## STEPPING UP THE PACE Strengthening Alliances and Building Movements to End FGM

### #UNITEZENDEGM DOMESTIC AND CULTURAL ABUSE NEWSLETTER

## Welcome!

The 6<sup>th</sup> February 2025 is **The International Day of Zero Tolerance for Female Genital Mutilation (FGM)**, every year, it marks an important day for the world community.

More than 230 million girls and women alive today have undergone female genital mutilation. This year, nearly 4.1 million girls will be at risk of this harmful practice. The United Nations member states committed to eliminate FGM by 2030 and a girl born in 2025 is one-thrid less likley to undergo FGM than 30 years ago. However, although global efforts to encourage communities to abandon FGM are making strong progress, population growth means the number of girls at risk of being 'cut' continues to increase.

This year, the 14th anniversary of this international day has a theme that focuses on **"Stepping up the pace: Strengthening alliances and building movements to end FGM" #Unite2EndFGM and #EndFGM** 

Within Essex, this year lets focus on understanding, fostering open discussions and challenge social norms that perpeturate FGM:

#### Lets start with some myth busting:

#### FGM is not an issue for Girls and Women in the UK:

- Though traditionally concentrated in 30 countries across Africa, the Middle East, and some parts of Asia and Latin America, female genital mutilation persists globally – including women and girls that reside in the UK. What is FGM/C? | FGM/C Research Initiative
- Within Europe approx. 600,000 women are living with the consequences of FGM, with at least 140,000 survivors in the UK. In 2024 it was estimated that over 67,000 girls were at risk of FGM in England (Have a look at the European Girls at risk map Updated Map 2024)

#### FGM is a religious tradition:

 No. Though it's often perceived as a religious practice it is not endorsed by either Islam or Christianity. FGM has no religious foundation and the reasons for FGM can be different from one country/ community to another – with the age that girls being cut also varying, with girls usually being cut from birth to 15 years of age. https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/female-genitalmutilation-leaflet/female-genital-mutilation-the-facts-accessible-version

#### FGM has health benefits:

Many cultures believe that FGM has health benefits. However, FGM does not support health, quite the contrary: Most women who undergo FGM suffer for a life-time. FGM has significant immediate and long-term impacts on the health and well-being of women and girls, including many negative consequences for their sexual and reproductive health. <a href="https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/female-genital-mutilation-fgm/">https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/female-genital-mutilation-fgm/</a>

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## International Day of Zero Tolerance for FEMALE Genital Mutilation February 6<sup>th</sup>

#### FGM is only performed in rural areas or by traditional cutters:

Although traditionally, "cutters" are often female Elder's within the community, data from 24 countries found that 18 per cent of girls under the age of 15 who had undergone FGM, had the procedure performed by a healthcare provider. In Egypt, as many as 75 per cent of female genital mutilations are performed by medical practitioners. However, there remains no "safe" form of genital mutilation. Female genital mutilation (FGM) frequently asked questions | United Nations Population Fund

#### You can't change a person's perspective on FGM:

 Education and information are one of the most significant drivers of change – this is signified in research that shows Women and Girls with a secondary education are 70% more likley to oppose FGM and Girls whose mothers have a primary education are 40% less likely to be cut. Supporting families to understand the health implications and the law is vital in the support social workers should provide families where there is a risk of FGM. https://data.unicef.org/resources/the-power-of-education-toend-female-genital-mutilation/

#### If a child tells me they are the survivor of FGM – it's too late, there is nothing I can do:

- There is clear law in both the FGM Act 2003 and Serious Crime Act 2015 in the UK, which means it is illegal for UK residents to perform or abet a UK national to FGM. Legal Factsheet
- There is also a mandatory duty on health and social care professionals, and teachers to report to the police if a person under 18 informs them an act of FGM has been carried out https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/5a8086f2ed915d74e33faefc/FGM\_Mandat ory Reporting - procedural information nov16 FINAL.pdf

#### Further your Knowledge:

#### Watch a brief video about FGM:

https://youtu.be/D\_TMgAPNIGQ

#### Listen to a podcast:

 Community Care Podcast: Social Work and FGM: anti-oppressive pactice in Action https://www.ccinform.co.uk/learning-tools/social-work-and-fgm-anti-oppressive-practicein-action-podcast-episode/

#### To read some short stories about survivor's experiences of FGM please see below:

- https://www.unicef.org/nigeria/stories/cut-not-broken
- https://www.unicef.org/somalia/stories/survivor-turned-advocate

# If you would like to learn more about FGM – The National FGM Centre have free e-learning programme (it takes 1- 2 hours):

https://nationalfgmcentre.org.uk/fgm-e-learning-course/

#### Instagram:

UNWomen
end\_fgm\_european\_network
Womenofgraceuk