

**BME & Migrant Advisory Group;
Safeguarding Children and Young People (B-MAG)**

Annual Report 2017



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Introduction

The first annual report of the BME & Migrant Advisory Group; Safeguarding Children and Young People (B-MAG) describes how the Group was set up, its aims and objectives, how it works and the work that has been undertaken during this first year. We also describe how we see the work of the group progressing during 2018.

What is B-MAG? Why is it important?

B-MAG originated through the collaboration of The Victoria Climbié Foundation UK (VCF) and the Centre for Social Work Research (CSWR); it is a multidisciplinary working group which aims to promote good practice for safeguarding BME and migrant children, young people and families. The structure, membership and working practices of B-MAG are continuing to evolve.

B-MAG was formed in the immediate context of the Syrian migration crisis of 2016-2017, and the closure of the Calais refugee camp and its aftermath. Publicity surrounding these events raised concerns about the need to provide care and protection for children and young people, including unaccompanied minors, and their families. This immediate context of the migration crisis brought attention to a continuing and contested process of migration to this country, and the needs for support for migrant people, and provides an important context for the provision of care and protection by services and authorities.

However, both VCF and CSWR, separately and together, for many years have been working to improve practice and policy for individuals in the BME and migrant communities. Based on these experiences, B-MAG was born through identifying the need for the needs of these children, young people and their families for care and protection.

These experiences recognise that to effectively safeguard these children and young people, there needs to be a focus that connects key themes and needs. These young people may have experiences of asylum seeking, having irregular legal status, being victims of child trafficking, sexual exploitation, modern slavery and torture. They can also be subject to harmful cultural practices such as female genital mutilation, and attributions of witchcraft and spirit possession. Some are vulnerable through having disabilities and many have difficulties in being understood by organisations because of language barriers and gaps in knowledge when working across cultures.

B-MAG aims to provide a multi-disciplinary approach that, through research, communication and campaigning, recognises and aims to ensure that the rights to care and protection of these children and young people are met, to the accepted standards of best practice.

B-MAG also recognises that the needs for care and protection are crucial, not only in the immediate and short-term, but also through long-term support and investment. Longer

term needs are to ensure that children, young people and families are helped to alleviate the effects of experiencing adverse circumstances, materially, emotionally and socially, so that they do not have to endure the effects of external and internal poverty, and cultural and political misunderstanding and discrimination.

Therefore B-MAG has identified a role that is vital, and not currently undertaken by other existing groups of focusing on the safeguarding needs of these children, young people and families, with regard to migration experiences, issues of faith and culture, and politically, especially in relation to the security question of radicalisation.

This first annual report describes work undertaken by the group to date and strategic planning for the year ahead.

Keeping in touch with B-MAG

CNR has a continuous social media presence with news and updates posted on to our website: <https://www.uel.ac.uk/schools/cass/research/centre-for-social-work-research>

and on Twitter at [B-MAG@safeguardingBME](https://twitter.com/B-MAG@safeguardingBME)

News and announcements are distributed through social media sites and we will introduce an email list through Jiscmail in 2018. Details of this will be posted on our website and on Twitter

We welcome contributions from all our members and followers.

B-MAG in 2017

Roundtable debate and launch of B-MAG at the House of Commons January 18th 2017

How will this country address the rights, care and protection of BME and Migrant Children?

The group was launched through a vibrant and well-attended event in the House of Commons on 18th January 2017, hosted by Sir Keir Starmer QC. He introduced the event and spoke to the importance of the issue of migration including reference to the current situation in Calais. Professor Stephen Briggs (UEL) introduced the factors that led to the need for the Advisory Group, and its aims, highlighting: the extent and urgency of the problem: the effects of negative narratives; the effects of reduced resources; the importance of professional safeguarding/child protection interventions. Dr Mor Dioum (VCF) discussed the importance of engaging families and communities; a community-led response to emerging national and international crisis for children. We heard from Fatuma Farah (FGM); Leethan Bartholemew (Witchcraft and spirit possession) and Aasma Ibrahim (the effects of the Prevent programme).

