

Police support International Zero Tolerance Day for FGM



Today marks the International Zero Tolerance Day for FGM (Female Genital Mutilation), and Police Scotland have thrown their support behind the campaign, which aims to raise awareness of this practice.

FGM is a complex form of child abuse. Despite international outcry, it continues to be practiced in certain communities for reasons related to chastity, status, honour, marriageability, belonging, tradition, cleanliness or desirability. No religion condones FGM and most faith leaders have condemned it. Women from affected communities who oppose FGM may be shunned, ostracised or abused by their communities.

FGM is extremely harmful, has no health benefits and can significantly affect girls and young women's physical, sexual and mental health and wellbeing for life, and Police Scotland will respond sensitively to FGM concerns raised by professionals and others. A multi-agency approach will ensure individuals receive a co-ordinated response.

Assistant Chief Constable Gillian McDonald said, "Police Scotland, with its statutory partners and support organisations, nationally and locally, has a duty to protect young women and girls at risk of FGM. FGM is a complex and hidden issue, and there is no single solution to ending the practice. Police Scotland recognise that in order to affect real long term attitudinal, social and cultural change, working closely with communities and those who have been affected is crucial.

"Community engagement is essential to prevent FGM and to do this effectively, there needs to be a concentrated effort to

work with partner agencies and communities to break down barriers and develop trust and confidence which enables concerns about FGM to be voiced. The Scottish Government's FGM Multi-Agency Guidance provides a framework to support collaborative working; which is essential to allow us to support and engage with all who are affected by FGM.

"By doing so we will increase confidence and encourage the sharing of information with agencies to ensure early and effective intervention and adequate support and protection from one of the severest forms of violence against women and girls.

"As the demographics of Scotland continue to change and the numbers from potentially affected communities continue to grow, tackling FGM will remain a challenge, not only for Police Scotland, but for all agencies, third-sector organisations and the communities themselves.

"International Day of Zero Tolerance to FGM is an important reminder that this practice still goes on, that it is a global issue and that by working together we can protect children."

Gathering intelligence from affected communities will greatly assist Police Scotland in building a FGM picture that can be utilised to target practitioners, prevent the practice taking place and support potentially affected families.

If you have a concern about a child's wellbeing or if you are aware that someone may be at risk of FGM or of being taken out of the country for the purposes of FGM, then please contact your local authority or Police Scotland on 101. If it is an emergency, then call 999. Police Scotland will act on all calls we receive.