving testimony from a survivor of FGM, Hawa Sesey, who explained how an elder relation carried out the procedure on her in Sierra Leone, the traumatic impact it had on her then as a young girl, and how it later affected her married life. She has worked for many years with in her community to end the practice
- 3.31 Local organisations World of Hope and Africa Advocacy Foundation detailed their work with survivors and practicing communities.
- 3.32 World of Hope is committed to raising Youth Ambassadors that will become tomorrow's leaders through their mentoring, training, coaching, and citizenship programmes which equip young people to positively impact their communities. It works with young people on FGM directly seeking ambassadors to help end the practice and in July it held an African safeguarding children's conference, in partnership with CANUK, which in dealt with FGM.
- 3.33 Africa Advocacy Foundation has an established programme to support women with FGM and end the practice. The project employs a dedicated worker and their work includes training for FGM community champions and outreach with a wide range of Southwark faith based organizations (Muslim & Christian) and community groups. The project holds events that focus on a number of issues in an engaging way, for example FGM is often discussed within the context of sexual health to reach a wider audience. The community outreach includes work with Faith leaders, utilises sister circles, and also holds men specific discussions on FGM. Community awareness raising workshops are held tailored to the language of the people e.g. Somali, Swahili, Yoruba, and Arabic.
- 3.34 Africa-Advocacy Foundation said they have identified a lack of knowledge on the health effects of FGM. They also reported that communities frequently feel there is interference without insight into issues and a lack of trust means that communities sometimes feel targeted. They advised that there needs to be more training and education within practicing communities and there needs to be appropriate resources to facilitate learning in the community.
- 3.35 Scrutiny in a Day concluded with two workshops on next steps and conducting action research with practicing communities. Participants thought there needed to be further awareness rising through publicity on the adverse impacts of FGM, and more in depth work with different communities to change attitudes. As well as reaching out to women of child bearing age to offer them support and safeguard children who may be at risk, it was also considered important to engage with boys and men, and vital to engage with older women. Grandmothers and 'Aunties' are often the ones carrying out the procedure and it is the older generation who set the social norms of the community. Elders in African and Middle Eastern communities are frequently given a high level of respect and review participants familiar with practicing communities identified that changing elder views could be pivotal to ending the practice.
- 3.36 Africa Advocacy Foundation in depth work with a wide range of faith and community groups using community champions from practicing communities was noted as particularly valuable. However Africa Advocacy Foundation has

highlighted the need for continued financial support to continue and build on this work.

Recommendation two

Support the existing good work of community organizations, particularly Africa Advocacy Foundation.

3.37 A publicity campaign was suggested to highlight the impact of FGM , and participants discussed using blunter messages on the negative health consequences and more explicit information on the adverse impact FGM had on girls and women , however some review participants cautioned that this needed to be balanced with the need to build trust with communities and develop appropriate interventions which do not alienate communities .Experts advised that it is by knowing the community very well and always keeping the survivor voice center stage that these tensions can be resolved : the survivor voice is crucial to understanding the issues and building credibility.

3.38 Dr Comfort Momoh of the African Well Women’s Centre is organizing a Female Genital Mutilation Music Festival to raise more awareness of FGM and to educate professionals and the public in a welcoming, friendly and fun environment. The aim is to make this a yearly event in July before school holiday and the cutting season. The event will include key people from the UK and abroad, as well as ambassadors, survivors and professionals.

Recommendation three

Raise local awareness of FGM through community events, publicity, media campaigns and via community champions. Work with the local voluntary sector groups & professionals; Africa Advocacy Foundation, World of Hope, FGM survivors and Dr Comfort Momoh of the African Well Women’s Centre to support planned events and generate publicity material. Keep the survivor voice at the forefront.

3.39 The review participants identified faith communities, community groups, embassies, schools and front line workers as key groups to work with.