The texts of talks by Stephen Briggs, Mor Dioum and Fatuma Farah are included in this report (see below).

B-MAG structure and working groups

Following the launch, the Advisory Group organised the themes into three Work Streams. These use similar working methods, based on three activities - research, communication and campaign. Each Work Stream is convened by a member of the Advisory Group, and members of the group express allegiances to one or more, based on expertise and current practice. It is recognised that there are important overlaps and cross-references between the themes, which are coordinated in the Advisory Group.

During 2017-2018 research assistance is provided by CSWR, and the RAs work across the Work Streams and working methods.

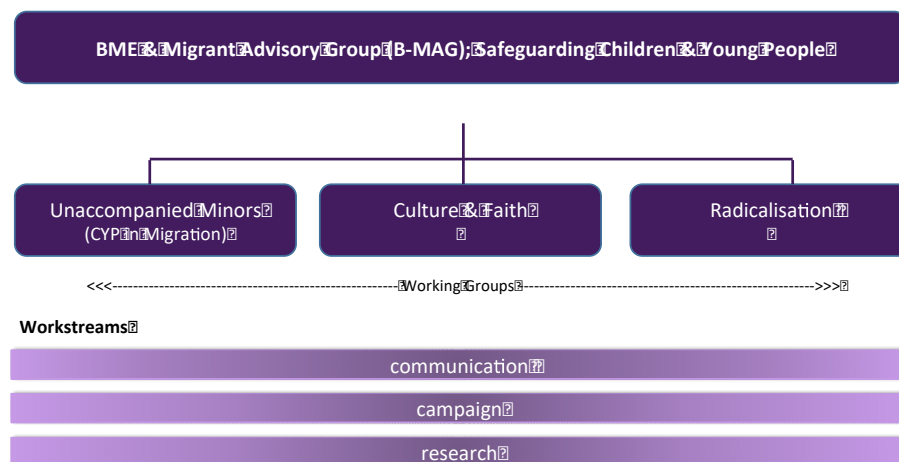
Three Work Streams:

Work Stream 1: Children, families and young people in migration, including unaccompanied minors;

Work Stream 2: Faith and culture: the impact of beliefs and faith practices on children and young people

Work Stream 3: Radicalisation: the impacts of the implementation of the Prevent programme

These themes were identified to provide focus and to organise activities, using the working methods described below.



Working methods:

Within each Work Theme, B-MAG aims to use three working methods: communication, campaign and research. During this first 12 months, the emphasis has been on communications and research.

Communications. A dedicated webpage is hosted by the Centre for Social Work Research (UEL) www.uel.ac.uk/schools/cass/research/centre-for-social-work-research and communication tools (twitter, email distribution lists) have been set up to engage with practitioners, statutory and voluntary sector organisations, academics and policy makers.

Research: B-MAG focusses on disseminating outputs from research by its members and colleagues working in the field. A regular series of public seminars has been established and coordinated by CSWR to reach practitioners and policy makers, and to generate debate and discussion. Seminars have been communicated on the CSWR website and through twitter feeds. These early evening seminars are publicised through EventBrite.

Campaigns: The overarching campaign will seek to ensure the rights, care and protection of BME and migrant children are adhered to and upheld alongside the dominant community. Focused campaigns will be informed by contributions to and feedback from the public seminars.

Reports from the Workstreams

Workstream 1: Children and Young People in migration

Convenor: Prof Stephen Briggs

CSWR Director

“How do we help them survive? And how do we help them thrive?”

-David Miliband, RSA, 6/12/18

David Miliband’s clear and simple phrases hide a devil of detail. Protection and ensuring the longer-term health and well-being of vulnerable migrant children and young people are the aims of safeguarding, but practitioners are often involved in highly conflictual and contradictory situations. Policies and practice need to embed the ‘best interests’ principle, whilst its interpretation requires skilful, informed and understanding professional practice interventions, coordinated across the different layers and contexts of practice. The many organisations – statutory, large and small charities - involved in working with migrant children/young people at national and local levels face difficulties of coordination, reduced resources, and working with negative narratives about migrants; myths can be hard to dispel.

