



## Department for Education

The Rt Hon Bridget Phillipson MP  
Secretary of State for Education

Sarah Owen MP  
Chair, Women and Equalities Committee  
House of Commons  
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Dear Sarah

Thank you for your correspondence of 19 February in relation to the Women and Equalities Committee on what the Department for Education is doing to stop Female Genital Mutilation and to support survivors of it.

Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) is abuse and we want to eradicate this terrible practice once and for all. Services, including schools, should safeguard children from this abuse as from any other form of abuse.

Schools and colleges have a critical role to play in protecting children and keeping them safe. The Department publishes statutory safeguarding guidance "Keeping children safe in education" (KCSIE) to support schools and colleges to carry out their duties to safeguard and promote the welfare of children.

Through the relationships, health and sex education curriculum we are teaching pupils about the emotional and physical damage caused by Female Genital Mutilation in an age-appropriate way, as well as teaching that it is a crime.

All school staff should be aware of the indicators of abuse, neglect and exploitation, including FGM, and know what to do if they have any concerns about a child. There must be clear procedures in place for responding to concerns about FGM, including referring cases to children's social care and working with other agencies as part of the multi-agency response. Teachers also have a legal duty to report to the police if they discover that an act of FGM appears to have been carried out on a girl under 18.

In child protection services, the government has strengthened multi-agency working, to ensure that local authorities, the police, and health services collaborate to protect children from FGM. Child protection agencies and the police treat allegations of abuse very seriously; they will investigate and take appropriate action, including prosecution, where there is evidence of an offence having been committed.

Across government, we are tackling the problems that cause children to be in need of help and protection.

We are rolling out improvements to support families whilst keeping children safe

including new multi-disciplinary Family Help teams, multi-agency child protection teams and lead child protection practitioners. From April 2025, over £500m will be available to local authorities to roll out these reforms across the country, more than doubling direct investment in preventative services for 2025-26.

This department is also committed to supporting the Safer Streets Mission, including its pillar of halving violence against women and girls (VAWG). Much of the work we do, including through the Opportunity Mission, supports this ambition, and we are considering where we could go further to support children and young people. The Safer Streets mission is led by the Home Office, and the Department for Education works closely with them and other government departments to ensure a coordinated approach to tackling VAWG that covers prevention, early intervention, response and support.

Thank you for writing to me and for bringing attention to this important subject. I hope that this response is useful and provides clarity on the Department for Education's ongoing efforts to address FGM and support survivors.

Yours,

Bridget

**The Rt Hon Bridget Phillipson MP**  
**Secretary of State for Education**