



Raising awareness of Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) in Slough



Executive Summary

Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) is a severe form of violence against women and girls. FGM is illegal in the UK. However a report from City University in 2015 showed that across every local authority area in England or Wales, there are families affected by FGM. Nearly 6,000 women who had FGM were treated in NHS services during 2015-16. There is now a mandatory reporting duty for health and social care professionals to report FGM to the police to try to protect those at risk.

Healthwatch Slough commissioned Slough Refugee Support to undertake some awareness raising workshops.

About Healthwatch Slough

Healthwatch was created to gather and represent the views of the public. The aim of Healthwatch is to give Slough citizens a stronger voice to influence and challenge how health and social care services are provided within Slough.

Every voice counts when it comes to shaping the future of health and social care, and when it comes to improving it for today. Everything that Healthwatch does will bring the voice and influence of Slough people to the development and delivery of services.

People need to feel that Healthwatch Slough belongs to and reflects them and their community. It needs to feel approachable, practical and dynamic and to act on behalf of local people.

Background

The practice of FGM involves removing a girl's outer sexual organs and can result in infertility, repeated infections, death and extreme pain during sex and childbirth. FGM has been illegal in the UK since 1985

Women and girls affected by female genital mutilation can be found in every local authority in England and Wales. FGM prevalence in the UK is difficult to estimate due to the hidden nature of the practice. However, the latest data on prevalence in England and Wales (City University London and Equality Now, 2015) estimates that: approximately 60,000 girls aged 0-14 were born in England and Wales to mothers who had undergone FGM and estimates that there is a prevalence of between 12-16% per 1,000 women.

Aims of the awareness raising workshops

- Highlight the fact that FGM existed and was practiced not only in the countries around the world but also in the UK.
- Provide information and advice on concerns raised by either families or their children.
- To strengthen the voice of women and communities speaking out against FGM

Over a six month period, Slough Refugee Support conducted one staff training session which was also incorporated into all volunteers introduction programme.

They held two midwife and client sessions with Q&A after the course. This was attended by over 15 people of all ages. (All female).

Flyers and the FGM material was made available in the Somali language as most of the clients didn't have much knowledge of English. What made it also very popular and practical was that it was headed by a Somali speaking Midwife/Nurse. The group was small enough for people to ask individual questions and seek advice. It was a very friendly atmosphere and tea, Coffee and biscuits were also served.

Three sessions which included girls of between the ages of 11 -16 years also took place at the Slough Refugee Support centre.

This was a small group which we organised with the Local African community. This was successful, with positive feedback from the girls who were horrified at the thought of going through with this illegal practice in the UK and as well as back home.

Overall the sessions have been very successful but more work needs to be done.

One of the other things that has been highlighted is that the Mothers also want sessions for Fathers and Fathers to be.

"I was affected by FGM but would not let my daughters have it now"

Top Tips for engaging people on FGM

DO no harm - FGM is a complex, deeply sensitive, social norm, which lies at the heart of gender identity and gender relations. It is important to 'Do no harm'

Resources which **celebrate change and success** in FGM awareness, depicting people actively rejecting the practice, should be used as often as possible. This underlines the positive story of change and what has been achieved by the movement to end FGM.

Engagement should seek to **empower women**, providing support, building their confidence, and considering how their skills and capacities can be developed as part of their participation.

Challenges

'Speaking out' within Slough communities still carries risks, and requires sensitivity, safeguards and a long-term approach.

Some frontline staff, including teaching, social work and health professionals, lack the confidence and/or skills to respond adequately, or to act proactively, in relation to FGM. Some are afraid to raise the issue for fear of appearing discriminatory. More staff training will help increase confidence in staff knowing what to do if they come across FGM.

Due to funding constraints SRS have not yet run sessions exclusively for fathers

What Works? Tackling FGM at the Grassroots Level

- Incorporating FGM into other messages, including a wider range of health issues (e.g. sexual health, mental health). Exclusive focus on FGM can feel threatening for people who are unaccustomed to talking about FGM or can lead to people feeling fed up of discussing the issue. Inviting health professionals to contribute to these sessions has proved helpful for many projects.
- Providing safe spaces to discuss FGM and related issues, where all opinions are heard in confidence
- Working with religious leaders, addressing religious justifications for FGM.
- Working with young people using a rights-based approach.



- Recruiting, training and supporting Community Champions or Advocates to mobilise community rejection of FGM and increase the reach of prevention activities.
- Working with mixed groups (different ages, ethnicities, or genders) helps to counter views of FGM as an immutable practice.