During the first year of B-MAG we have focused on networking and research; the latter has involved reviewing literature, both published and grey, including policy reports. Our networking has brought us into contact with a range of individuals and organisations working in this complex field, involved with resettlement, education, legal, physical and mental health, and working with issues of identity. In April 2017, Domenica Pecararo, Refugee Project Officer, Diocese of Canterbury presented to the Advisory Group, demonstrating the importance of community initiatives for working with national schemes for the resettlement of migrant children. Domenica also gave a vivid illustration of how educative approaches with children can be helpful for dispelling negative narratives.

For 2018 we have three key objectives; increasing membership of the advisory group to enhance the team in this workstream; bringing key stakeholders together to focus on ways of working together to safeguard children and young people and presenting the issues in a CSWR B-MAG public seminar during the early summer; and thirdly, writing and widely circulating a summary of the current literature with identified key actions for practice, policy and training.

Workstream 2 Culture and Faith

Convenor: Dr Mor Dioum,

VCF Director

The focus of the **B-MAG Culture, Faith or Beliefs** workstream is the safeguarding of children and young people, including, though not limited to those impacted by mental health, language, domestic abuse, disabilities, exploitation and trafficking, in addition to safeguarding priorities affecting BME and migrant communities such as FGM, witchcraft & spirit possession, and radicalisation.

Child Abuse Linked to Faith or Belief (CALFB) has become an emerging theme for UK government and statutory agencies, and we welcome its recent inclusion as an assessment category in the children in need census for 2016-17.

Witchcraft and Spirit Possession is the sole focus for the current UK definition of child abuse linked to faith or belief, with previous calls for legislation to stop branding children as witches, largely catered for within the Children Act 1989 & 2004. The need for a global – and UK – definition has been demonstrated following a special resolution ‘witchcraft and human rights’ workshop at the UN summit in Geneva (Sep 2017). This has led to UK foreign office interest in seeking contributors for future related initiatives.

Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) has its roots in cultural beliefs and traditions, though long established as an abuse within UK law and compartmentalised within UK policy; the Prohibition of Female Circumcision Act 1985 extended in the Female Genital Mutilation Act 2003 and within the Serious Crime Act 2015. To-date, FGM remains the only form of abuse subject to mandatory reporting, increasing statistics largely as a result of victims/survivors of non-recent practice identified through health settings. The legislative changes have resulted in zero prosecutions to-date, and the learning for government and statutory agencies is to effectively engage with impacted communities, if we are to eradicate harmful practice.

Radicalisation has emerged within child protection cases, often linked to alleged counter-terrorism acts by one of the parents, predominantly the father, leading to radicalisation, and thus safeguarding concerns for children and young people. Such cases have further identified a lack of practitioner confidence in assessing risk of cultural or faith-based harmful practices within Section 17 (child in need) and Section 47 (child protection) processes.

How we address culture, faith or beliefs within the wider child safeguarding agenda led by the Department for Education (DfE) is increasingly influenced by the Home Office and to a lesser degree the Department of Health (DH) where some of the factors for children are located.

Strategic links include the DfE-supported National Working Group on Child Abuse Linked to Faith or Belief, the cross-party Victims Forum, and UNESCO Chair for the integration of refugees through language and arts.

During 2018, the group will continue to communicate, research and campaign on matters of culture, faith or beliefs, in all its forms, to ensure that the relevant aspects pertaining to culture and faith are embedded within child protection policy and practice, and that the rights, care and protection of BME and migrant children are assured.

In conclusion, various individuals/organisations have contributed to the group's work streams related to culture, faith or beliefs. Activities to-date, listed below, have included dialogue within communities, with professionals and practitioners and victims/survivors.

