

Health and Wellbeing Board - 19 January 2015

Female Genital Mutilation

Purpose

To seek support from the Health and Wellbeing Board for a number of actions to raise awareness of this issue and to support the campaign to ban the practice of Female Genital Mutilation (FGM)

Reason for Lateness: This report was not included on the original agenda for the meeting as the issue arose following a question at the Council meeting on 12 January 2015 after the agenda had been published. As Cabinet portfolio holder for Health, the Chairman responded to the question in which he undertook to ask the Health and Wellbeing Board at its next meeting to endorse an action plan and that this would be reported as part of his portfolio report to Council at its next meeting on 4 February 2015.

In addition, this issue is due for discussion at the next meeting of the Police Authority on 19 January, the same day as the Health and Wellbeing Board meeting. Councillor Burley will be attending this meeting as the Council's representative and can inform the meeting of the proposed actions.

Recommendations

That the Health and Wellbeing Board agree to the following actions:

1. That all partner organisations be contacted to raise awareness of the issue of FGM with their front line staff, particularly but not exclusively the Manor Hospital, GP surgeries, School Nurse network and Health Visitors.
2. That this issue be included as part of the NHS 'Making Every Contact Count' (MECC) training
3. That the Chair of the Health and Wellbeing Board raise the issue of FGM at regular meetings of Chairs of neighbouring Authorities Health and Wellbeing Boards.
4. That the Chair of the Health and Wellbeing Board write to elected representatives in both the UK Parliament and the European Parliament, and other organisations such as Amnesty International, supporting the campaign to ban this form of mutilation.
5. That the Health and Wellbeing Board consider establishing a task and finish group to look at this issue in greater detail.

Report Detail

At the last Council meeting on 12 January 2015, Councillor Burley asked the following question:

(1) Councillor Burley – Female genital mutilation

“Are you aware of a recent West Midlands Police and Crime Panel report highlighting serious concern at the practice of Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) still being practised here in the UK? How can Walsall Council assist and support the campaign to eliminate this abhorrent practice?”

Councillor Robertson as Cabinet portfolio holder for this matter provided a response at the meeting which is essentially summarised as follows:

- “FGM has been illegal in the UK since 1965
- Operation Sentinel is a West Midlands Police operation aimed at protecting our most vulnerable victims and includes a dedicated strand of work on FGM
- There is current anonymous survey work being undertaken in areas including Walsall in order to seek information
- A report will be presented to the next Board meeting on this issue to seek agreement to an action plan to include: contacting partner organisations to raise awareness amongst their front line staff, including this in the Making Every Contact Count initiative, raising the issue with other Board Chairs, writing to elected representatives in Parliament, Strasbourg, and relevant campaign organisations, and establishing a task and finish group”.

The actions proposed in the recommendations intend to provide the basis of a constructive way forward and the Vice-Chair of the Health and Wellbeing Board, Dr A. Gill, has endorsed this approach