

<b>Title</b>	Governance arrangements for the oversight of tackling Female Genital Mutilation in Buckinghamshire
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**Purpose of this report:**

For the Health and Wellbeing Board to confirm the governance and monitoring arrangements for tackling Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) in Buckinghamshire and to comment on the draft Strategy for tackling FGM ahead of a wider consultation.

**Summary of main issues**

Following a joint meeting of the Chairs of the Health and Wellbeing Board, Safer and Stronger Bucks Partnership Board, Buckinghamshire Safeguarding Children Board and Buckinghamshire Safeguarding Adult Board in February 2016, it was recognised that all Boards had a role to play in effectively tackling FGM. However, in order to provide accountability, it was agreed that the overall governance and monitoring should sit with one of the Boards and that the Health and Wellbeing Board with both local authority and NHS membership would take be best placed to take the overall strategic lead on this agenda in Bucks.

This reflects the approach set out in the [Joint Protocol](#) where the Boards have agreed on a number of areas where strong partnership working and clear governance arrangements are required in order to ensure an effective local approach with no duplication of effort.

This report provides:

- A short summary on the local context relating to FGM in Buckinghamshire and the work taking place, including the development of a Bucks wide Strategy for tackling FGM
- A proposal for how the HWB will practically adopt their role as strategic lead and monitor of the effectiveness the local approach to tackling FGM in the county.

**Recommendations for the Health and Wellbeing Board:**

1. To confirm their position as strategic lead for FGM
2. To agree the proposals for monitoring the effectiveness of the local approach to tackling FGM
3. To comment on the draft FGM strategy ahead of a wider consultation across partners

**Background documents:**

Draft FGM Strategy and action plan

## **1. Introduction**

Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) is considered child abuse in the UK and is a grave violation of the human rights of girls and women. It has intolerable long-term physical and emotional consequences for the survivors and has been illegal in the UK for over 30 years. It is estimated that 137,000 girls and women in the UK are affected by this practice,<sup>i</sup> but this is likely to be an underestimation.<sup>ii</sup>

Despite the difficulties with obtaining accurate and reliable figures on FGM, we recognise that there are girls and women who live within Buckinghamshire who are at risk of or have been subjected to FGM

While there has been some work undertaken around FGM within specific agencies in Buckinghamshire, a holistic approach has not been formally ratified across the strategic partnership boards operating locally.

If we want to ensure an approach in Buckinghamshire that is proportionate to the local prevalence of FGM, it is important that we have robust partnership approach and clear systems in place to maximise use of resources and avoid any duplication of effort.

## **2. The Local Picture**

There is an uneven distribution of cases of FGM around the country, with more occurring in those areas of the UK with larger communities from the practising countries. Whilst this would not make Buckinghamshire an area of high FGM prevalence, there are some areas close by that are likely to have far more cases such as Oxford, Reading, Slough and Milton Keynes.

It is difficult to gain an accurate picture of how many women and girls have undergone or are at risk of FGM in Buckinghamshire. Recent work carried out for the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment estimates that there were 154 babies born to mothers who were born in a country where FGM is practised in 2014. A proportion of these women are likely to have undergone FGM, although local NHS services have so far identified very few or no women who have had FGM. Local policies and strategies need to acknowledge that most practitioners will see few or no cases of women with FGM or girls at risk. However, it is important that they are aware of risk factors, have the skills to identify them early, and knowledge of existing local and national specialist resources to provide women with advice, support and interventions when needed.

### **3. The Development of a Bucks wide strategy for tackling FGM and the role of the Health and Wellbeing Board**

In September 2015 the Health and Wellbeing Board jointly hosted an FGM challenge event with the BSCB. This was an opportunity for agencies to share good practice in relation to FGM and highlight any challenges or barriers they were facing.

A report on this session can be found on the BSCB website here. [http://www.bucks-lscb.org.uk/wpcontent/uploads/About%20the%20BSCB/Audits%20and%20findings/FGM\\_Challenge\\_Session.pdf](http://www.bucks-lscb.org.uk/wpcontent/uploads/About%20the%20BSCB/Audits%20and%20findings/FGM_Challenge_Session.pdf).

Subsequent to this session a draft multi-agency action plan was drawn up and this has influenced the work that has been undertaken with partners over the last year. This action plan is available at the end of the attached strategy.

In particular work has focused on:

- Drafting a Bucks wide strategy for tackling FGM
- Updating the guidance for frontline practitioners on FGM and the local procedure for responding to incidences of FGM (publication due shortly)
- Awareness raising with practitioners and members of the public before the summer holidays

Work against the action plan will continue but there are two areas in particular which require input from the Health and Wellbeing Board.

1. Confirming the new governance arrangements
2. Agreeing the local data set for monitoring the prevalence of FGM and confirming responsibility for the production of regular reporting arrangements.

#### **1. Recommendation for confirming governance arrangements**

- It is recommended that members confirm that the Board will act as strategic lead for this agenda in Bucks
- It is recommended that all members agree to act as champions for tackling FGM within their own organisations to ensure appropriate messages are cascaded and staff have appropriate knowledge around FGM
- It is recommended that the HWB receives an annual report showing progress against the action plan and any areas of risk or concern at its March or April meeting. The timing of this recognises that summer is a time of year when there is an increased risk of incidences of FGM and the Board would have time to influence the local approach leading up to the summer.
- The HWB receives an information report every autumn.

## **2. Recommendations for data monitoring around FGM**

- The Board appoints a lead to undertake regular monitoring of available data sets on the prevalence of FGM in Buckinghamshire so this can be reported to the HWB and made available to the other Boards.

## **3. Recommendations for the FGM Strategy**

- The Health and Wellbeing Board agrees the Draft Strategy for tackling FGM and wider consultation across partners over the next 6 weeks.

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<sup>i</sup> <http://www.nhs.uk/conditions/female-genital-mutilation/pages/introduction.aspx>

[https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/380125/MultiAgencyPracticeGuidelinesNov14.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/380125/MultiAgencyPracticeGuidelinesNov14.pdf)

<sup>ii</sup> [http://about-fgm.co.uk/about-fgm/world-prevalence/](http://about-fgm.co.uk/about-fgm/world-prevalence/uk-prevalence/)

<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201415/cmselect/cmhaff/201/20105.htm>