



Good Practice Briefing

Young Women and Violence

April 2011



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Introduction

Sharing Our Strengths

WRC and Women and Girls' Network (WGN) have been funded by London Councils to deliver a four-year project, Sharing Our Strengths, aimed at providing second tier support to London's violence against women and children sector through the sharing of knowledge, skills and good practice and the facilitation of networking and partnerships. The project will run from February 2009 to March 2013.

This support is primarily available free of charge to organisations funded under the London Councils specifications which cover violence against women and children (43, 59, 60, 61 & 63, 62, 65, 69, 70 and 72).

What support does the project provide?

The support comes in a number of forms:

1. Accredited training for frontline workers
2. Professional exchange seminars
3. Good practice briefings and template policies
4. Training and 1-1 support on monitoring and evaluation and infrastructure issues
5. Monthly email newsletter - email ellen@wrc.org.uk to subscribe
6. 6-monthly discussion and networking meetings for funded organisations
7. Membership of WRC's online women's sector network
8. Quality assurance guide

For more information, please see www.wrc.org.uk/sharingourstrengths

Professional Exchange Seminars

[Women and Girls Network](#) (WGN) and WRC are providing a programme of Professional Exchange Seminars (PES) as part of the [Sharing Our Strengths](#) project. The seminars will bring together practitioners to discuss and explore issues relating to best practice around violence against women (VAW). The seminars aim to help develop a multi-disciplinary community of shared learning, knowledge and practice by promoting and encouraging professional networking. From each PES a good practice briefing will be written which not only serves as an event report, but also as a resource for those working in the sector

Young Women and Violence – the wider context

“Violence against women is perhaps the most shameful human rights violation, and it is perhaps the most pervasive. It knows no boundaries of geography, culture or wealth. As long as it continues, we cannot claim to be making real progress towards equality, development and peace” *Kofi Annan, Former UN Secretary-General*

We live in an increasingly violent society. The consequences for girls / young women experiencing violence are, invariably long lasting and devastating to their life chances. The socialisation of girls and young women, combined with the frequent portrayal of violence and objectification of girls and young women in the media, may result in a negative or poorly developed sense of identity.

The result for some young women is that they are conditioned to not pay attention to their own needs and experience. This can result in depression, low self-esteem and a learned sense of powerlessness. Harassment and other forms of violence affect not only victims of abuse, but also have long standing consequences for bystanders.

Violence against women persists as one of the most systematic and prevalent human rights abuses in the world. It is a threat to all women, and an obstacle to efforts for development, peace, and gender equality in all societies. For young women who experience violence, their lives are then deprived of their rights, security, dignity and their dreams.

Young Women and Violence Seminars

The two PESs on Young Women and Violence (held in October 2009 and March 2010) marked the start of the 4-year PES programme. These seminars showcased agencies that are working with young women and are at the forefront of best practice in the field. These agencies deal regularly with the issues of sexual exploitation, forced marriage, female genital mutilation, domestic violence and gang violence, along with other forms of abuse.

Through attendance at the seminars and the dissemination of this guide, we hoped to provide workers with:

- a deeper awareness and understanding of the issues around young women and violence
- a range of useful tools and creative ways to engage in working with young women

Young women and gangs

Speakers

Nicola Weller, Head of Children's Services, the nia project
Carlene Firmin, Senior Policy Officer, ROTA

The context

"Women and girls affected by serious youth, and gang related violence have been largely ignored in both policy and practice. The serious youth violence agenda has been targeted at young men, and the violence against women agenda has been targeted at adult women. As a result the way in which young women experience and associate with violence has been overlooked. Serious youth violence strategy has been developed without due consideration given to females, leaving statutory practice, commissioning and policy in breach of the gender duty."¹

The Mayor of London's Violence Against Women Strategy (2010) cites evidence on the growing problem of rape within gangs. The London Teenage Sexual Health Forum commissioned research on the role of non-consensual sex in teenage pregnancy. It received anecdotal evidence of sexual bullying and coercion of teenage girls, often by groups of boys and young men. Girls are frequently seen as 'sexual accessories' by young men in gangs and can be passed around among group members. The strategy concludes: *'Rape and sexual assault, by individual gang members and by the whole group, is relatively common'*.

Girls in gangs

Nicola Weller's research has revealed the following information about the nature of girls' involvement in gangs and the place that sexual violence plays.

Girls can be involved in a number of different ways with gangs/groups who offend and their involvement can be classified in a number of ways:

- Girlfriend of gang member
- "Gang" member (mixed or girl group)
- Baby Mother (i.e. mother of one of the gang's children)
- "Link" – a girl who has sex with gang member but is not classed as a girlfriend
- Sister
- Other relative, e.g. cousin
- "Snitch"

Girls can have different statuses within groups, for example:

- Women as property: "There is no other function; they are just sexual objects... There are three things that they will do. It will be sex, or they will be the ones used as alibis, or they will hold their things. That's it."

¹ P. 6, C. Firmin, *Female Voice in Violence Project: A study into the impact of serious youth and gang violence on women and girls* (ROTA, London, 2010)

- Offending: “depends on what the boy wants rather than on what the girl wants.”

Sexual violence in gangs

Sexual violence is rife within the context of gangs and groups who offend. Girls are subject to sexual violence and this can take a number of different forms:

- Sexual acts being filmed and passed on without consent
- Girls being “passed around”
- Multiple perpetrator rape
- Rape perpetrated by individuals
- Coerced sex
- Groping
- Sexual exploitation
- Physical violence within intimate relationships
- Kidnap alongside sexual violence
- Initiation into gangs (“sexed in”)

Sexual violence can have a number of different purposes:

- Rape as retaliation- against her and males connected with her.
- “It’s the fear of reprisals, the fear of rape. Knowing that it could happen to you if you make the wrong decision... However you are involved.”
- Use of threat and humiliation as control, including use of technology (e.g. mobile phone images/video)
- Male bonding/pleasure
- Girls’ involvement: “You want to be part of the group that is oppressing you, because you sure as hell don’t want to be part of the other group.”

In response to the threat of sexual violence, young women tend to put forward one of two personas. This can be either the masculinised girl “It was almost like a defence mechanism, whereby to act very masculine and to make yourself sexually inaccessible because of the way you are and the reputation you have got.”, or a girl with emphasised femininity, a “girlie girl”: “There are girlie girls who dress very provocatively, wear lots of bling and make-up and are expected to sleep with any and every gang member, although their ambition is to be chosen by the leaders of the pack.”²

In this context, anger is often the response to sexual violence, and can take the form of immediate anger (e.g. girls fighting back), hyper arousal and trauma, girls grouping together to protect themselves and can also manifest as anger at agency responses to incidents of sexual violence.

This all happens against the backdrop of the normalisation of sexual violence, firstly in the wider context of consumerism and sexualisation of women and girls: to be sexual is strongly linked to feelings of self worth and being valued for girls in this situation. But this is alongside a lack of understanding amongst both boys and

² P. 74 <http://www.centreforsocialjustice.org.uk/client/downloads/DyingtoBelongFullReport.pdf>

girls about consent and sexual offences. Some young people and adults have attitudes which hold girls accountable for sexual violence.