Where to go for further help

Slough contacts

Jeena International www.jeena.org.uk e: smile@jeena.org.uk • t: 07958 603541

Jeena is an innovative organization that empowers women and young people. Jeena challenges and raises awareness of unacceptable social norms that negatively impact the lives of women and young people; Inspires women to reach their full potential and achieve their dreams; Improves skill sets of women and young people to create choices and opportunities; Empowers women on health and financial decisions to improve their quality of life; Educates women on coping mechanisms to encourage independence; Provides an accessible support network.

Jeena offers a free Counselling Service to any organisation who have clients who are victims of any crime in the Thames Valley area. Sessions will be lead by BACP registered counsellors to run 'Support groups' Sessions will last between 60-90 minutes depending on the needs of the group for minimum of 6 and maximum of 12 per group.

Sessions for:

1. Young People (14-18 years)
2. Women's only group (can be in Urdu/Hindi/Punjabi if required)
3. FGM group
4. Men

Contact Rani on 07958603541 for further information.

Destiny Support www.destinysupport.org 01753 552271 / 577458

An organisation that provides vulnerable people in Slough the holistic support necessary to get back on their feet. Services include a provision of basic advice and information on a range of health issues; Money/debt advice and welfare benefits advice; housing related advice and support to people regardless of their current tenure status

Slough Refugee Support www.sloughrefugeesupport.org.uk 01753 537142

An organisation committed to impartially helping all asylum seekers and refugees in Slough to achieve their rights and settle with dignity in a new community. Hold drop in sessions on a Tuesday and Thursday 10-12. E Mail Chief Exec Taz Mohammed at Taz@sloughrefugeesupport.org.uk

Slough Safeguarding team can be contacted if you see something that concerns you and you suspect a person is being harmed or abused. Call 01753 475 111 (option 1) or e mailing safeguardingadults@slough.gov.uk The worst thing you can do is nothing

National contacts

[NSPCC's FGM website](http://www.nspcc.org.uk) helpline: 0800 028 3550 email fgmhelp@nspcc.org.uk

[National Domestic Violence Helpline](http://www.nspcc.org.uk): 0808 2000 247 (24-hour)

To find FGM support near you, try the [FGM help and advice postcode finder](http://www.nspcc.org.uk).

[Freedom Charity](http://www.freedomcharity.org.uk); Tel 0845 607 0133 or text 4freedom to 88802

[Iranian and Kurdish Women's Rights Organisation \(IKWRO\)](#); Tel 020 7920 6460

[Karma Nirvana](#); Tel 0800 599 9247

[London Black Women's Health and Family Support \(bwhafs\)](#); Tel 020 8980 3503

[Ocean Somali Community Action \(OSCA\)](#); Tel 020 7987 5833

[Southall Black Sisters \(SBS\)](#); Tel 020 8571 0800

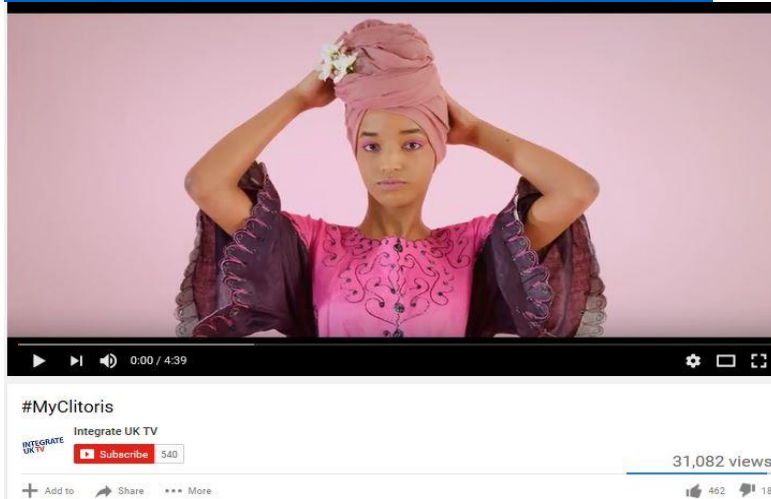
[Values vs Violence](#); Tel 07585 696 260

A list of [specialist FGM clinics in the UK](#) is available on the NHS website
(<http://www.nhs.uk/NHSEngland/AboutNHSservices/sexual-health-services/Pages/guide-to-sexual-health-services.aspx>)

Video

A cheeky but very meaningful song by the young people of Integrate UK, making it very clear that no form of FGM is acceptable.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fq6v-klcG_Y



Do you have something to say about FGM? Contact Healthwatch

Let Healthwatch know your thoughts and views.

Let Healthwatch know if you want to access training on FGM

Please contact Nicola Strudley, Healthwatch Slough Manager

Tel: 01753 325 333

E-mail: nicola.strudley@healthwatchslough.org.uk

www.healthwatchslough.co.uk



[#EndFGM](https://twitter.com/EndFGM)