3.40 The teachers who attended the Scrutiny in a Day suggested training materials are developed for PSHE lessons and that the school Safeguarding Leads are fully briefed on how to respond to FGM. FORWARD, a long standing voluntary sector organization who contributed to the review, have a schools programme offering a comprehensive range of services for schools to engage and empower young people and a training programme for front line professionals. Young people and their peers need to have ways of raising alerts and getting support. It was noted that often it is siblings who raise safeguarding alerts. A confidential phone line was suggested, or exploring the Petals mobile-phone application which allows young people to find out more about FGM and source help discreetly on a smart phone. The Strategic Director brought the committees attention a safeguarding icon that one schools has developed to enable children to raise alerts and get help.

Recommendation four & five

Work with schools on integrating teaching on FGM as part of the PSHE curriculum development and ensure schools Safeguarding Leads

understand FGM and how to protect girls. Consider using the material developed by FORWARD and Integrate Bristol.

Develop ways for young people to get help, information or report concerns, making sure that it is particularly tailored for girls at risk, their siblings and peers who can help safeguard them e.g. via a confidential phone line and /or the phone application Petals and/or a safeguarding alert icon on school computer networks.

- 3.41 The Africa Advocacy Foundation said that survivors report there is a lack of FGM specialist knowledge making it difficult for women to seek appropriate advice and support and there needs to be more training for frontline professionals. The current FGM steering group has work both with schools and training of primary care professionals as an objective.

Recommendation six

Request a detailed report back in 6 months time of the FGM steering group work programme to train primary care professionals and other frontline professionals

- 3.42 Scrutiny attempted to engage with the Nigerian, Sierra Leone and Somali Embassies; however none were able to attend the scrutiny in a day. It is unclear why this was; capacity may be an issue as all have small High Commissions. Participants recommended ongoing work with embassies to engage them in ending the practice, particularly as girls are at risk during the summer holiday of being taken back to their country of origin to undergo FGM during what is termed the 'cutting season'. Although FGM is now illegal in most countries, this is often very poorly enforced and the practice is prevalent in many countries of origin: it is very common in Sierra Leone and near universal in places such as Somalia. Girls visiting extended family could be at high risk: Hawa Sesey, FGM survivor, relayed a story of returning to her home country, Sierra Leone, with her daughter and needing to take steps to protect her child from harm from her extended family. A Southwark child with her mother was intercepted at Heathrow with instruments that may have been intended to be used to cut her child. Clearly there is a risk to girls being taken out of the country, though it is hard to quantify the extent of this.

Recommendation seven

The council should continue to seek to encourage the High Commission of the countries where most families originate from, particularly: Sierra Leone, Nigeria and Somalia, to engage in order to ensure that those affected communities are brought along in our quest to eradicate the practice of FGM and also to avoid those communities feeling isolated and wrongly targeted.

Community based behaviour change programme to end FGM: REPLACE 2

- 3.43 In November 2015 a workshop was held on REPLACE 2 with Coventry University's Professor Hazel Barrett & Dr Katherine Brown. Many of the committee attended and some of the participants from Scrutiny in a Day, including African Advocacy Foundation staff, FGM social care leads and community development lead.
- 3.44 REPLACE 2 is the second round of an EU wider behaviour change action research programme which focuses on community engagement to end FGM. The programme has worked with diaspora communities in Europe by engaging members of the practicing communities to understand the social norms that perpetuate FGM and then to provide intervention support to change beliefs and motivate social change. Coventry University lead the programme. The academic leads presented on the programmes work since its inception in 2010.
- 3.45 The academics explained that thirty years on since the World Health Organisation (WHO) called for the ending of FGM there is conflicting evidence as to whether the emphasis on a criminal justice, health and Human Rights approaches has led to a reduction in the practice. 15 years ago WHO called for application of behaviour change approaches to address FGM, however research concluded that there was a poor understanding of how to conduct this.
- 3.46 The REPLACE 2 programme uses a cyclic framework for Social Norm Transformation in relation to FGM. Community engagement is critical to the approach and focused on building trust and partnership with the community. The programme works with the community to design interventions whose content and messages align with those belief systems and norms that perpetuate FGM, in order to end the practice. The programme has recently published a toolkit to conduct community participatory work with local communities.
- 3.47 The workshop concluded with an offer by Coventry University REPLACE 2 programme to assist Southwark in adopting this approach, which was welcomed by attendees.