Case studies³

Amelie

Amelie attended an all girls' grammar school when she was 11. She completed her GCSEs and passed 11 graded A-C in 2008. She is now 17, and her boyfriend is currently in a young offenders' institution, also aged 17. She loves him very much and says she is always attracted to 'bad boys' but doesn't know why. Her boyfriends have been from her borough, but as she does not live in a gang-affected ward, her association with them is her link to serious youth violence.

Amelie began seeing boys when she was 13 and lost her virginity at 14. She thinks that was too young and that 16 would have been better. She thinks that it was too early as she feels it is important to be able to have sex and not get attached to the person you are having sex with. When you are under 16 you get too clingy and boys don't like that. She feels it is important to be able to have sex, walk away and feel nothing.

Amelie is aware that if her boyfriend gets into trouble people may come looking for her so she doesn't hang around with his set. The only time they really spend together is at her house and her movement is restricted to certain areas. Her boyfriend wants her to do well at school so she can be a good mum to any kids they might have. She says some girls are sluts and hang around the gangs all the time; they don't like her and she doesn't spend any time with them. While her boyfriend is in prison she will stand by him. Her parents think he has not been around because the couple broke up.

Louise

Louise went to a 'good' school because her mum was keen to have her educated away from the area she lived in. She claims she was bored there and ended up occupying her time selling drugs on behalf of gangs in her local area. Aged 13 she was arrested in possession of drugs she was planning to sell. These were confiscated by the police. Following this confiscation she was kidnapped by the gang she had been working for and repeatedly raped by the members as a punishment. This was when she lost her virginity. She did not seek any help following this incident.

Young men's use of sexual violence in a group/gang context

Sexual violence in the group/gang context seems to enhance group cohesion and validates the masculinity of the individual men involved. The group context also serves to diminish individual responsibility⁴. Sexual violence is also used against

³ Extracts from larger case studies, pp.120-121, C. Firmin (ROTA, London, 2010)

⁴ <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-1084469/Nine-schoolboy-rapists-facing-jail-punishment-attack-14-year-old-insulted-gang-leaders-girlfriend.html>

other boys to feminise or to humiliate, while again validating the masculinity of the perpetrator.

Girls exiting relationships/groups

“We don’t talk about what happens when they get chucked out, or they haven’t fulfilled their duties... That’s more dangerous than being in the gang itself.”

“It feels like they have got themselves stuck in to a place that they can’t get out of, and then more seems to happen to those girls because they are vulnerable and can’t say no.”

Female Voice in Violence Project

Since 2008 ROTA has conducted research on the impact of serious youth and gang violence on women and girls. This research programme began with a London-focused study from 2008 - 2010 and has now developed into a national research programme covering Liverpool, Manchester and Birmingham.

Phase 1 of the Female Voice in Violence Project, launched its report in February 2010. The report assessed the impact of serious youth violence on females in London, and made recommendations for working at a local, regional and national level.

- View the press release for the launch [here](#)
- Download the executive summary of the report [here](#)

In 2010-2011 ROTA has been developing cross regional research in Liverpool, Manchester and Birmingham, launching a final report in March 2011. In preparation for this fieldwork ROTA produced an introductory report to the national research programme which identified work currently being conducted in the named regions and central government engagement with the London fieldwork.

You can download a copy of the introductory national report [here](#).

Key findings

The London report identified that⁵:

1. There is a negligible amount of intelligence on the numbers of women and girls affected by gang violence, either as sisters, mothers and girlfriends, or as female gang members. Even services that have intelligence on male gang members struggle to identify females associated with those gang members, or to collect this information in a co-ordinated fashion.

- This limits the ability of services to target interventions or assign resources to reduce female association.

⁵ pp.3-4

<http://www.rota.org.uk/downloads/Female%20Voice%20in%20Violence%20Project%20report%20Executive%20Summary.pdf>

- It also means that specialist services designed to reduce female association and address female victimisation, in a gang context, are chronically under-resourced and over-stretched.

2. Sexual violence and exploitation are significant weapons used against females associated with, or involved in, gang violence. Rape has become a weapon of choice, and used against sisters, girlfriends, and on occasion mothers, as it is the only weapon that cannot be detected during a stop and search.

This use of sexual violence takes place against a backdrop where girls have little peer support, where girls and boys are extremely confused about consent and their own motivations for engaging in sex, and where young people have little to no understanding of coercion.

3. Gang-associated women and girls rarely disclose any victimisation they experience due to fears over reprisals, and the belief that their criminal association means that they are not privy to the protection of the state. Girls struggle to identify services that are independent of the state and have little or no confidence in claims of confidentiality by any service.

Given the lack of intelligence on these issues, statutory services are not clear how they should respond to gang-related sexual violence, and cannot guarantee the safety of girls associated once they have disclosed exploitation or assault when using standard safeguarding models.

4. Girls who carry firearms and drugs for their boyfriends:

- Often live in areas that are not perceived to have a 'gang-problem'
- may attend grammar or private all-girls schools
- will rarely be under any form of surveillance or be known to any specialist services such as children's or youth offending services
- have their own bank account where their boyfriend can store his money.

These girls rarely receive interventions and struggle to identify routes of support.

5. Girls are being processed through systems such as youth justice, or alternative education (pupil referral units) which are designed to work with boys, and where they have to access to interventions in environments dominated by boys. This has a severe impact on their ability to address their offending behaviour and reduce their victimisation.

Where next and implications for good practice

Gaps in policy

There have been some recent shifts towards focusing serious youth violence policy more on the impact violence has on women and girls. However, this policy is often focused on punitive responses to young women. An example of this was the recent 'Trident' campaign targeted at girls who hold firearms for their partners:

"Many of them believe that if they are caught with a firearm they will not be prosecuted for possession because 'clearly' it is not their gun. They are wrong. If found guilty of gun possession, they will face a prison sentence, regardless of their sex. This campaign drives home the simple message that those who store weapons for others are committing a crime, as well as helping others to commit theirs." *Detective Chief Superintendent Helen Ball, Head of Trident*

At present we still have much to learn from the Corston review⁶, about how women experience the criminal justice system. The learning from Corston is yet to be applied to girls under the age of 18, and this is when girls are often in very male-dominated environments such as youth offending services.

Best practice

There are questions to be asked about how best to manage disclosure of gang association in a VAW organisation, and how to support gang-associated women while also protecting other women who may also access their services. This requires the VAW sector to be open to the possibility of building partnerships with Serious Youth Violence (SYV) and gang mediation services in order to offer safe services for all of their clients.

How can we work with girls/women more holistically, to take into account the variety of their experiences?

Partnership working is key to providing holistic services for women and girls affected by gangs and serious youth violence. As their needs cut across expertise held in the VAW, SYV, and youth sectors, in addition to BAME service providers, it is crucial that responses clearly take these into account. Attempting to provide services in a short-cut fashion has the potential to put gang affected females at further risk.

