

June 2019

Dear Head Teacher,

The Police and Crime Commissioner and Hampshire Constabulary are committed to working in partnership with Hampshire, Portsmouth, Southampton and Isle of Wight Councils as well as other agencies to protect the most vulnerable people in society, including children from all of our diverse communities.

We are writing to you to ask for your support and awareness in helping to identify and protect young girls who may be at risk of Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) and Forced Marriage (FM) throughout the year but specifically over the summer. FGM is one of the hidden crimes within our communities, and one that causes severe long-term physical and emotional harm to the girls and women affected by it. Forced Marriage is where one or both people do not or cannot consent (e.g. for those with learning disabilities) to a marriage and they are pressurised or abuse is used to force them to do so. It is recognised in the UK as a form of domestic or child abuse and a serious abuse of human rights.

It's important to report and refer children at risk of FGM and FM so we can know and understand the full scale of the challenge. If FGM and FM are not reported, we won't know and cannot respond.

Both sets of statutory guidance 'Keeping Children Safe in Education 2018' and 'Working Together to Safeguard Children 2018' make explicit reference to FGM and FM as safeguarding issues, and since 31 October 2015, regulated health and social care professionals and teachers in England and Wales have been required legally to report known cases of FGM in under 18-year-olds, which they identify in the course of their professional work, to the police.

Hampshire Constabulary has trained and experienced officers and staff who are mindful and respectful of anyone who may feel prevented from contacting police due to cultural or religious beliefs. The circumstances of a victim are always of paramount consideration when the police investigate a case, acting at all times with integrity, courage and compassion.



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Following this letter, your school's Designated Safeguarding Lead can contact your local Neighbourhood Policing Team, Safeguarding Team, respective Local Authority Safeguarding lead or Safeguarding Board website for information and support and with any questions they may have. Additional resources specifically for education professionals are available on the Safe4me website (www.safe4me.co.uk).

Included with this letter is some guidance to support you in identifying children that may be at risk, and choosing appropriate next steps to help safeguard those children.

Thank you for your co-operation.

Kind regards,



Michael Lane
Police and Crime Commissioner



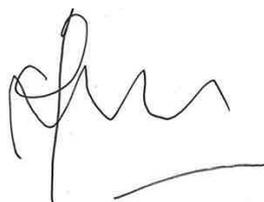
Supt Alison Heydari
Hampshire Constabulary



Supt Lucy Hutson
Hampshire Constabulary



Keith Makin
Southampton LSCB



Richard John
Portsmouth LSCB



Derek Benson
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