

Committee: Health and Wellbeing Board	Date: 29 January 2016
Subject: Female Genital Mutilation strategy	Public
Report of: Director of Community and Children's Services	For Decision

Summary

This report introduces the Tackling and Preventing FGM Strategy which is a joint Strategy with the London Borough of Hackney. The Strategy aims to promote the welfare of girls and women by reducing FGM and supporting those that have been affected by this illegal and harmful practice.

This is a multi-agency strategy highlighting the need for different agencies to work together to help prevent and tackle FGM in the City of London and Hackney.

The Strategy focuses on the following three priorities:

- 1) Prevention and early intervention
- 2) Strong and effective leadership
- 3) Effective protection and provision

The Strategy, which includes an action plan, underwent a consultation process in August 2015 and this report outlines the main responses and key officers involved its development.

Recommendation(s)

The Health and Wellbeing Board is asked to:

- 1) Approve the City of London and London Borough of Hackneys' Tackling and Preventing FGM Strategy

Main Report

Background

1. This report outlines the strategy for preventing, identifying and tackling Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) in the City of London and the London Borough of Hackney. This strategy has been developed in conjunction with the London Borough of Hackney.
2. It has been developed with regard to existing knowledge of the issue and has drawn on evidence about effective practice from national research and local multi-agency focused discussions, legislation, policy and guidance
3. The strategy also sets out actions to be taken by local agencies over a three year period that will aim to: prevent FGM from happening; improve the response of

professionals to girls and women who have undergone or are at risk of FGM; and make specialist information and advice available to the right people

4. The joint FGM strategy will be presented to the London Borough of Hackney Health and Wellbeing Board on 13th January 2016. Officers will give City of London Health and Wellbeing Board members a verbal update of the outcome of this meeting.

Aims and Priorities

5. The overarching aim is to promote the welfare of girls and women by reducing FGM and the deleterious impact of the practice by knowing and understanding the issue locally, providing strong leadership, prevention initiatives, protection and support to those who need it the most. The strategy focuses on the following three priorities:

6. **Priority 1:** Prevention and Early Intervention

This priority is about the safety of girls and women at risk of FGM. Key actions under this priority include:

- Conducting an audit of relevant agencies to examine what and how information is collected and recorded on FGM.
- Identify key staff and ensure they are effectively trained to identify and support those at risk of FGM.
- Developing and implementing a local public awareness campaign which focuses on preventing FGM.

7. **Priority 2:** Strong and Effective Leadership

This priority is about local agencies taking a zero tolerance approach to FGM. Key actions under this priority include:

- Reviewing specifications for new and existing services that work with girls and/or women to ensure that providers understand how to address FGM issues.
- Developing the City of London's FGM protocol and encouraging other key agencies to adopt it.

8. **Priority 3:** Effective Protection and Provision

This priority is about meeting the health and wellbeing needs of girls and women affected by FGM. Key actions under this priority include:

- Engaging with girls and women who have been affected by FGM to understand which interventions and services have been most effective.

- Developing and publicising a directory of key health and support services available to those affected by FGM.

Engagement and Involvement

9. The following teams and agencies were asked to comment on the draft strategy in August 2015

- Children and Young People's Service (Hackney Council)
- City and Hackney Clinical Commissioning Group
- City and Hackney Safeguarding Children's Board
- City of London Healthwatch
- City of London Police
- Community and Children's Services (City of London Corporation)
- Community Safety (City of London Corporation)
- Domestic Violence and Abuse Team (Hackney Council)
- City and Hackney GP Confederation
- Hackney Learning Trust
- Homerton University Hospital NHS Foundation Trust
- Hackney Council for Voluntary Services
- Metropolitan Police (Hackney)
- NHS England
- Hackney's VAWG Forum

Equality Impact Assessment (EIA)

10. The London Borough of Hackney have undertaken an EIA for the FGM strategy which the City of London Corporation fully supports.

11. Prevalence data, national and international research information indicate that girls and women from countries in Africa and the Middle East are more likely to be at risk of FGM, however it should be made clear that FGM is happening within a number of different communities, and may also involve individuals marrying into a community where FGM is practiced. Research conducted by Trust for London and City University shows that London has the highest prevalence of FGM for any city in England or Wales.¹

¹ Prevalence of FGM in England and Wales: National and Local Estimates available at <http://www.trustforlondon.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2015/07/FGM-statistics-final-report-21-07-15-released-text.pdf>

12. The EIA recognises the overall positive impact that the strategy could have on different equality groups, and on cohesion in empowering girls and women to speak out against FGM. The proposed actions should result in a positive impact on girls and women particularly in terms of their health and wellbeing.
13. The action plan includes a targeted publicity campaign which will target communities where FGM is still being practised. It is possible this type of targeted work may have a negative impact on cohesion and good relations as actions to prevent FGM may conflict with deep rooted traditions. Additionally, these groups may be perceived negatively by non-practicing communities. However, as FGM is illegal and extremely harmful it is important a clear message is promoted to practising communities to ensure they are aware of dangers, illegality and to help challenge many misconceptions. In addition, we will be working with survivors from these communities to ascertain the appropriate methods to prevent FGM while minimising the negative impact on cohesion and good relations.

Conclusion

14. The City of London and London Borough of Hackney FGM strategy sets out the City of London's aim to promote the welfare of girls and women by reducing FGM and supporting those that have been affected by this illegal and harmful practice and how we intend to achieve this.

Appendices

15. Appendix 1: City of London and London Borough of Hackney FGM Strategy.

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