In order to provide appropriate services for girls in gangs, training and expertise is essential, along with skills sharing between professionals. VAW practitioners should be willing to attend generic SYV and gangs training in addition to girl and gang specific training as they need to understand the full context of gang violence in order to meet the needs of their clients.

Case study

the nia project's safe choices programme is an example of an effective programme aimed at both prevention and mitigation of the effects of girls' involvement in gangs

- Partnership project led by the nia project
- Working with The Children's Society and Shian Housing Association

⁶ This Review was commissioned by the [Home Office](#) and conducted by Baroness Corston (published in March 2007) and was an investigation into vulnerable women in the UK criminal justice system. The report outlines "the need for a distinct radically different, visibly-led, strategic, proportionate, holistic, woman-centred, integrated approach".

- Aims to reduce young women's violence
- Working with young people 13-19 yrs
- Funded by the Department for Children, Schools and Families
- Rigorous evaluation

Services offered:

- 1:1 work with young women; 3 months per client
- 8 week group work programme for young women. The programme has a focus on patterns of offending behaviour, resilience and positive support networks
- 8 week group work programme for young men
- Training for professionals (from 2010)

Resources

Female Voice In Violence Project: A study into the impact of serious youth and gang violence on women and girls (London, 2010), ROTA
<http://www.rota.org.uk/downloads/Female%20Voice%20in%20Violence%20Project%20report%20Executive%20Summary.pdf>

Female Voice in Violence Introductory Report: Phase 1: A cross-regional study on the impact of gangs and serious youth violence on women and girls (London, 2010), ROTA
<http://www.rota.org.uk/downloads/FVV%20TRIF%20REPORT%20FINAL%20FINAL.pdf>

The Way Forward: Taking action to end violence against women and girls (London, 2010) GLA
<http://www.london.gov.uk/sites/default/files/The%20Way%20Forward%20Final%20Strategy.pdf>

Young women and sexual exploitation – prevention work

Speakers

Kristine Balfour, Project Worker, Barnardo's Young Women's Project
Sally Seex, Senior Practitioner, Barnardo's Young Women's Project

Context

“Girls have to be raped to get in to gangs.” *Young man, Year 9*

The sexual exploitation of children and young people takes different forms. It ranges from receiving perceived gains such as 'acceptance' in return for sexual activities through to being exploited more formally. It is often difficult for these children to accept that they are being exploited but they are always coerced in some way into situations by others. For example, it is common for a young person to believe they are in a loving relationship when the person is actually controlling them. The young person may remain loyal to the abuser even when the relationship becomes abusive.

The true extent of the sexual exploitation of children and young people is unknown as it can take many forms. Most sexual exploitation of young people is covert. The young people may not recognise that they are being abused or feel too unsafe to disclose.

Sexual exploitation facts

- While the average age range at which children are most vulnerable to sexual exploitation is 13 to 15, Barnardo's has worked with boys and girls as young as 10 and 11 who are known to have been sexually exploited.
- Children and young people who are sexually exploited can also be subjected to other forms of abuse and exploitation e.g. transporting drugs and weapons.
- The pain of children's experiences can show itself in many ways including: self-harm; overdosing; eating disorders; aggression to self or others; withdrawal; relationship breakdown and crime.

Barnardo's Young Women's project

Barnardo's has extensive experience in practice and research in the field of Child Sexual Exploitation. The first service in this area was established in 1995 and there are now 20 specialist services nationwide.

Services in London:

- SEone Service
- Croydon Eclipse

- Young Women’s Project (Islington, Hackney and Camden as well as across London Councils: prevention work and 1-1 work).

Preventative Work

Bwise2 Sexual Exploitation is a practical resource developed and piloted from 2005 to 2007 by Barnardo’s and is funded by London Councils. It is a preventative education programme running from 2008 to 2012 using this resource, educating young people and professionals in every London borough

In each borough the project provides:

- One training day for up to 25 multi agency professionals on identifying and preventing sexual exploitation
- Delivery of 2 prevention work sessions to every class in one year group (usually Year 9) of one school
- Delivery of prevention work sessions to a pupil referral unit
- Delivery of prevention work sessions to a residential unit (as well as 1-1 case work with young people)

Case studies

These case studies come from the Bwise2 Exploitation training pack for schools, available at:

<https://www.dawsonmarketing.co.uk/barnardoscc/categorylist.asp?CAT=Tools%20for%20professionals#cc475>

Routes Into Sexual Exploitation: Older Boyfriend

- Young person is targeted due to their vulnerabilities
- Adult is usually at least 5 years older
- Initially relationship feels positive and rewarding for young person
- Adult uses techniques to increase isolation and create dependency
- Relationship becomes abusive
- Young person may be forced into sexual activity with others

Sophia

- Aged 14; not getting on with her family or fitting in at school.
- Meets Jake, 22, who lives nearby and is nice to her and her mum.
- Jake buys her clothes and takes her clubbing.
- Sexual relationship begins; Jake introduces Sophia to alcohol, drugs and pornography.
- Sophia stops going to school and moves in with Jake; relationship becomes violent.
- Jake coerces Sophia into having sex with many other men; Sophia is raped and beaten so badly that Jake has to take her to hospital.

Routes Into Sexual Exploitation: Gangs

- Increased rate of referrals for gang exploitation in recent years
- Can involve young men and young women
- Young people may be coerced into sexual activity in exchange for 'protection' or as part of initiation
- Young people may be encouraged to recruit peers into the gang
- Young people may be penalised for gang activity, while it is more difficult to identify the perpetrators who control the gang

Jada and Roland

- Friends aged 14; attending the same Pupil Referral Unit; Roland is in care.
- Roland's cousin invites them to a local gang's party where they are given alcohol and drugs.
- Jada goes off alone with Kane, 20, a gang leader, while Roland is distracted.
- Roland is threatened when he defends Jada's reputation; he is then coerced into drug running and bringing Jada to Kane for his initiation into the gang.
- Kane gets Jada drunk and high, hits her, then forces her to give oral sex to him and other gang elders.
- Other gang members show Roland a mobile phone video of Jada giving Kane oral sex.
- Roland later asks Kane to delete the clip.
- Kane becomes very violent towards Roland and rapes him at knifepoint.
- Roland is too scared to leave Kane's flat.
- Kane phones some child sex offenders who are willing to pay to have sex with Jada and Roland.

