

20/06/2017

To Whom This May Concern,

The Foundation for Women's Health, Research and Development (FORWARD), with support from the Department for Education, is contacting you in advance of this year's summer holidays with a message about safeguarding girls from FGM. Since 2013, FORWARD has been engaging with schools to create a safe environment to prevent, safeguard, support and signpost those affected and at risk of FGM. Over the past 4 years we have worked with over 29,000 students (primary and secondary) and over 5,000 staff members in schools across London.

The summer holidays are a well-documented high-risk period for FGM to take place as many families travel abroad to have their daughters cut. The prolonged summer break allows sufficient time for the girl to recover before returning to school in the autumn term. As such, the weeks leading up to summer are a crucial time for schools to protect girls who may be at risk of undergoing FGM, either in the UK or abroad.

Since October 2015, **teachers are now legally mandated to report known cases of FGM in girls under 18 to the police by calling 101**. This new duty was introduced to the 2003 FGM Act as an amendment of the 2015 Serious Crime Act.

According to Ofsted's guidance for inspectors – *Inspecting safeguarding in early years, education and skills settings* (August 2016) – schools are expected to include FGM in their policies on child abuse and neglect. Staff should understand their responsibilities around safeguarding girls from FGM and schools are also required to raise awareness of the issue among learners, of both primary and secondary school ages.

This email outlines three actions that your school can take to fulfil your safeguarding duties in the run up to the summer holidays:

1. Distribute FORWARD's resource for parents '[Keeping your girls safe from FGM: Summer holidays, the law and you](#)' – please contact us if you would like to receive hard copies
2. Ensure all staff members receive FGM awareness training, including their safeguarding duties, and signpost them to the [Multi-Agency Statutory Guidelines](#) which include **risk factors to be aware** of during this period
3. Make sure that students know who the school's safeguarding leads are and where to go for help

This email is being sent out as part of a series of ongoing actions by FORWARD and our national partners to help schools safeguard girls who may be affected by FGM. Please contact the [FORWARD Schools Team](#) to enquire about staff, pupil or parent sessions for primary and secondary schools (including sixth forms and colleges).

Yours sincerely,



Naana Otoo-Oyortey  
Executive Director