

Health and Adult Social Care Scrutiny Board

30 March, 2017

Findings of Vice Chair's Work Stream on Female Genital Mutilation

1. Summary

- 1.1 During the development of its 2016/2017 work programme the Health and Adult Social Care Scrutiny Board decided to look at female genital mutilation. Increased media attention of the issue in recent years prompted scrutiny to look into the matter to:-
- Identify the scale of the problem in Sandwell.
 - Ascertain what is being undertaken by the Council and partners to address the issue.
 - Identify whether, and where, any improvements can be made to any work already being done.
- 1.2 Councillor Ann Jarvis, Vice-Chair of the Board took the lead on this work stream.
- 1.3 It became clear early on that there is already a lot of work taking place to tackle female genital mutilation, as detailed below in this report. As much of this work is in its infancy the review focussed on seeking assurances in relation to the effectiveness of the existing work and allowing it to embed. It is therefore recommended that overview and scrutiny consider an update report on progress with the work undertaken by partners in relation to female genital mutilation in 2017/2018.

2. Recommendations

The Board is invited to consider the draft recommendations as set out in Appendix 1.

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3. Strategic Resource Implications

Any implications arising from the recommendations set out in this report will be explored by the relevant directors and will be the subject of a future report to Cabinet, should the recommendations be agreed.

4. Legal and Statutory Implications

- 4.1 Female genital mutilation is illegal in the UK and is a form of child abuse. The Female Genital Mutilation Act 2003 made it a criminal offence to perform the procedure. The Serious Crime Act 2015 has also strengthened legislation on female genital mutilation and added measures to protect girls and women from undergoing the procedure.
- 4.2 There is Multi-Agency Statutory Guidance on female genital mutilation (2016).

5. Implications for the Council's Scorecard Priorities

The recommendations arising from this work support the Council's Scorecard Priority of Great People.

6. Background Details

6.1 West Midlands Regional Task Force

- 6.1.1 In June 2015 West Midlands Police and Crime Panel published a report into tackling female genital mutilation in West Midlands. The Panel found much that is going on that is positive across the region but different areas and organisations were at different places in the journey – some just setting out, with others having long established multi-agency working. The report and its nine recommendations can be viewed here <http://westmidlandspcp.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2015/06/WMP-CP-Tackling-FGM-in-the-West-Midlands.pdf>.
- 6.1.2 The report found that community engagement is critical to tackling female genital mutilation and highlights the crucial role that councils, health organisations and schools need to play.
- 6.1.3 A West Midlands Regional Task Force was established to take forward the report's recommendations.

6.2 “Sandwell Stopping FGM Group”

6.2.1 Previously in Sandwell female genital mutilation was discussed in the Domestic Abuse Strategic Partnership, which is a Priority Group under the Safer Sandwell Partnership (Sandwell’s Local Police and Crime Board). However, in response to the increased media attention of the issue, the Domestic Abuse Strategic Partnership determined that a separate sub-group was required and so the “Sandwell Stopping FGM Sub-Group” was established in October 2015.

6.2.2 The Group’s terms of reference and 2017-2018 action plan are aligned to the work and priorities of the West Midlands Regional Task Force and are attached as an appendix (Appendix 2). The Group is chaired by a representative from Sandwell and West Birmingham Clinical Commissioning Group, who is also a member of West Midlands Police’s Regional Task Force. The Vice-Chair is an officer of the Council. Representatives from the following organisations/areas also sit on the group:-

Black Country Women’s Aid
Domestic Abuse Services (Sandwell MBC)
Homes & Communities (Sandwell MBC)
Home Office
West Midlands Police
Schools
Sandwell & West Birmingham Hospitals Trust
Maternity Services
School Nursing
Sexual Health
Health Visiting
Sandwell Children’s Social Care
Rights Equality Sandwell
Voluntary and Community Sector

6.2.3 The Group recognises that it is still in its infancy; however it is making excellent progress and has received widespread praise for its contribution towards the Task Force’s objectives. Some of the key achievements to date are:-

- [Sandwell Policy and Procedures to address Female Genital Mutilation](#) were developed by members of the SSFGM group, which cover both adults and children. The procedures provide professionals, practitioners and anyone working with adults, children and young people with an understanding of female genital

mutilation and what action they should take to safeguard girls and women who they believe may be at risk or have already undergone female genital mutilation. The procedures were launched at the annual Safeguarding Children Board Conference (July 2016) by the chair of the SSFGM. Conference delegates (150 multi-agency professionals from across Sandwell) also heard directly from a survivor of female genital mutilation as she bravely recounted her very personal experience of this form of abuse.