Seminars and Presentations

Individual (Organisation)	Type	Description	Date
Dr Prospera Tadam	Book Launch & B-MAG Seminar <i>Centre for Social Work Research</i>	The W-Word: Witchcraft labelling and child safeguarding in social work practice	Oct 2017
Amma Anane-Agyei & Sheila Leighton (African Families Service)	PAGE EU consortium meeting, <i>Centre for Social Work Research</i>	International Multi-Agency Training: Safeguarding Black African Children and Families, PAGE, EU Erasmus Plus Project	March 2017
Dr Stephanie Yorath (VCF)	Open Workshop; Multilingual children in foster care <i>ESRC Science Festival</i>	Practitioner Day: The Importance of the Native Language <i>Partnership work with Mothertongue to address language matters/linguistic heritage in child protection</i>	Nov 2017

Current Research

Individual (Organisation)	Type	Description	Date
Fatuma Farah (UEL)	PhD Studies <i>Centre for Social Work Research</i>	Examining differing perspectives on FGM; from affected communities	Ongoing
Laura Hamblin-Opaluwa (UEL)	PhD Studies <i>Centre for Social Work Research</i>	An investigation of the abuse of children and young people arising from the practice of faith-based beliefs relating to witchcraft or spirit possession in the UK'	Ongoing
Dr Mor Dioum (VCF)	Research Project <i>In collaboration with Dr Lisa Oakley (MMU)</i>	Exploration of practitioner knowledge of child abuse linked to faith or belief; in search of effective intervention	Mar 2017
Stephen Briggs & Andrew Whittaker (UEL)	Published article in British Journal of Social Work	"Protecting children from faith-based abuse through accusations of witchcraft and spirit possession: understanding contexts and informing practice"	January 2018

Work Stream 3: Radicalisation

Convenor: Dr Jo Finch (UEL)

During the first year of B-MAG this workstream has been involved in networking, and research including publication and presentations

Networking: expanding existing networks of academics from a range of disciplines and practitioners involved in work around radicalisation and extremism. Dr Jo Finch attended a forensic health radicalisation learning event in Nottinghamshire, November 2017, to network with practitioners and academics.

Publications:

The article McKendrick, D. and Finch, J. (2016) "Under Heavy Manners: Social Work, Radicalisation, Troubled Families and Non-linear War, *British Journal of Social Work*. 47 (2): 308-324) now has growing citations from across disciplines (currently 14).

Publication of McKendrick, D. and Finch, J. (2017) Downpressor man: securitisation, safeguarding and social work, *Critical and Radical Social Work*, doi.org/10.1332/204986017X15029697482460

Current submitted article in review: (McKendrick, D. and Finch, J. PREVENT, Safeguarding and the Common-Sensing of Social Work in the UK, *Critical and Radical Social Work*

A book chapter is in press: Finch, J. and McKendrick, D. Securitising Social Work: Counter Terrorism, Extremism and Radicalisation in Webb, S. (ed) *Routledge Handbook of Critical Social Work*, Routledge, London)

Section on radicalisation in a new book (SHARE: A New Model for Social Work, By Maclean, S., Finch, J. and Tedam, P, 2018, Kirwin Maclean Associates, Litchfield)

Presentations: Panel member at Community Care Live: Jo Finch, PREVENT and Social Work: Challenges, contradictions and concerns, Community Care Live, (27th September 2017)

Plans for 2018:

Publications will continue, including an edited book, and presentations at conferences, including:

European Conference of Social Work Research (Finch, J. and McKendrick, D, 2018, Securitising Social Work: safeguarding, extremism and radicalisation, Edinburgh university, April 17-19th).

Networking will continue and there will be a series of regular meetings to develop themes. Funding for research will be applied for. There is a clear need to expand the activities of this work stream and include practitioners directly or indirectly involved with working with those at risk from racialisation.

The B-MAG Seminar series

Seminar held in 2017

“The W-Word: Witchcraft branding and spirit possession: Challenges for professionals”,

The Centre for Social Work Research at the University of East London, hosted a research seminar, “The W-Word: Witchcraft branding and spirit possession: Challenges for professionals”. The seminar focused on the issue of witchcraft labelling/branding and spirit possession, and considered how practitioners can work effectively with such concerns. Dr Prospera Tadam opened the research seminar with a general overview of the issue of witchcraft branding, spirit possession and child safeguarding. Laura Hamblin-Opaluwa presented early findings from her PhD in the topic of witchcraft and spirit possession, and Noktula Ruparaganda, a newly qualified social worker, discussed the role of the church in addressing abuse of children linked to witchcraft and spirit possession.