Recommendation eight

Conduct a community engagement programme to end FGM, in partnership with local voluntary sector and community organisations, using the expertise of the REPLACE 2 Coventry University programme and 28 Too Many.

4 Conclusion

FGM has a multitude of different reasons for its continued practice; it is perpetrated and justified by reasons of perceived beauty, religion, health, to control women's sexuality, and as a rite of passage. This report has particularly emphasized the community engagement approach to change behaviour as the most underused approach in Southwark, however experts advised that to end FGM the practice needs to be tackled through a range of approaches: as a health hazard, a crime, abuse, and as a human rights and gender equality issue. Pursued all together they are most likely to end FGM.

The committee calls for more efforts and resources be geared towards using partnership working, community engagement and public awareness measures, which the evidence suggests will be central to the speedy eradication of FGM in the affected communities, both within the London Borough of Southwark and by working with the respective High Commissions of those countries. By adopting the below recommendations the committee believes that Southwark will not only be able to quickly eradicate the barbaric and outdated FGM practices but the council will also enable us to build community cohesion and a sense of togetherness.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- 1 Develop a community profile of the FGM practicing communities in Southwark, with communities, drawing on available statistical data and community knowledge. Update this regularly as more accurate primary data becomes available and local knowledge of practicing communities develops.
- 2 Support the existing good work of community organizations, particularly Africa Advocacy Foundation.
- 3 Raise local awareness of FGM through community events, publicity, media campaigns and via community champions. Work with the local voluntary sector groups & professionals; Africa Advocacy Foundation, World of Hope, FGM survivors and Dry Comfort Momoh of the African Well Women's Centre to support planned events and generate appropriate publicity material. Keep the survivor voice at the forefront.
- 4 Work with schools on integrating teaching on FGM as part of the PSHE curriculum development and ensure schools Safeguarding Leads understand FGM and how to protect girls. Consider using the material developed by FORWARD and Integrate Bristol.
- 5 Develop ways for young people to get help, information or report concerns, making sure that it is particularly tailored for girls at risk, and their siblings & peers who can help safeguard them e.g. via a confidential phone line and /or the phone application Petals and/or a safeguarding alert icon on school computer networks.
- 6 The council should continue to seek to encourage the High Commission of the countries where most families originate from, particularly: Sierra Leone, Nigeria and Somalia to engage in order to ensure that those affected communities are brought along in our quest to eradicate the practice of FGM and also to avoid those communities feeling isolated and wrongly targeted

- 7 Request a detailed report back in 6 months time of the FGM steering group training of primary care professionals and frontline professionals
- 8 Conduct a community engagement programme to end FGM partnership with local voluntary sector and community organizations and using the expertise of the REPLACE 2 Coventry University programmed and 28 Too Many.
- 9 The committee welcomes the increased use of civil Female Genital Mutilation Protection Orders, which have been used to effectively to safeguard children in Southwark. The committee supports this type of enforcement action which enables the authorities to intervene to protect girls, while working with the parents and wider family to challenge behaviour and change attitudes, and reduce the risk of unnecessary family breakup and disintegration. However any intervention must always place the needs of girls first, and recognize that while FGM is often practiced in otherwise loving homes, FGM is also associated, on occasions, with other forms of family domestic abuse, and the wider cultural oppression of girls and women.

5 Appendices

- I. FGM Scrutiny in a Day
- II. FGM workshop with Coventry University on REPLACE 2