- Rights Equality Sandwell recruited and trained 10 community champions, in partnership with Birmingham Women's Aid to support community engagement work.
- Through the Domestic Abuse Strategic Partnership an Artemis e-learning module has been developed which is available for all council staff, members, and partners.
- Letters have been sent annually to all Sandwell schools before the risk period of summer holidays to assist in awareness raising.
- The Group is liaising with Birmingham City Council around adopting an educational package to raise awareness of female genital mutilation in primary schools. This has been benchmarked by OFSTED as best practice and is currently being rolled out to all schools in Birmingham.
- The Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) database has been amended to capture female genital mutilation as an indicator.
- Updates to Children's Services MASH live database have been made to enable the collection of data on Female Genital Mutilation.
- An information pack was distributed to all Sandwell GP practices in July 2016, which included professional and legal responsibilities as well as signposting victims for support.
- Questions relating to female genital mutilation have been added to the audits required under Section 175 of the Education Act 2002, which requires the governing bodies of maintained schools and further education institutions to make arrangements to ensure that their functions are carried out with a view to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children. This will ensure accountability by agencies, their executives and boards and has resulted in an increased awareness and understanding within social care and schools.
- Questions relating to female genital mutilation have been added to the audit process required under Section 11 of the Children Act 2004, which places duties on a range of organisations and individuals to ensure their functions, and any services that they contract out to others, are discharged having regard to the need to safeguard and promote the welfare of children audits. This will ensure accountability by agencies, their executives and boards and

- has resulted in a raised awareness and understanding within social care and schools.
- Sandwell's Domestic Abuse Strategic Partnership board has worked with Sandwell Children's and Adult's Safeguarding Boards to coordinate all domestic abuse related training to ensure that gaps in training are identified and addressed and training is easily accessible via one training plan. Female genital mutilation training in Sandwell incorporates best practice as defined by the regional task force to ensure the following core elements are included: the law surrounding female genital mutilation, spotting the signs, relevant communities/ethnicities affected, types of female genital mutilation, avoidance of stigmatisation, risk assessment and post risk assessment follow up, roles and responsibilities of staff whilst focussing on safeguarding children and vulnerable adults, understand referral pathways. All partners are encouraged to access multi agency training provided by the Domestic Abuse Strategic Partnership and Safeguarding Boards including the domestic violence and abuse and female genital mutilation e-learning package developed by the Council. Guidance has also been issued to Sandwell social care and schools.
 - The Council has provided six monthly update reports to the West Midlands Police and Crime Panel inquiry into tackling female genital mutilation.

6.3 Prevalence

- 6.3.1 Data collection is widely recognised as a major challenge in tackling female genital mutilation on a local, regional and national basis. It is generally considered that girls born to mothers who have been cut are the children most at risk. Risk and prevalence varies across regions, reflecting the location of practicing communities.
- 6.3.2 Due to Sandwell straddling Birmingham under the auspices of Sandwell and West Birmingham Clinical Commissioning Group, it has proven difficult to extract Sandwell specific health data in relation to the prevalence of female genital mutilation. Mapping of the problem has therefore to date been based upon the location in Sandwell of the communities known to practice.
- 6.3.3 Efforts are therefore currently focussed in the town of Smethwick and in particular the ward of Soho and Victoria, where there is a high proportion of residents from practicing communities. In 2014 the Council assessed and mapped data from the school census identifying over 260 girls from practicing countries in Sandwell (Appendix 3).

6.3.4 In late 2016 the Safer Sandwell Partnership Police and Crime Board commissioned the partnership analyst from West Midlands Police to develop a problem profile for Sandwell. The analyst is currently working with members of the Sandwell Stopping FGM group to collate data from the following sources:-

Midwifery Services
Research Sandwell
Children's Social Care
Sandwell Women's Aid
Health and Social Care Information Centre
Community Health Services
Education
Public Health
Police
Black Country Women's Aid

6.3.5 The problem profile is expected to be completed in April 2017.

6.4 Health Implications

6.4.1 There are a number of significant short-term and long-term health implications for victims for FGM:-

- Severe pain.
- Excessive bleeding.
- Shock.
- Genital tissue swelling.
- Infections.
- Human immunodeficiency virus (HIV).
- Urination problems.
- Impaired wound healing.
- Death.
- Psychological consequences.
- Chronic Infections of the genitals, reproductive tract and urinary tract.
- Painful urination.
- Menstrual problems.
- Keloid scarring.
- Female sexual health problems.
- Obstetric complications.
- Obstetric fistula.
- Perinatal risks.