The research seminar was followed by the launch of Dr Prospera Tadam’s book *“The W word: Witchcraft labelling and child safeguarding in social work practice”*

This book the narrative of a 10-year-old girl of West African heritage who was accused of witchcraft possession in the UK. The complex intersections of power and culture will be examined and the implications of understanding these variables within child and family social work practice will be outlined. The book ‘The W word: Witchcraft Labelling and child safeguarding in social work practice tells the full story.

Seminars planned for 2018

Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) in the life of a child. A symposium to be held on Tuesday 24th April, 5.30-8pm

Discussions on how to end the practice of Female Genital Mutilation has been happening in Britain for the last 30 years. The UK government passed its first law on FGM in 1985 and since then there has not been one single prosecution.

This symposium will aim to explore beneath the surface, to understand what it means to be, or to have been a child affected by the practice of FGM, and how this has impacted on their lives. This discussion of the child’s journey will be placed in the context of what FGM means to the affected communities. This will lead to a critical evaluation of current UK policies to deter the practice and will ask whether British practitioners have enough training on FGM to safeguard children from undergoing FGM.

Speakers:

Toks Okeniyi (Head of Programmes and Operations at FORWARD): Is the FGM Legislation in the best interest of the child?

Millie Patel (6th form student, Forest School, Walthamstow): Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) – To Prosecute or Educate as a Way Forward?

Fatuma Farah (CSWR, PhD student and psychotherapist): The different lenses to look at FGM. FGM is child abuse in the UK but how is it seen by some of the practicing communities?

Future seminars being planned

Children & Young People in Migration Seminar (Summer Term 2018)

Seminar on Radicalisation (Autumn Term 2018)

Talks from the Roundtable Debate and Launch: How will this country address the rights, care and protection of BME and Migrant Children?

Stephen Briggs: Introduction.

Welcome to the launch of the Advisory Group for the safeguarding of BME and migrant children and this roundtable discussion. We, Victoria Climbié Foundation UK (VCF) and the University of East London (UEL) Centre for Social Work Research (CSWR), have established the Advisory Group as a multi-disciplinary response to identifying and responding to needs of migrant and BME children and young people, to protect their immediate and longer-term health and well-being. The advisory group aims to ensure that these children and young people receive support and protection provided by services, applying best practice.

In introducing the rationale for the Advisory Group I will mention 4 of the key issues:

Firstly: The extent and urgency of the problem:

Debates about migration are currently everywhere, yet there remain wide areas of misunderstanding – or not understanding. There are significant concerns that migrant children and young people are not receiving adequate access to essential services; this is partly through problems in service coordination (to which I shall return) but also through a deeper lack of understanding of diverse groups of migrants and their particular needs, cultures and experiences.

Unaccompanied minors are “the most vulnerable group. In most cases,they have suffered some form of psychological or physical injury or harm. Their development has often been impaired and their needs neglected” to quote Baljeet Sandhu, (Director of the Migrant and Refugee Children’s legal unit, House of Lords 2016, paragraph 26). The ramifications of failure to respond effectively – with understanding - to these vulnerable children and young people cannot be overstated. Over 70 years of research has shown that threats to attachment security lead to longer term difficulties, including for mental health, self-esteem, capacity to learn, work and relate, and a sense of belonging. A sense of belonging is crucial for development; it requires being ‘kept in mind’, over time, by at least one person in a caring or parenting role. It includes having access to one’s cultural heritage, including the importance of language through access to one’s mother tongue, as well as help integrating into the host culture.

Migrant communities, especially BME communities suffer negative attributions (racism); they need cooperation and support in working to safeguard children over the longer term, as we will hear later in this meeting, including addressing some cultural practices that can lead to child abuse, and radicalisation.

