

Kirsty Williams raises the issue of FGM with schools

Education Secretary Kirsty Williams has written to all schools in Wales to raise awareness of Female Genital Mutilation (FGM).

Friday 07 July 2017

All head teachers are being reminded of the issue and their responsibilities to help ensure that children and young people remain safe while they are in school.

The prevalence of FGM is difficult to estimate because of the hidden nature of the crime. However, there are an estimated 137,000 women and girls affected by FGM in Wales and England.

The Education Secretary is highlighting the important role schools can play in identifying potential victims and safeguarding them from FGM. Statutory guidance, [Keeping learners safe](#) is in place to support schools and education services in ensuring that child welfare concerns are acted upon appropriately and effectively, involving investigating agencies where necessary.

The Welsh Government has also produced a range of materials and guidance available on Hwb to support schools in managing child protection issues.

Kirsty Williams said:

“I have written to schools to seek their assistance in helping eradicate this particularly abhorrent form of violence against women and girls. It is imperative we all recognise the warning signs of a child who might be at risk.

“Female Genital Mutilation is child abuse and a criminal offence. It cannot be justified as a cultural or religious practice and leaders of all main faiths have rightly spoken out against it.

“School and college staff must play a crucial role in safeguarding young people from abuse, which is why it is vital that they are alert to the signs of FGM and what action to take if they have concerns.

“Staff should also be aware that young girls may be taken abroad in summer holidays to undergo FGM, as procedures take up to four weeks to heal. The procedure may therefore be performed before a girl returns to school at the start of the autumn term. It is essential that staff are vigilant in looking for signs of FGM after the school holidays and report anything that may seem suspicious to the

appropriate professional.

“ I want all of us to be more aware of this unacceptable abuse, so together we can put an end to FGM in Wales. ”

[July 2017](#)

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