When these case studies are used with school groups (normally year 9), the practitioners from Barnardo's noted the following key points:

Blame and Sympathy

- Young people offer more sympathetic reactions to Sophia than to Jada
- Blame is often directed at young people and parents rather than perpetrators
- 'It wouldn't happen to me'
- The young people in the stories are 'stupid/naïve'
- 'It would be easy to escape'

Language and Stereotypes

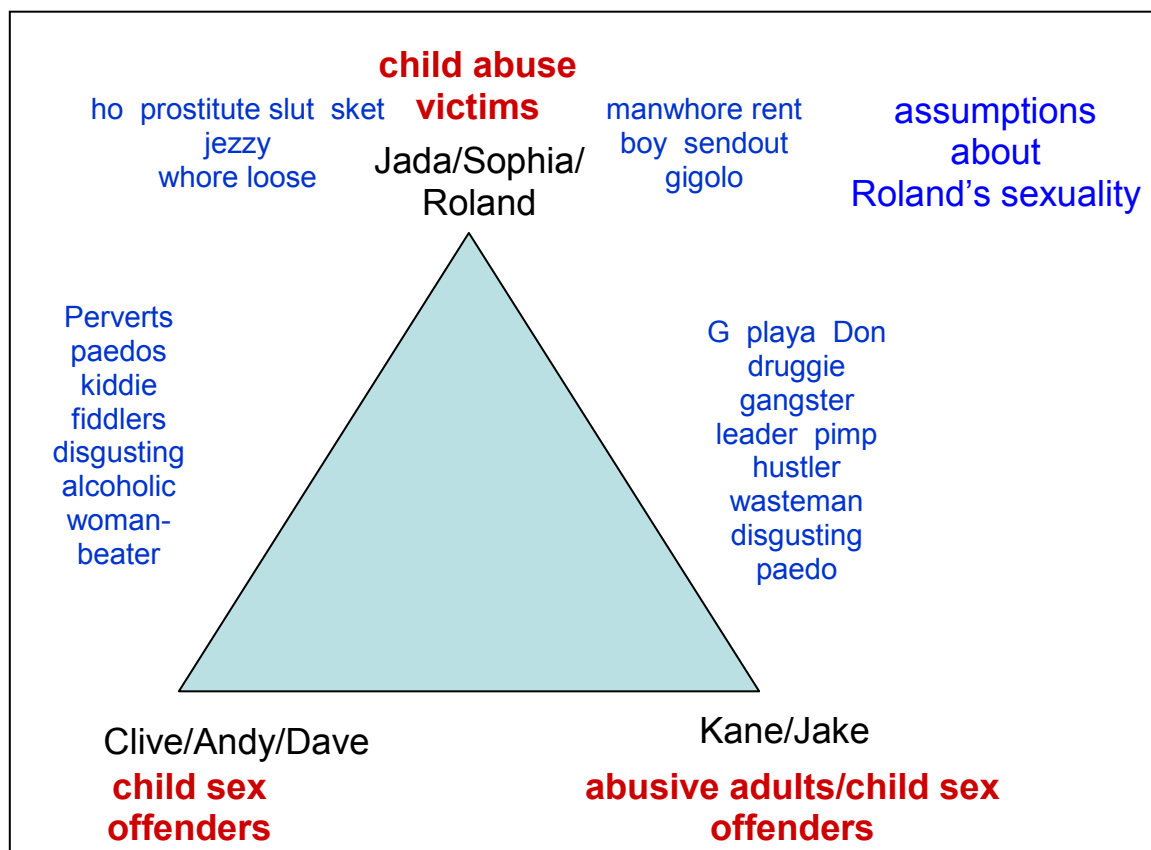
- Positive/status terms for perpetrators
- Less vocabulary offered for Roland – sexual assault of boys is less talked about
- Sexual exploitation seen as a consequence of girls' clothing
- Stereotypical ideas about what a sex offender will be like – need to challenge this thoroughly
- Euphemisms and gang terminology minimise and downplay the true violence of the events e.g. the term 'line up' is used for girls being forced to give blow

jobs to a room of men. Importance of giving full, honest descriptions which the young people can understand.

Triangles Exercise

This is an exercise used in the prevention sessions to address issues around language and stereotypes. Young people are asked how the characters in the story might be perceived. Discussion then centres on the impact of these terms on the young people in the stories, with particular reference to blame, power and responsibility.

Legal definitions are then added in order to clarify that the abusers are responsible for what has happened to the young person.



Rape

- Young people often find it difficult to accept rape as being about power and control. For example, young people believe that Roland was raped because he was gay and that Kane is also gay. Rather than seeing that Kane is using rape as a tool to assert his power (see case study).
- Culture of normalised sexual violence against young women – circulation of mobile phone images are accepted and expected
- Being forced to give oral sex not seen as rape
- Seen as Jada having to do something, rather than something being done to her

- Not appreciating the full meaning of consent.

Gender and Sexuality

- Rape of young women does not come as a surprise; rape of young men is generally a shock.
- Assumption that experience of sexual assault automatically affects your sexuality
- Jada's sexuality is assumed, not discussed
- Raping Jada would not impact negatively on Kane's reputation; raping Roland would.
- To date, delivery has been requested for mixed gender groups or single sex female groups
- Unfortunately, no identification of young men for recovery service as yet
- Assumption that sexual exploitation is an issue for women and girls only

Best practice

Through working on the prevention programme, the workers on the Bwise 2 sexual exploitation project have learned a number of key lessons.

1. While doing prevention work, it is very important to openly challenge the following:

- Attitudes of normalised sexual violence
- Language which downplays the severity of sexual assault and exploitation
- 'This wouldn't happen to me'
- Acceptance of indecent images of young people being shared using technology
- Homophobic language and attitudes
- Blame

2. Be open about the genders, ages, family and socio-economic situations of victims and perpetrators in case studies

3. Make sure you consider:

- A dual approach – encouraging young people to keep safe and reconsider their attitudes to what is acceptable and who is responsible
- The impact of limited choices
- The true definition of consent – freedom, capacity and choice
- Young people can't always distinguish caring behaviours from controlling behaviours

4. Make it clear:

- That it is always the perpetrators who are responsible for sexual exploitation; even if young people can't or don't use protective behaviours to avoid exploitative situations, they are still in no way at fault.

- That discussion of abusive relationships should be balanced with discussion of healthy relationships

5. Create awareness that sexual exploitation is not simply 'selling sex', but is the young person being directly or indirectly coerced into sex. The coercion can take many forms and ultimately involves very complex issues of consent.

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Resources

BWise2 Sexual Exploitation pack

<https://www.dawsonmarketing.co.uk/barnardoscc/categorylist.asp?CAT=Tools%20for%20professionals#cc475>

Forgotten and Failed

http://www.barnardos.org.uk/forgotten_and_failed__final_report_july_2007.pdf

Meeting the needs of sexually exploited children in London

http://www.barnardos.org.uk/full_london_report.pdf

Reducing the Risks

http://www.barnardos.org.uk/reducing_the_risk_report.pdf

Forced marriage and honour-based violence

Speakers

Kaveri Sharma, Legal Advice Service Manager, Newham Asian Women's Project

Shaminder Ubhi, Director, Ashiana Network

Context

Forced marriage (FM)

A forced marriage is a marriage in which one or both spouses do not (or, in the case of some adults with learning or physical disabilities, cannot) consent to the marriage, and duress is involved. Duress can include physical, psychological, financial, sexual and emotional pressure.

Honour-based violence (HBV)

The terms 'honour crime' or 'honour-based violence' or 'izzat' embrace a variety of crimes of violence (mainly but not exclusively against women), including assault, imprisonment and murder, where the person is being punished by their family or their community. They are being punished for actually, or allegedly, undermining what the family or community believes to be the correct code of behaviour. In transgressing this correct code of behaviour, the person shows that they have not been properly controlled to conform by their family and this is to the 'shame' or 'dishonour' of the family.