6.4.2 The Department of Health has issued guidelines for health professionals in dealing with female genital mutilation.

6.4.3 Currently Sandwell and West Birmingham Clinical Commissioning Group does not commission any services to support victims. A monthly ante-natal clinic for vulnerable women is held at Birmingham City Hospital, where women who have undergone female genital mutilation are referred. It is important to note this is not a service specially commissioned for this. It has not been possible to secure a meeting with the consultant who runs this clinic to ascertain further information and desktop research has also been unsuccessful. It is estimated however that around 20 women who have undergone female genital mutilation attend the clinic each month. The Sandwell Stopping FGM Group has requested data directly from Sandwell and West Birmingham Hospitals NHS Trust in relation to attendance at this clinic. Further work needs to be undertaken to source and cleanse the data in order to understand the number of Sandwell residents who attend the clinic.

6.5 Community Approach

6.5.1 The West Midlands Police and Crime Panel's report found that community engagement is critical to tackling female genital mutilation and highlighted the crucial role that councils, health organisations and schools need to play.

6.5.2 The Service Level Agreement that the Council holds with Rights Equality Sandwell has been amended to include female genital mutilation focussed work, which will include the following:-

- consulting with community groups to identify best approaches in targeting specific groups within communities; mothers, girls, males and faith leaders;
- developing of an understanding of whether different approaches are needed;
- promoting awareness of it through community events in partnership with other agencies and community groups;

6.5.3 As well as raising community awareness overall and working with girls and women, work with boys and men is a key factor in tackling female genital mutilation from a community engagement standpoint, however there are limited resources with which to undertake such work.

6.5.4.10 community champions have been recruited and trained in partnership with Birmingham and Solihull Women's Aid to support community engagement work. However, further development work is needed equip

these volunteers with sufficient knowledge and skills to undertake the community engagement required. External funding is being sought to deliver some of this work in partnership with Ileys Community Association, the Somali Women's Association and Brushstrokes.

- 6.5.5 The West Midlands Police and Crime Panel's report identified that councillors can play a vital role in tackling female genital mutilation by giving a high profile to policy interventions as decision makers; making FGM a priority for action across the partnership, engaging with local people in their communities as ward councillors and as scrutineers investigating the work that the Council and partners are doing and suggesting improvements.
- 6.5.6 Through the Domestic Abuse Strategic Partnership an Artemis e-learning module has been developed for all staff and members. All elected members in Sandwell are encouraged to complete all modules. Data shows that to date only five elected members have completed the Artemis module on Domestic Violence and Abuse, which covers Female Genital Mutilation.
- 6.5.7 The Sandwell Stopping FGM Group is working with a local women's community group to raise awareness of the issue within Sandwell. Saturday morning women's health sessions which include awareness on female genital mutilation are being arranged and a community led event which will include awareness raising has been planned for Saturday 8th July 2017.
- 6.5.8 Discussions to deliver holistic education sessions regarding female health including female genital mutilation to young people in Sandwell schools are currently underway. These sessions will be delivered on a collaborative basis with voluntary sector agencies, community groups and community sessions.

Useful Information

- Sandwell Council's Domestic Abuse Website has further information on FGM. You can access the FGM page via this [link](#)
- The Local Government Association (LGA) has produced useful guidance for councillors on FGM, which includes information on how councils can contribute to addressing FGM. This document can be accessed via the link below: http://www.local.gov.uk/documents/10180/5854661/L14-567+FGM+guidance+for+councillors_09.pdf/7196465e-4b63-4b58-b527-a462f5b5cc9d

Recommendations

1. that the work of the Domestic Abuse Strategic Partnership's Sandwell Stopping Female Genital Mutilation Group be endorsed, along with the Group's 2017/2018 Action Plan;
2. that the Cabinet Member for Public Health and Protection be requested identify funding to support the delivery of the Stopping FGM Group's 2017/2018 Action Plan and associated work to enhance the long term sustainability of community interventions to tackle female genital mutilation in Sandwell, including:-
 - raising community awareness
 - engagement work with boys and men
 - engagement and support work with girls and women
 - the production and circulation of appropriate awareness raising materials
 - developing and supporting community champions
 - the holding of an event to launch the Joint Policy of the Adult Safeguarding Board, Children's Safeguarding Board, Health and Wellbeing Board, Safer Sandwell Partnership and Domestic Abuse Strategic Partnership on tackling female genital mutilation
3. that Sandwell and West Birmingham Clinical Commissioning Group be asked to consider commissioning health specific services including psychological support for victims of Female Genital Mutilation;
4. that all elected members be encouraged to undertake the Artemis training module on Domestic Violence and Abuse, which covers female genital mutilation;
5. that awareness raising materials in relation to tackling female genital mutilation be circulated across the partnership and to include libraries and community centres in Sandwell;
6. that consideration be given to a rewards package to recognise the to the contribution of the community champions in supporting the work to tackle female genital mutilation in Sandwell;