

Lewisham's VAWG COVID-19 response

Domestic violence and abuse is likely to increase during this period based on evidence from countries a few weeks ahead of us in this pandemic. In turn we want our VAWG partners to know that support is available for victims during this time.

Female Genital Mutilation (FGM)

What is Female Genital Mutilation?

Female Genital Mutilation involves the complete or partial removal or alteration of external genitalia for non-medical reasons. It is mostly carried out on young girls at some time between infancy and the age of 15. Unlike male circumcision, which is legal in many countries, it is now illegal across much of the globe, and its extensive harmful health consequences are widely recognised. ^[1]

FGM is often performed by traditional circumcisers or cutters who do not have any medical training. But in some countries it may be done by a medical professional.

Anaesthetics and antiseptics are not generally used, and FGM is often carried out using knives, scissors, and scalpels, pieces of glass or razor blades. ^[2]

FGM often happens against a girl's will without her consent, and girls may have to be forcibly restrained.

It's also known as female circumcision or cutting, and by other terms, such as Sunna, Gudniin, Halalays, Tahur, Megrez and Khitan, among others.

- It's illegal in the UK and is child abuse.
- It's very painful and can seriously harm the health of women and girls.
- It can also cause long-term problems with sex, childbirth and mental health. ^[1]

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FGM can happen at different times in a girl or woman's life, including:

- when a baby is new-born
- during childhood or as a teenager
- just before marriage
- during pregnancy.^[2]

FGM Terms, what they mean

- 'Cutter'
A 'cutter' is somebody who carries out FGM. They might use things like knives, scalpels, scissors, glass or razor blades to carry out the procedure.
- 'Cutting season'
This refers to the summer months – often July, August and September – when many girls are on break from school. This is often the period when girls have time to undergo FGM. Girls might be flown abroad during this time, so it's important to be aware of this risk. ^[2]

Types of FGM

There are 4 main types of FGM: ^[1]

Type 1 – clitoridectomy	removing part or all of the clitoris
Type 2 – excision	removing part or all of the clitoris and the inner labia (the lips that surround the vagina), with or without removal of the labia majora (the larger outer lips)
Type 3 – infibulation	narrowing the vaginal opening by creating a seal, formed by cutting and repositioning the labia
Type 4 - Other harmful procedures to the female genitals	pricking, piercing, cutting, scraping or burning the area



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Effects of FGM

There are no health benefits to FGM. It can cause serious harm, including:

- severe and/or constant pain
- infections, such as tetanus, HIV and hepatitis B and C
- pain or difficulty having sex
- infertility
- bleeding, cysts and abscesses
- difficulties urinating or incontinence
- organ damage
- problems during pregnancy and childbirth, which can be life-threatening for the mother and baby
- mental health problems, such as depression, flashbacks and self-harm
- death from blood loss or infections.

Signs FGM might happen

- A relative or someone known as a 'cutter' visiting from abroad.
- A special occasion or ceremony takes place where a girl 'becomes a woman' or is 'prepared for marriage'.
- A female relative, like a mother, sister or aunt has undergone FGM.
- A family arranges a long holiday overseas or visits a family abroad during the summer holidays.
- A girl has an unexpected or long absence from school.
- A girl struggles to keep up in school.
- A girl runs away – or plans to run away - from home.

Signs FGM might have taken place

- Having difficulty walking, standing or sitting.
- Spending longer in the bathroom or toilet.
- Appearing quiet, anxious or depressed.
- Acting differently after an absence from school or college.
- Reluctance to go to the doctors or have routine medical examinations.
- Asking for help – though they might not be explicit about the problem because they're scared or embarrassed.



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Who's at risk?

Girls living in communities that practise FGM are most at risk. It can happen in the UK or abroad. In the UK, the Home Office has identified girls and women from certain communities as being more at risk:

- Somali
- Kenyan
- Ethiopian
- Sierra Leonean
- Sudanese
- Egyptian
- Nigerian
- Eritrean
- Yemeni
- Kurdish
- Indonesian.

If a child reveals abuse?

A child who has faced, or is worried about FGM, might not realise what's happening is wrong and they might even blame themselves. If a child talks to you about FGM it's important to:

- listen carefully to what they're saying
- let them know they've done the right thing by telling you
- tell them it's not their fault
- say you'll take them seriously
- don't confront the alleged abuser
- explain what you'll do next
- report what the child has told you as soon as possible.

