

Our position on the UK's first FGM conviction

After 34 years of there being female genital mutilation (FGM) legislation, we have our first successful prosecution. Whilst it is a momentous moment, we must not forget the journey to this point meant a child had to suffer significant harm and this is the saddest part of it all.

The effects of FGM have a lifelong impact on survivors both physically and psychologically, so it is vital support is in place for this survivor for as long as she needs it.

"I hope the verdict serves as a warning to those considering having FGM carried out on their daughter or other family member or taking her abroad to do so. It is illegal and the police and the Crown Prosecution Service will do everything in their power to track down and bring to justice anyone who carries out FGM", says Leethen Bartholomew, Head of the National FGM Centre.

At the National FGM Centre we work to prevent this hidden form of child abuse and also provide support to survivors. Education is a key part in this, including working with girls and their families, raising awareness in schools and communities, and training professionals like social workers and teachers to spot girls at risk of FGM and know how to report it.

The National FGM Centre has:

- Worked with 195 female genital mutilation survivors and been involved in 23 FGM Protection Orders nationally, and have worked on/consulted on over 372 cases of FGM.
- Of these cases, specialist social workers from the National FGM Centre have provided short term support to over 138 families, and long term support to over 20 families.

The law does have a role in protecting girls, but we recognise that community engagement is also equally key to protecting girls, so much of our work involves working with communities to raise awareness. Preventing FGM is therefore about changing the views of affected communities and affecting a huge cultural shift in groups where FGM is commonly practised. We believe the change in



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attitudes around the practice of FGM will come from communities themselves, and therefore more work needs to be done through a broader range of services to engage them. The families who carry out FGM predominantly do it due to a belief it is a way to protect their daughter and so there needs to be community engagement work that uses an asset-based approach.

We also work with a number of key agencies with specialist expertise in the field of FGM, such as police, community organisations, specialist FGM midwives and specialist barristers to provide girls and women with high quality, long-term effective support.

At the Centre we believe prevention is crucial and even though this conviction sends a strong message, as sadly in the words of Thomas Barnardo “there is still much to be done”.



Leethen Bartholomew
Head of the National FGM Centre



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