Welchman and Hossain state: "The term crimes of honour encompasses a variety of manifestations of violence against women; including murder termed 'honour killings', assault, confinement or imprisonment and interference with choice in marriage where the publicly articulated justification is attributed to a social order claimed to require the preservation of a concept of honour vested in male [members of the] family and or conjugal control over women and specifically women's sexual conduct – actual, suspected or potential."^{7,8}

Frequency of forced marriage

The UK Government regard forced marriage as an abuse of human rights and a form of domestic abuse and, where it affects children and young people, child abuse. It can happen to both men and women although **most cases involve young women and girls aged between 13 and 30**. There is no 'typical' victim of forced marriage. Some may be under 18 years old, some may be over 18 years old, some may have a disability, some may have young children and some may be spouses from overseas. The majority of cases of forced marriage reported to date

⁷ Welchman, Lynn and Hossain, Sara, eds. (2005) *Honour: Crimes, Paradigms and Violence against Women*. Zed Books (London)

⁸ <http://www.fco.gov.uk/resources/en/pdf/3849543/forced-marriage-guidelines09.pdf>, p.8

in the UK involve South Asian families. This is partly a reflection of the fact that there is a large, established South Asian population in the UK.

However, it is clear that forced marriage is not solely a South Asian problem and there have been cases involving families from East Asia, the Middle East, Europe and Africa. Some forced marriages take place in the UK with no overseas element, while others involve a partner coming from overseas or a British national being sent abroad.

In 2008, over 1,600 incidents of suspected forced marriage were reported to the Forced Marriage Unit. Cases also come to the attention of the police, social care services, health, education and voluntary organisations. Many others go unreported. With greater awareness of the help available, the number of cases reported is likely to increase.

Case study

Newham Asian Women's Project

www.nawp.org

Newham Asian Women's Project (NAWP) was set up in 1987 as a hostel to provide emergency accommodation and housing support services to South Asian women and their children fleeing domestic violence.

NAWP developed its services under a holistic framework of violence prevention, early intervention and direct provision. This model has proven effective in achieving outcomes for women and their children including increasing their self esteem and confidence, encouraging empowerment through opportunity and in addressing the issues of domestic violence which affects their lives.

NAWP's provides services in five key areas:

- Safe and emergency housing provision in hostels including housing support services to encourage women to move on to independent living;
- Training in accredited and non-accredited courses to enable women to increase their opportunities and improve their chances of employment;
- Mental health services including counselling services and work on self harm;
- Awareness raising around sexual health and provision to address sexual abuse and exploitation;
- Rights-based advice and information services.

Their involvement in working with and supporting South Asian women and girls at a grassroots level for the past two decades has provided them with insight into their needs, especially in the context of all forms of domestic violence, sexual abuse and rape, 'honour'-based violence, forced marriage and self-harm.

Client profile in relation to forced marriage

- 60-80 new clients approach their Advice Service each month

- 2-5% of our clients each month present as facing a potential forced marriage
- In addition, 5% present as facing domestic violence in a marriage in which they were forced
- 10% of all phone queries relate to forced marriage (primarily from teachers and social workers from across the country)
- 9 in 10 of the clients facing a threat of forced marriage are in the age group of 18-21 years

Case study

Ashiana Network: www.ashiana.org.uk

Ashiana is a charitable organisation based in London, set up to help women from the South Asian, Turkish and Iranian communities get help when they need it. They offer help, support and guidance to women in need and believe everyone has the right to live a life free of oppression, fear and violence.

They aim to empower South Asian, Turkish and Iranian women who are experiencing domestic violence with culturally sensitive advice, support and safe housing - enabling them to make positive and appropriate choices for themselves. They also aim to raise awareness of domestic violence and carry out preventative work with the community as a whole.

They work to:

- provide refuge and outreach services for South Asian, Turkish and Iranian women
- education for children and young people about domestic violence
- provide counselling and support services for young people affected by domestic violence
- raise awareness about domestic violence with communities, voluntary and statutory agencies

Service User Statistics: April 08 – March 2009

Ashiana worked with 450 women

Ethnicity

| | |
|-------------|-----|
| Pakistani | 35% |
| Bangladeshi | 18% |
| Indian | 14% |

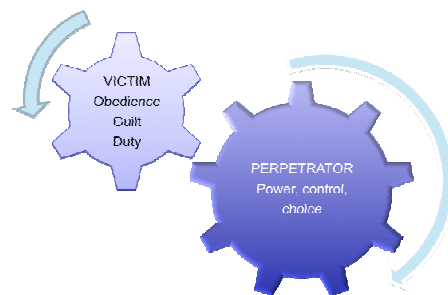
Most common perpetrators

| | |
|----------------|-----|
| Family members | 46% |
| Partner | 38% |

Presenting Issues:

| | |
|-----------------------------|-----|
| Homelessness | 28% |
| Forced Marriage | 25% |
| Language Needs | 8% |
| Depression | 26% |
| Rape/ Sexual Abuse | 6% |
| No Recourse to Public Funds | 12% |

Understanding FM & HBV perpetrators



Victim- Perpetrator Basic Relationship

Psychology of perpetrators

Perpetrators of FM and HBV often use honour as an excuse and try to control a victim in any way possible under the guise of cultural standards. Whole communities make this system work by creating a sense of respect for those who are in control. Failing to control their wives or children may therefore actually confer a feeling of shame on the part of the perpetrator – so the feeling of shame may well be real for the perpetrator.

The perpetrator, to ‘save face’ threatens or commits acts of violence in order to control their wives/children in order to prove to the community that they are worthy of respect. Mothers can be guilty of the same behaviour against their children for the same reasons – they are culturally conditioned to believe they have failed as a mother if their child is disobedient. Many perpetrators have convinced themselves that they are only doing their duty as a good parent or member of the community.

How they abuse

Signs of FM/HBV in a victim:

- Social relationships have narrowed
- Suspected perpetrator makes all the rules and the victim has no say in his/her own life
- Extreme restrictions on movement and contact with others
- Victim shows signs of fear
- Victim has been injured
- Victim is withdrawn

