



Home Office

Consultation on the draft statutory multi-agency practice guidance on Female Genital Mutilation (FGM)

Summary of responses

1 April 2016

Introduction

This document is the summary of responses to the consultation document 'draft statutory multi-agency practice guidance on Female Genital Mutilation (FGM)'. It covers:

- the background to the consultation;
- a summary of the responses to the consultation;
- the next steps following the consultation.

Background

In 2011, the previous Government launched multi-agency practice guidelines on FGM for front-line professionals with responsibilities for safeguarding children and adults. As it is unlikely that any single agency will be able to meet the multiple needs of someone affected by FGM, the guidelines set out a multi-agency response to encourage agencies to cooperate and work together.

In December 2014, as part of a wider consultation on the introduction of mandatory reporting for FGM, the Government sought views on how the multi-agency guidelines could be placed on a statutory footing most effectively.

The responses to the consultation uniformly supported statutory guidance, and the Serious Crime Act 2015 amended the FGM Act 2003 to confer on the Secretary of State a power to issue guidance to persons in England and Wales the Secretary of State considers appropriate. A person exercising public functions to whom guidance is given must have regard to it in the exercise of those functions.

A consultation paper seeking views on the content and detail of new statutory guidance on FGM, 'draft statutory multi-agency practice guidance on Female Genital Mutilation (FGM)' was published on 22 July 2015. Its purpose was to enable the Government to ensure that the new guidance captures the full range of evidence, responsibilities, duties and good practice to support professionals in safeguarding women and girls from FGM.

The consultation closed on the 30 September 2015. This document sets out a summary of the responses and outlines the Government's next steps.

Summary of Responses

A total of 166 consultation responses were received. The responses came from a variety of respondents including: healthcare professionals, education bodies, local authorities, the police, charities, and members of the public.

Type of Organisation	Number of respondents
Charity/ Voluntary Sector Organisation	20 (12%)
Education	13 (8%)
Healthcare	53 (32%)
Local authority/Local Safeguarding Children's Board	16 (10%)
Social Care	4 (2%)
Member of the public	3 (2%)
Police/Police and Crime Commissioner	18 (11%)
Other/unspecified	39 (23%)
Total	166

Q1. Do you agree that the draft statutory guidance provides frontline professionals with the information they need on the prevalence of FGM and the issues around it?

Yes	58%
No	29%
Don't know/no answer	14%

58% of respondents agreed that the draft guidance provided enough information to frontline professionals. The 21% of respondents who answered 'no' and 14% of respondents who answered 'don't know/no answer' included those who felt there needed to be more information on the prevalence of FGM and its links to other forms of violence against women and girls, and that there was duplication with other guidance.

Q2. Do you agree that the draft statutory guidance provides service delivery organisations with the information they need on the prevalence of FGM and the issues around it?

Yes	61%
No	16%
Don't know/no answer	18%

The majority of respondents (61%) agreed that the draft guidance provided service delivery organisations with enough information. A number of respondents requested more information on the specific role of their organisation.

Q3. Do you agree that the draft statutory guidance adequately captures FGM risk factors?

Yes	66%
No	29%
Don't know/no answer	14%

The majority of respondents (66%) agreed that the guidance captured FGM risk factors. The 29% of respondents who answered 'no' and 14% of respondents who answered 'don't know' included those who felt there needed to be more information on the role of other family members and the importance of engaging with survivors.

Q4. Do you agree that the draft statutory guidance captures the full range of legal tools and interventions to enable professionals and public sector organisations to safeguard and protect women and girls at risk of FGM?

Yes	62%
No	17%
Don't know/no answer	21%

62% of respondents agreed that guidance captured enough information. Those who disagreed included respondents who felt more information was required on other relevant legislation.

Q5. Do you agree that the draft statutory guidance promotes an individual-centred approach, ensuring that a woman or girl's individual circumstances drive the decision making process at all times?

Yes	57%
No	27%
Don't know/no answer	22%

The majority of respondents (57%) agreed. Some of these suggested additions included more information on the potential psychological effects of FGM and working with communities.

Q6. Do you agree that the draft statutory guidance provides sufficient and clear information for healthcare providers/police/children's social care/schools and colleges?

	Healthcare providers	Police	Children's social care	Schools and colleges
Yes	49%	56%	49%	48%
No	23%	10%	15%	16%
Don't know/no answer	28%	34%	36%	36%

Approximately 50% of each relevant profession - healthcare (49%), police (56%), children's social care (49%) and schools and colleges (48%) agreed that that the guidance provided sufficient and clear information for their profession. Those who disagreed included respondents who felt more information was required on working with non-governmental organisations, more clarity on the FGM mandatory reporting duty and that it would be helpful to include case studies.

Q7. Do you agree that the draft statutory guidance captures how professionals and public sector organisations can work with communities to prevent FGM?

Yes	40%
No	36%
Don't know/no answer	24%

There was a close split between those who agreed (40%) and those who disagreed (36%). Those who disagreed or answered 'don't know' included those who felt more information was needed on multi-agency working with the voluntary and community sector and the role of Local Safeguarding Children Boards.

Q8. Do you agree that the draft statutory guidance describes a multi-disciplinary approach which will allow for the voice of the child to be heard and respected whilst working to protect and support her?

Yes	50%
No	24%
Don't know/no answer	26%

50% of respondents agreed that the guidance allowed for the voice of the child to be heard. Those who disagreed (24%) or did not know (26%) included those who felt more information was required about teaching in schools, how to approach families and information sharing.

Conclusion and next steps

We have analysed the responses from the consultation and taken them into account in developing the final version of the guidance.

The guidance focuses on the specifics of the response to FGM and will complement other relevant guidance on child abuse, such as *Working Together to Safeguard Children*. The Government is clear that placing the guidelines on a statutory footing will support a more effective front-line response to FGM, support improvements to multi-disciplinary working and will in itself help to promote effective implementation of legislation, including the new mandatory reporting duty, putting the safety and wellbeing of girls and women at the front and centre of our approach to ending FGM in a generation.

Consultation principles

The principles that Government departments and other public bodies should adopt for engaging stakeholders when developing policy and legislation are set out in the consultation principles.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/consultation-principles-guidance>