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23 July 2015

Dear Colleague

## RE: FEMALE GENITAL MUTILATION (FGM)

1. The purpose of this letter is to inform you of the additional resources available to support you to deliver services to people who have had FGM or at risk of FGM. It is also to remind you to be alert to young girls being taken out of Scotland to have FGM performed.
2. Police Scotland are running a campaign from the 23 June 2015 to the 21 August 2015, to co-incide with the Scottish school summer holidays to raise awareness of FGM in members of the public, police officers, partners working in the airport environment (including cabin crews) of all Scottish airports and passengers travelling to countries known to practise FGM.
3. Vigilance is particularly important in school holiday periods where the young girls “can heal” over long holiday periods. Frontline NHS staff are crucial in identifying and protecting young girls from FGM and link in with Police Scotland’s campaign of Travel Safe and Campaign against Violence and local Child Protection procedures.
4. Some of the signs to look out for are:
  - Young girls attending for inoculations to travel to countries with high FGM prevalence;
  - Young girls talking about travelling home for ‘special’ ceremonies or rituals;
  - Families planning absence from school that would extend the summer holiday period.
5. NSPCC helpline staff have now been trained by FGM health experts so that NHS staff can receive support from a 24/7 team of advisors who can discuss the often complex circumstances surrounding cases of FGM. The helpline number is **0800 028 3550**. Please ensure that your staff are aware of this important source of information and assistance.
6. NHS staff should be aware of and follow their local Child Protection Procedures. Other information on information governance is attached in the **Annex**.

7. The Scottish Government has printed copies and an electronic version of a 'Statement Opposing FGM' leaflet (a wallet-sized document sometimes known as the "health passport") for families travelling abroad who may be pressured to allow girls to undergo FGM. Electronic copies are available to download at [http://www.fgmaware.org/uploads/4/6/7/9/46792493/fgm\\_gov\\_info.pdf](http://www.fgmaware.org/uploads/4/6/7/9/46792493/fgm_gov_info.pdf) Hard copy can be obtained by contacting Scottish Government Equality Team at 3HS, Victoria Quay Edinburgh EH66QQ 0131 244 7097/41834

8. Other information and resources are available in the **Annex**.

### **Action**

9. We would be grateful if you could disseminate this information to all your staff and ensure that they are fully aware of their responsibility to protect girls from this act, which is illegal in Scotland and extends to cover girls taken overseas.

10. In circumstances where FGM is disclosed, NHS staff in the specialist, primary care and the community services should also be reminded to record the diagnosis and types of FGM, together with any corrective procedures, in relevant clinical records, as requested in the CMO/CNO letter sent on 11 July 2014. A link is attached below for ease of reference. CMO(2014)19 [Re: female genital mutilation](#)

Thank you for your invaluable support in protecting girls and women at risk from this illegal practice.

Yours sincerely

*Catherine Calderwood*

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Chief Medical Officer**

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## **The Resources and Information to Help Tackle FGM in Scotland**

- FGM has been unlawful in Scotland since 1985. The Female Genital Mutilation (Scotland) Act 2005 re-enacted the Prohibition of Female Circumcision Act 1985 and extended protection by making it a criminal offence to have FGM carried out either in Scotland or abroad by giving those offences extra-territorial powers. The Act also increased the penalty on conviction on indictment from 5 to 14 years' imprisonment. Legislation has been strengthened to extend the reach of the extra-territorial offences in that Act to habitual (as well as permanent) UK residents.  
<http://www.legislation.gov.uk/asp/2005/8/contents>
- The Scottish Government has funded the Women's Support Project to develop a range of training materials and information materials on FGM. These include:
  - a Scottish DVD outlining the law, child protection, prevention work in communities and services for women and girls who have experienced FGM;
  - information leaflets for practitioners highlighting key points, good practice, resources and services, and a standardised training package and risk assessment tool and
  - an FGM statement that sets out the law in relation to FGM in Scotland and (signed by Cabinet Secretary for Social Justice, Cabinet Secretary for Education, Cabinet Secretary for Justice, Lord Advocate and Minister for Children and Young People). The purpose of this statement is to allow a person who may be at risk to show it to family friends and or relatives when travelling abroad to remind them that FGM is a serious offence in Scotland and the UK and that there are severe penalties (up to 14 years in prison) for anyone found guilty of the offence.
- These resources can be found at:  
<http://www.fgmaware.org/>
- The Scottish Government has also provided useful information and links to support organisations at:  
<http://onescotland.org/equality-themes/gender-equality/female-genital-mutilation-fgm/>

### **Patient Information and Leaflet**

- *More information about FGM* – There is useful information and a link to a leaflet that can be given to patients identified with FGM. It defines the different types of FGM, explains the health consequences and the help and support available, and provides information on the FGM data being collected in the NHS. Available in English and ten other languages from the NHS Choice website at [www.nhs.uk/fgm](http://www.nhs.uk/fgm).

## Training

- FGM e-learning training modules: *Raising awareness of female genital mutilation*. The five e-learning modules are free of charge to all NHS staff via the 'e-learning for health' platform and cover a range of issues in relation to FGM at all stages of a girl or woman's life including:

Introduction to FGM;  
Adult women both pregnant and non-pregnant;  
Children and young women;  
Communication skills for staff;  
Legal and safeguarding issues.

- These e-learning modules have been developed by Health Education England and are available at:  
[www.e-lfh.org.uk/programmes/female-genital-mutilation](http://www.e-lfh.org.uk/programmes/female-genital-mutilation)

## Information Governance

- Collecting and sharing information appropriately is essential to provide safe and effective healthcare.
- *The NHSScotland Code of Practice – Protecting Patient Confidentiality* (link provided below) should be read with the healthcare professional's regulatory organisation's guidance on confidentiality such as those given below. If healthcare professionals are unsure about the law or their responsibilities relating to protecting personal identifiable information, senior colleagues, the individual's regulatory or professional body or the defence organisation may be able to help. The local information governance expert for NHS Boards is the Caldicott Guardian or the Data Protection Officer.  
<http://www.knowledge.scot.nhs.uk/media/CLT/ResourceUploads/4011563/Revised%20Code%20of%20Confidentiality%20-%20Final.pdf>
- The General Medical Council's (GMC) *0-18 years: guidance for all doctors* sets out the duties and principles for doctors related to children from 0-18 (particularly paragraphs 42-52 in the link below). In it, the GMC explains that "it is guidance, not a statutory code, so you must use your judgment to apply the principles to the various situations you will face as a doctor, whether or not you hold a licence to practise and whether or not you routinely see patients. You must be prepared to explain and justify your decisions and actions."  
[http://www.gmc-uk.org/guidance/ethical\\_guidance/children\\_guidance\\_index.asp](http://www.gmc-uk.org/guidance/ethical_guidance/children_guidance_index.asp)
- GMC's guidance on *Confidentiality* (2009) sets out the principles of confidentiality and respect for patients' privacy that doctors are expected to understand and follow. See link below.  
[http://www.gmc-uk.org/Confidentiality\\_English\\_0415.pdf](http://www.gmc-uk.org/Confidentiality_English_0415.pdf)