- Victim may excel in school work or employment as symbols of freedom

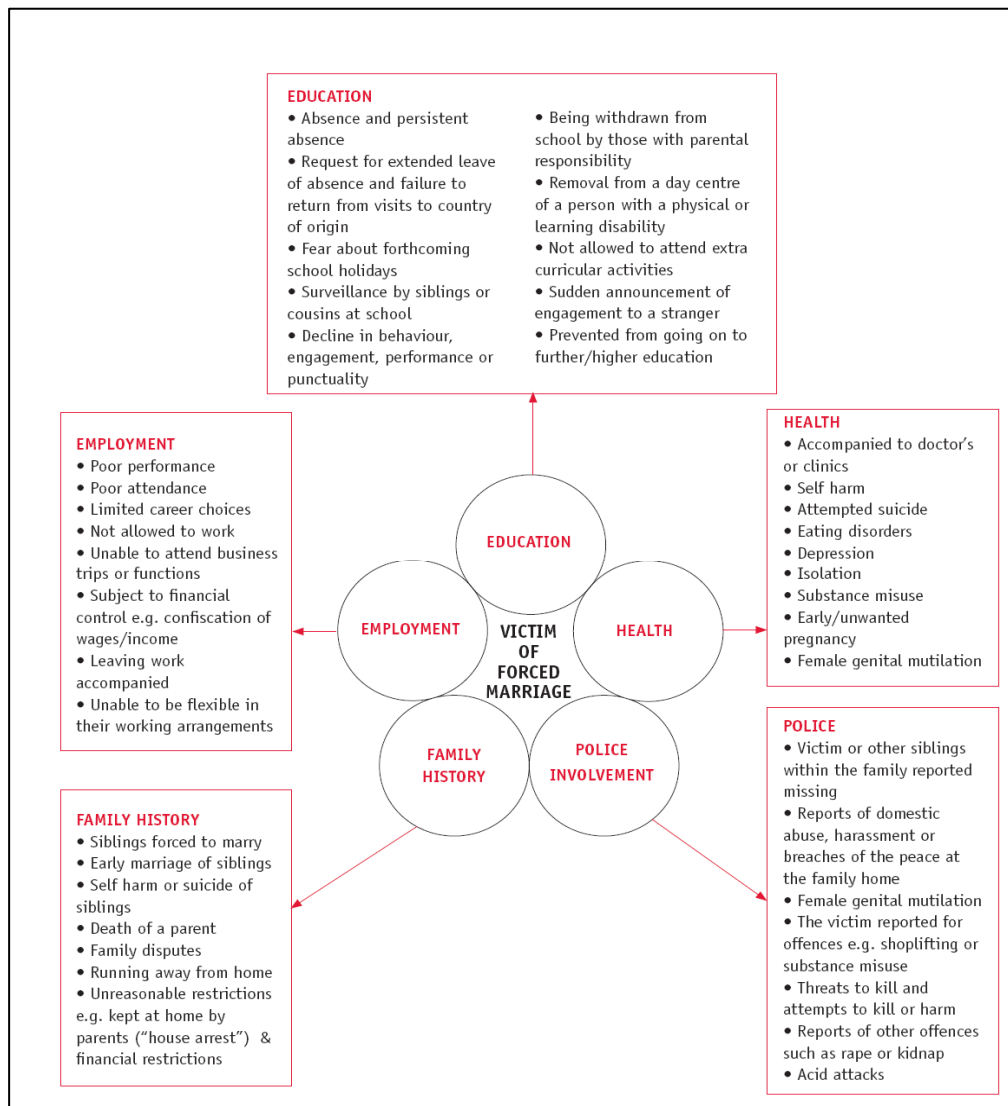


Image from p.15 <http://www.fco.gov.uk/resources/en/pdf/3849543/forced-marriage-guidelines09.pdf>

Forms of Control

- Cross-community perpetrators
- Access to/ control of victim's documents
- Access to victim's personal details (passwords, bank statements etc.)
- Demean privacy
- Dismiss independent thinking as 'shameful'
- Victim is led to believe that she will never survive without community support

Providing support to victims/survivors

Newham Asian Women's Project

What are the dilemmas of young women?

- Choice between safety and losing family
- Whether they are betraying family honour
- Being blamed for tighter controls on other siblings
- Not knowing who they can take into confidence
- Not knowing what their rights are

What are the expectations of young women when accessing a service?

- To be heard, believed and understood
- A guarantee of confidentiality
- An understanding and appreciation of cultural background
- Advice and support
- Quality service

Advice issues young women bring:

- Awareness about rights and knowing their options
- Safe housing/homelessness
- Continuation of education
- Money/resources/access to benefits
- Safety planning
- Counselling and psychotherapy
- Safety of siblings
- Employment or further training

Case Study

Manjeet

Manjeet is 21 years, works 12 hours in a supermarket; dropped out of college despite being a good student. She self-harms and has very low self esteem. Her father has been abusive towards her mother. When Manjeet has any argument with her father, her mother doesn't support her. Two years ago, she was engaged to a man who lives in India. At the time, it sounded like a good idea but increasingly, Manjeet has been very anxious about the impending marriage and has recently told her parents that she doesn't want to get married to her fiancé. Her father has been adamant that the marriage will take place later this year and her mother told her that she will eventually like the guy, so she should marry.

Manjeet's dilemmas

- She agreed to the engagement and will be betraying her family, culture and religion if she backs out now
- One of her younger sisters might have to get married to the man if she doesn't
- Her mother will have no support if she leaves

- How will she support herself if she leaves? Job doesn't pay her enough
- She also wants to go for higher education, how will she do that and support herself
- Concerns about her safety and well-being
- Leaving family and living alone can be difficult
- She is not familiar with any area other than Newham
- All her connections, friends and support network are in Newham, so can she move out of the local area?

Gaps in Service Delivery

- Legislative guidelines are not always being implemented
- In various statutory departments, officers are not aware of the guidelines
- Very little training and awareness about guidelines
- Lack of cross-departmental initiatives on forced marriages
- Young people slip through cracks

Best practice

Examples of bad practice

- "You are 18, if you have trouble at home, you can take a room to rent and live on your own"
- Response to a young girl fleeing forced marriage, on her application to Homeless Persons Unit.
- Unclear understanding of distinction between arranged and forced marriages
- Not viewing forced marriage as domestic violence
- Breach of confidentiality by professionals (GPs, housing officers and so on)

So what can work?

- Consistency in service delivery from all agencies, including health, housing, social security, social services, education
- Training across all departments and agencies on issues around forced marriages
- Awareness about the issue within the young population
- More work in schools and colleges

Risk Assessment (Ashiana Network)

Victims and Survivors of FM and HBV are subject to many kinds of risk.

- Community Personal Safety (i.e. geographical risks posed by other members of the survivor's community)
- Personal Physical safety (including self harm)
- Mental and emotional stability (including depression and dependencies)
- Age and culture specific risks

Safeguarding

Effecting security measures and aiding access to appropriate accommodation and services:

- Access to safe housing
- Changing identity
- Clerical action and document handling
- Working closely and confidentially with other agencies (multi-agency response)

Circumstances in which clients don't live in refuge accommodation:

- Outreach clients may still live with perpetrators - this may be out of choice or coercion.
- Has run away from home but is afraid to go to a refuge;
- Has run away with her partner and cannot find supported accommodation in which they can both stay

Living with the Perpetrator

Victims of FM and FBV may live with the perpetrator, whether through choice or through coercion.

They may choose to stay for the following reasons:

- May be afraid to leave their home and family
- May want to continue at their current school or employment
- Afraid of leaving friends/support network

The victim might be coerced through the use of threats, for example:

- "If you run away, I'll divorce/beat your mum and shame her"
- "If you leave, no one will marry your sisters – you'll be responsible for their unhappiness"
- "If you ever go, I'll have a heart-attack and die – do you want that guilt on your heart?"