Children are at a higher risk of FGM if it's already happened to their mother, sister or another member of their family. ^[2]



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Seeking Help

All women and girls have the right to control what happens to their bodies and the right to say no to FGM.

Help is available if you have had FGM or you're worried that you or someone you know is at risk. If someone is in immediate danger, contact the police immediately by dialling 999.

If you're concerned that someone may be at risk, contact the NSPCC helpline on 0800 028 3550 or fgmhelp@nspcc.org.uk.

If you're under pressure to have FGM performed on your daughter, ask a GP, your health visitor or another healthcare professional for help, or contact the NSPCC helpline.

If you have had FGM, you can get help from a specialist NHS gynaecologist or FGM service – ask a GP, your midwife or any other healthcare professional about services in your area.

Read about National FGM Support Clinics and where to find them.

If you're a health professional caring for a patient under 18 who's had FGM, you have professional responsibilities to safeguard and protect her.

Guidance and resources about FGM for healthcare staff are available on the GOV.UK website. [\[1\]](#)



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National resources for guidance

Coronavirus (COVID-19): support for victims of domestic abuse

www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-and-domestic-abuse/coronavirus-covid-19-support-for-victims-of-domestic-abuse

Apps to support those experiencing domestic abuse

www.hestia.org/brightsky

COVID-19/Coronavirus: Safety Advice for Survivors

www.womensaid.org.uk/covid-19-coronavirus-safety-advice-for-survivors

Domestic abuse and COVID-19

www.safelives.org.uk/news-views/domestic-abuse-and-covid-19

National campaign to raise awareness of the Silent Solution system

www.policeconduct.gov.uk/news/national-campaign-raise-awareness-silent-solution-system

Useful numbers and websites

Athena

Freephone 24-Hour National Domestic Abuse

Helpline: 0808 2000 247

To contact the Athena directly: 08001124052

www.refuge.org.uk/our-work/our-services/one-stop-shop-services/athena

www.refuge.org.uk

Early Years Alliance - Lewisham Children's and Family Centres

www.lewishamcfc.org.uk

The Deaf Health Charity – Sign Health www.signhealth.org.uk/our-projects/deafhope-projects/

Text: 07970350366

RASASC (Rape and sexual abuse centre)

0808 802 9999



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African Advocacy Foundation

www.africadvocacy.org
020 8698 4473

Rights of women:

rightsofwomen.org.uk

National stalking helpline – Suzy Lamplugh Trust

www.suzylamplugh.org
0808 802 0300

Respect Helpline for men

0808 8010327
respectphoneline.org.uk/help-for-domestic-abuse-victims

Women's Aid live chat

This is an online chatting service which is ideal for victims who are self-isolating and do not want to be heard.

chat.womensaid.org.uk
www.womensaid.org.uk
0117 944 44 11

NSPCC

Helpline - 0800 028 3550 or fgmhelp@nspcc.org.uk

GALOP National LGBT+ Domestic Abuse Helpline

0800 999 5428
www.galop.org.uk/domesticabuse

Women and Girls Network

Sexual violence helpline - 08088010770

Free advice line - 08088010660

Future bulletins

Please let me know if there is anything you would like to feature or promote within these bi-weekly bulletins.

