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Edward Timpson MP

Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Children and Families

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Robert Neill MP
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Dear Bob,

20 March 2014

Thank you for your letter of 24 February, addressed to the Secretary of State, on behalf of a number of your constituents, about female genital mutilation (FGM). I am replying as the minister responsible for this policy area.

The government's and this department's position is clear and consistent. FGM is unacceptable. It is child abuse and a criminal offence. It is an issue that schools should take very seriously, and any school that has concerns that a pupil is at risk should contact their local authority safeguarding team immediately.

Guidance from the government on FGM is already available in, *Multi-Agency Practice Guidelines: Female Genital Mutilation*, which can be downloaded at: <http://tinyurl.com/FGM-practice-guidelines>. This 2011 guidance includes a chapter specifically for schools and colleges.

On 25 February, the Secretary of State and I met Fahma Mohamed, the young woman whose campaign has featured prominently in *The Guardian* and elsewhere, along with other FGM campaigners to discuss how best to tackle this terrible abuse. The Secretary of State issued a statement after this meeting, where he announced that we will be contacting schools via email by 17 April with guidance on keeping children safe, including material to help staff tackle FGM.

On 28 February, the Secretary of State visited Fahma's school in Bristol, where he met staff and pupils and sat in on a classroom discussion on FGM. Ministers have also met head teacher and teacher associations and unions to discuss how to raise awareness in schools of this and similar child protection issues.

The department is also funding voluntary organisations who work on safeguarding issues, including FGM, in the relevant minority communities. Over the two years from 2013-2015, we will be providing a total of over £730,000 between the Victoria Climbié Foundation and AFRUCA (Africans Unite Against Child Abuse) for their work with these communities. Educating communities is essential if we are to eradicate this practice. We are also providing more than £275,000 over the two years to Children and Families Across Borders for their work on international social work issues, which has included the production of a training app on FGM.

I hope your constituents are reassured that, right across government, there has been and continues to be a concerted effort to eradicate FGM from our society, for good.

Thank you for your interest in this important issue.

*Yours ever,
Edward.*

Edward Timpson MP
Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Children and Families