Case Study

Living with the Perpetrator

S is in her early 20's and has a university degree but her father only allows her to work in his factory from 9am to 10pm. He has agreed to let her undertake a Masters degree only if she agrees to marry a man of his choosing and marries before she begins her course. S does not want to marry right now but wants to pursue her education and a career.

Lately, S's father had tried to physically abuse her in order to make her obedient and to let out his frustration. S's mother calls her selfish and asks S why she could make the sacrifice a woman must and yet S is too stubborn not to? S is not allowed to leave the house often and is not allowed to see friends.

S feels very guilty and suffers from depression and has a history of eating disorders and self harm as a result of the way her family treats her. She has a little brother whom she looks after very often and she is afraid of what will happen to him and if the home will become more violent if she leaves.

Initially, S wants to understand her options and this includes taking into account the risks she was subject to, including those she posed to herself.

Some of her options may have included police escorts from her home or leaving home but visiting her local police station to explain that she had left home of her own accord.

Ashiana helps create a safety plan which looks at S's risks and finds a safe way for her to get out. She hides her documents and some clothes with her friend's mother. She does not have immediate access to benefits as a result of her personal circumstances so she has had to borrow money from friends. S will come to a refuge organised by Ashiana.

Leaving the Perpetrator

Upon leaving or just having left an abusive situation, this is the time when a victim is in the most danger. At this time, a client's safety risks shift, and it is essential to consider if:

- She has a safe place to stay or access to one
- The likelihood of the perpetrators trying to seek her out

Her personal health is very important too and the following questions should be asked:

- is she injured from violence?
- how fragile is her mental health?
- is she pregnant?

Age-specific Protection

Most victims of FM are between 15 and 21 years old. Responsive services with sensitivity to age are very important. Culture teaches victims that they will not survive without their family and community and many victims believe this as they have no life experience (and in many cases are not allowed to gain life experience) to prove this notion false.

Any female who leaves the house without her family's permission or being wed may be subject to accusations of bringing shame on the family's honour and fear of this often prevents victims from seeking help.

Key issues to consider:

- Age : vulnerability ratio - if she is under 18, she cannot access many refuges because of her age. She may fall through the net as Social Services may not consider her to be vulnerable enough for support. Therefore this age group can be more vulnerable and at increased risk.
- Culture teaches victims that they will not survive without their family and community – many victims believe this as they have no life experience (and in many cases are not allowed to gain life experience) to prove the notion false
- Can she sustain a tenancy? If she doesn't have the life skills to live independently, she may be forced to go home.
- You may have to make a child protection referral

If parents report a missing person or kidnap:

- Try and get a feel for reasons he or she might have left
- If they propose a boyfriend/fiancé is the most likely kidnapper check whether it is in fact kidnap, or they may have felt the need to flee
- Ensure that when taking a statement the only person/s present are parents
- Don't allow community groups to interpret for family. Always get a professional interpreter.
- Check to see if anyone in the family is known to the police for domestic violence or honour-related crime.
- Check with your supervisor if you have a duty to disclose where the victim is. You may have to do this with the police.

Making appropriate referrals

Remember that holistic services like Ashiana and Newham Asian Women's Project offer everything from counselling services to ongoing support in many areas.

If you would like to make a referral please bear the following things in mind so that you make appropriate ones!

“Between 5 and 12 contacts are made by women experiencing domestic violence before they receive a positive response. This rises to 17 if the woman is black.”⁹

- Make sure the client is within the remit of the organisation you approach
- Ask appropriate questions (i.e. their support needs: Language? Cultural needs? Communities? Education?)
- Acquaint yourself with tell-tale signs

Legislation

The Forced Marriage (Civil Protection) Act (2007)

⁹ www.crimereduction.homeoffice.gov.uk/gp/gpvca07b.ppt - 2004-10-06

The Act provides measures for the courts to prevent forced marriages from occurring. The courts have the power to make Forced Marriage Protection Orders to stop someone from forcing another person into marriage. The courts have a wide discretion in the type of injunctions they can make to enable them to respond effectively to the individual circumstances of the case and prevent or pre-empt forced marriages from occurring.

Why legislation isn't always useful

- Complaining against family members isn't always easy, particularly for young people
- Going to court and giving evidence seems daunting to young women
- Women are seeking safety rather than retribution
- Women are worried about siblings left behind and the repercussions that the rest of the family may have to face if there is court action
- Split loyalty towards family – still love them but can't live with them

The way forward

More funding should be available for service provision to survivors of forced marriage and Government's policies should be informed by survivors' expectations and experiences. The same level of services should be provided to all women irrespective of immigration status (i.e. the no recourse to public funds rule should be changed) and there needs to be much more joined up working at the Local Authority level.

5 Best Practice Tips for working with forced marriage and honour-based violence:

- Listen to what the individual is saying about their needs.
- Don't use family members, community leaders, friends, etc. as interpreters.
- Speak to the person alone. They may be influenced by others to say something they don't mean.
- Do a thorough risk assessment and remember the 'one chance' rule. Many potential victims of forced marriage may only have one chance to speak to a professional before it is too late.
- Mediation, reconciliation and family counselling as a response to forced marriage and honour based violence can be extremely dangerous. Professionals undertaking these activities may unwittingly increase an individual's vulnerability and place them in danger.

Resources

Black, Asian, Minority Ethnic and Refugee (BAMER) Refugees and Services

- Ashiana Network (London): 020 8539 0427
- Asha Project: 020 8677 8196

- Imkaan: 020 7250 3933
- The Kiran Project: 020 8558 1986
- Latin American Women's Aid: 020 7275 0321
- The Forced Marriage Unit: 020 7008 0151.
- Domestic Violence Helpline: 0808 2000 247
- Newham Asian Women's Project: 020 8472 0528
- Southall Black Sisters: 020 8571 9595

Female genital mutilation

Context

Female genital mutilation (FGM), also known as female circumcision or female genital cutting, is defined by the World Health Organisation (WHO) as "all procedures involving partial or total removal of the external female genitalia or other injury to the female genital organs for non-medical reasons".

It is estimated that approximately 100-140 million women worldwide have undergone FGM and each year, a further 3 million girls are estimated to be at risk of the practice in Africa alone. FGM is prevalent in 28 African countries, parts of the Middle East and South East Asia, and increasingly in Europe, Australia, New Zealand, the United States of America and Canada.

The procedure is traditionally carried out by an older woman with no medical training. Anaesthetics and antiseptic treatment are not generally used and the practice is usually carried out using basic tools such as knives, scissors, scalpels, pieces of glass and razor blades. Often iodine or a mixture of herbs is placed on the wound to tighten the vagina and stop the bleeding.

The age at which the practice is carried out varies, from shortly after birth to the labour of the first child, depending on the community or individual family. The most common age is between four and ten, although it appears to be falling. This suggests that FGM is becoming less strongly linked to puberty rites and initiation into adulthood.