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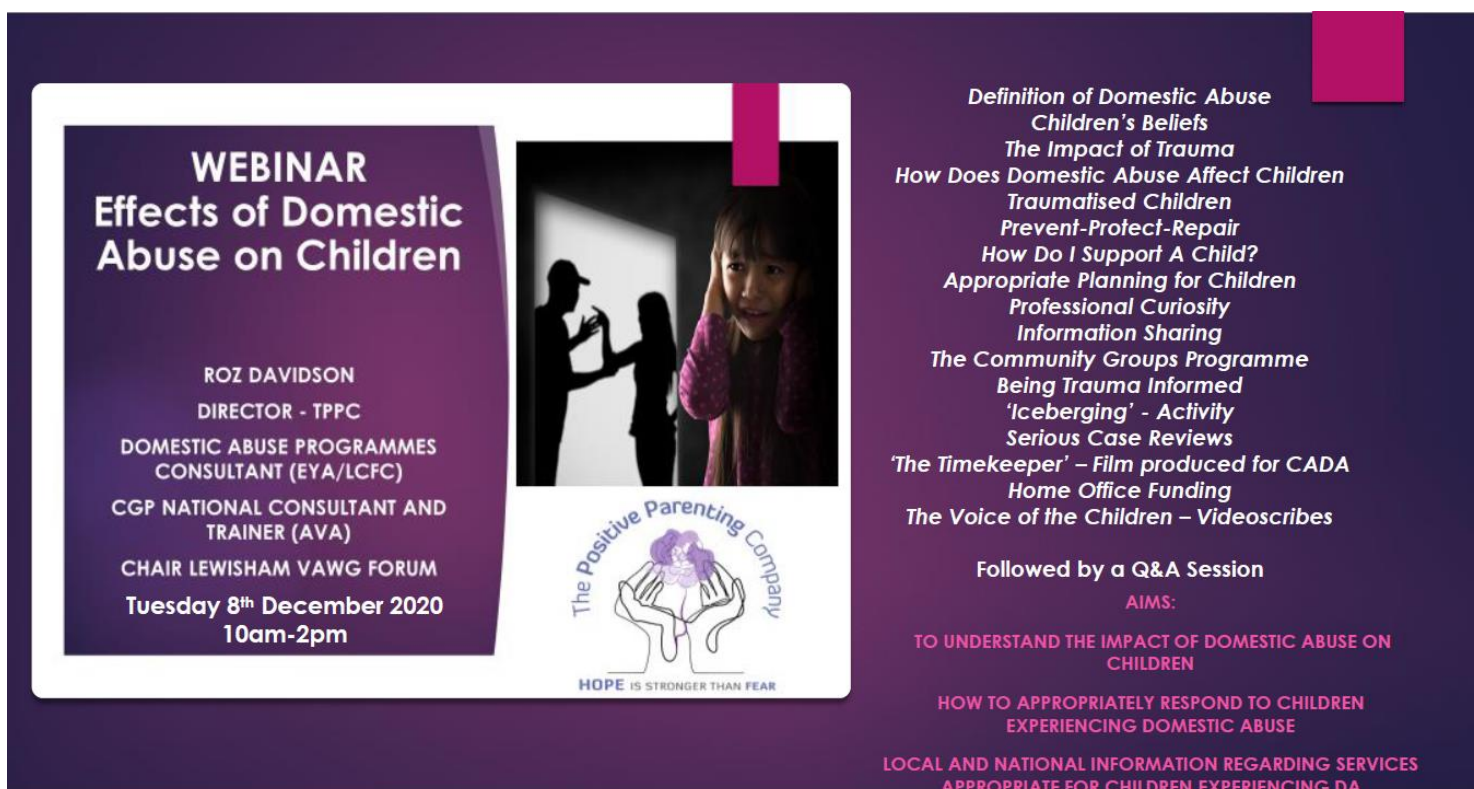
Future Training Sessions in Lewisham

Effects of Domestic Abuse on Children

Registration is required and delegates will receive a confirmation email following sign up.

Please find link to this webinar below to secure your place!

[Effects Of Domestic Abuse on Children Webinar 08/12/20 10am -2pm](#)



WEBINAR
Effects of Domestic Abuse on Children

ROZ DAVIDSON
DIRECTOR - TPPC
DOMESTIC ABUSE PROGRAMMES
CONSULTANT (EYA/LCFC)
CGP NATIONAL CONSULTANT AND
TRAINER (AVA)
CHAIR LEWISHAM VAWG FORUM
Tuesday 8th December 2020
10am-2pm

The Positive Parenting Company
HOPE IS STRONGER THAN FEAR

Definition of Domestic Abuse
Children's Beliefs
The Impact of Trauma
How Does Domestic Abuse Affect Children
Traumatised Children
Prevent-Protect-Repair
How Do I Support A Child?
Appropriate Planning for Children
Professional Curiosity
Information Sharing
The Community Groups Programme
Being Trauma Informed
'Iceberging' - Activity
Serious Case Reviews
The Timekeeper' - Film produced for CADA
Home Office Funding
The Voice of the Children - Videoscribes

Followed by a Q&A Session

AIMS:

TO UNDERSTAND THE IMPACT OF DOMESTIC ABUSE ON CHILDREN

HOW TO APPROPRIATELY RESPOND TO CHILDREN EXPERIENCING DOMESTIC ABUSE

LOCAL AND NATIONAL INFORMATION REGARDING SERVICES APPROPRIATE FOR CHILDREN EXPERIENCING DA

References

<https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/female-genital-mutilation-fgm/> [1]

<https://www.nspcc.org.uk/what-is-child-abuse/types-of-abuse/female-genital-mutilation-fgm/> [2]