In 2007 FORWARD was funded by the Department of Health to pioneer research with the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine and published 'A statistical Study of the Prevalence of Female Genital Mutilation in England and Wales'. Data gathered from maternity services revealed an estimated 66,000 women living in England and Wales had experienced some form of FGM and furthermore using 2003-4 census data and prevalence rates in the countries of origin it was estimated that 24,000 girls below the age of 15 may be at risk of undergoing the severest form of FGM, type 3¹⁰.

FORWARD and its work

The Foundation for Women's Health, research and Development (FORWARD) is an African Diaspora led campaign and support charity dedicated to advancing and safeguarding the health and rights of African girls and women.

FORWARD focuses on tackling female genital mutilation (FGM) and forced and child marriage by engaging, mobilising and transforming public opinion and communities including decision-makers, women, young people and community leaders to speak out and take action against gender-based discrimination.

¹⁰ Type3/Infibulation is the excision of part or all of the external genitalia and closing of the vagina, leaving one small hole through which a female must urinate, menstruate, have sexual intercourse and deliver her baby.

Programme areas include:

- Partnerships in 7 African countries to develop the capacity, voice and participation of grassroots NGO's.
- Networking, resource sharing and collaboration at the European level.
- Safeguarding training for professionals to respond effectively to FGM in the UK.
- Lobbying policy makers to enable entitlements for vulnerable women and girls and enhance protection and access to specialist services.
- Generating evidence by pioneering research to inform best practice.
- Community outreach and women's leadership programmes.
- Empowering young people to be advocates for change in their community.

Best practice for prevention and protection of females at risk or those who have already experienced FGM

There are three circumstances relating to FGM which require early identification and intervention.

- Where a child is at risk of FGM
 - Where a child has been abused through FGM
 - Where a prospective mother has undergone FGM
- a) Know the country prevalence rates and in which communities FGM may be practised.
 - b) Recognise the signs of a potential FGM case (child is being taken away for a prolonged period, discloses a planned 'special ceremony', when a mother, sister or other female relative has undergone FGM a child must be considered at risk).
 - c) Recognise the signs that FGM has taken place (absence from classroom, sports lessons or school altogether and noticeable change in behaviour such as anger, withdrawal and depression)
 - d) Respond appropriately when addressing FGM to practising communities;
 - Use simple language and ask straight forward questions, the term 'circumcision' is more widely recognised and considered less offensive.
 - Be sensitive, non-judgemental and make no assumptions
 - Explain FGM is illegal in the UK and protects permanent UK residents abroad; this can help the family protect their daughters from FGM.
 - Signpost to specialist services available that offer health and psychological support.

Report any suspected cases immediately to the Police. Also have FGM procedures in place or refer to London Safeguarding Children's Board Government Guidelines: http://www.londonscb.gov.uk/files/resources/fgm_resources/d_london_fgm_procedure.pdf

Prevention and education work

Case study

Young People Speak Out: Young Women and FGM

FORWARD takes a creative, youth-led approach to addressing FGM in the UK.

The youth programme, Young People Speak Out, aims to:

- Engage young people from FGM practising communities in the UK
- Build their knowledge, skills and confidence to advocate against FGM
- Provide a platform for their voices to be heard

A recent 6 month creative media project, funded by Mediabox enabled youth in London from Somalia, Yemen and Cote D'Ivoire to produce a film highlighting the risks of FGM for girls living in the UK.

There were a number of challenges initially; for example:

"At the start of the project there were too many girls and people who kept interrupting and wasting our time. It made the process longer and more tiring because no one was listening to each other."

However, these challenges were overcome by introducing:

- Incentives for attendance (Accreditation and expenses covered)
- Time restraints (so time couldn't be wasted)
- Work on Group Dynamics (team building and youth-led ground rules to ensure that everyone's voice could be heard)

Changing attitudes

"They said I was disgracing Somalis for talking about stuff like this."

"Some people didn't know about it and some had been through it and so I thought it was good that those girls were comfortable enough to talk to me."

"At first they were laughing but now they actually want to have conversations and get more informed. So it feels good to be able to talk about it."

Successes

Confidence building

"All of our confidence has grown so much since doing this, we feel like we now know what we are talking about, so we feel comfortable and confident talking about it."

"We were able to motivate each other, I didn't want to speak at the event but as soon as I saw Naima do her poem I was like, yeah I can do that! I didn't feel alone, I had the whole group with me."

Skills development

"I learnt something new everyday."

Influencing their community

"I really enjoyed the event, we feel like that was the best part, the way the people were happy and overwhelmed and looked like they actually learnt something."

'I learnt tonight how important young people are as Ambassadors and how effective they are to deliver messages.' Member of the audience

5 Best Practice Tips for working with communities to end FGM

1. Projects must always be Youth and Community led. Consult the beneficiaries at every stage of decision making throughout the planning and implementing process to maximise participation and effectiveness.
2. Consider the complex and interrelated nature of communities and engage on multiple levels, not targeting one specific audience in isolation but involving all members including religious leaders, men, women, elderly and youth.
3. Changing attitudes takes time; addressing FGM requires trust amongst the group members as well as with professionals. Build up to the issue of FGM sensitively within the context of attitudes to gender, culture and identity.
4. Awareness and provision of ongoing support is essential for beneficiaries advocating more vocally and visibly amongst their own community.
5. Bridge the gap of understanding and dialogue between professionals and communities.

Resources

The film '*Think Again*' produced by the participants of this project features three short films and a facilitator's guide for use with professionals, community groups and young people. Copies can be purchased from FORWARD for £10.

The Information, Services and Support Guide (ISS Guide) is a publication designed by young people, dispelling myths that surround FGM and signposts to services and support available in the UK. This document can be downloaded from the FORWARD website or hardcopies can be sent at your request.

Additional publications on FGM (and other harmful gender-based discriminatory practices) from FORWARD can be accessed on <http://www.forwarduk.org.uk/resources/resources#id8>

Glossary

Sexual exploitation

Sexual exploitation is the sexual abuse of children and youth through the exchange of sex or sexual acts for drugs, food, shelter, protection, other basics of life, and/or money.¹¹

Forced marriage

In forced marriages, one or both spouses do not (or, in the case of some vulnerable adults, cannot) consent to the marriage and duress is involved. Duress can include physical, psychological, financial, sexual and emotional pressure.¹²

Honour-based violence

Honour based violence is a crime or incident, which has or may have been committed to protect or defend the honour of the family and/or community.¹³

Female genital mutilation

FGM includes all procedures involving partial or total removal of the external female genitalia or other injury to the female genital organs for non-medical reasons.¹⁴

Young women

Females under the age of 18 years

Violence against women

Any act of gender-based violence that results in, or is likely to result in, physical, sexual or psychological harm or suffering to women, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or in private life. Gender-based violence against women is violence directed against a woman because she is a woman or that affects women disproportionately.¹⁵

¹¹ <http://www.jibc.ca/seytookit/what.htm>

¹² <http://www.fco.gov.uk/resources/en/pdf/3849543/forced-marriage-right-to-choose>

¹³ ACPO and CPS definition

¹⁴ World Health Organisation definition

¹⁵ Definition in the UN Declaration on the Elimination of Violence Against Women