Secondly. The effects of negative narratives:

Myths, misunderstandings and negative narratives (that can serve other purposes) are pervasive. These include: narratives of 'deserving and underserving' migrants: suspicion (of motives, age, etc). These narratives impact through all responses, from policy makers to what is in the mind of a professional practitioner working on the front line. Organisations develop risk-averse approaches based on the fear of adverse media publicity. These negative narratives and myths are hard to challenge; we need strong, authoritative counter narratives to underpin responses, in practice and policy, to promote understanding, based on data. Evidencing the experiences of migrant individuals and groups and the consequences of these (for health and wellbeing) is crucial. Safeguarding children relies on truths. The 'truth' of the needs of children/young people and their families has to be surfaced and communicated.

Thirdly: The effects of reduced resources

Reduced resources, following years of austerity, combine with currently increasing demands to undermine responses to the needs of migrant children. Services are less equipped to respond, they have less capacity. COMPAS (the Oxford Centre on Migration, Policy and Society) clearly document these issues in two reports, on statutory and voluntary organisations working with destitute migrants. Small organisations increasingly have to compete with each other to secure diminishing resources. Organisations work in silos and become 'risk averse', avoid taking on 'unpopular areas of work' and find it hard to effectively challenge negative narratives. We need to overcome fragmentation of the sector, as a priority, to create links across organisations, joint working and strategic alliances.

Fourthly: The importance of professional safeguarding (and child protection) interventions

Reduced resources, negative narratives, and the absence of clear and appropriate policy impact on practitioners. There is clear international agreement, based on the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) that the primary consideration when safeguarding children is to apply the principle of 'the best interests of the child'. Yet the House of Lords report, *Children in Crisis: unaccompanied migrant children in the EU*, finds that "adherence to the 'best interests' principle appears to be a mantra rather than an effective guiding principle". The report adds that to implement the 'best interests' principle in practice requires "overcoming many layers of prejudice, narratives of suspicion, hostility, and antagonism towards difference". Policies need to embed the 'best interests' principle, whilst its interpretation requires skilful, informed and understanding professional practice interventions, coordinated across the different layers and contexts of practice.

We call upon policy makers, service leaders and practitioners in all sectors to identify and deliver co-ordinated, effective services for migrant children, young people and their families.

Key References:

House of Lords European Union Committee report – Children in Crisis: unaccompanied migrant children in the EU, July 2006

Price, J and Spencer, S (2015) Safeguarding children from destitution: Local authority responses to families with ‘no recourse to public funds’, Oxford: COMPAS.

Price, J. (2016) Meeting the Challenge: Voluntary sector services for destitute migrant children and families, Oxford COMPAS

Petch, H, Perry, J, and Lukes, S (2015) How to improve support and services for destitute migrants, York: Joseph Rowntree Foundation

Mor Dioum: Safeguarding Children across Culture and Faith

Over the last decade, VCF has been assisting and supporting the prevalent communities through our advocacy casework to assist and advise those members of the community who have come into contact with the authorities funded by the public purse with safeguarding responsibilities.

The provision of this service aids the community to understand their safeguarding responsibilities and to be aware of the role and functions of these local authorities, in particular children’s social care departments.

In order to have an improved child protection system, it is important that we establish effective engagement with, especially, the BME and Migrant communities. Most importantly, it actively involves them in the process and at decision making levels to address their concerns or issues.

The process of advocacy casework VCF uses allows us to better understand the needs of the community and to further collect data around these needs.

Inclusion of these communities includes the improvement of socio-economic factors, by engaging them adequately within processes.

If we are to continue to improve ourselves as a society or nation, it is important that we build equality, in order to have a successful cohabitation and integration.

Segregation of our communities brings about instability and division. In circumstances, post-Brexit, if ever we need to sustain our communities, it is now, in order to bring about inclusion for all.

Fatuma Farah: Female Genital Mutilation.

Good afternoon ladies and gentlemen. My name is Fatuma Farah. I am very grateful to be given this opportunity to be a member of the advisory group for the safeguarding of migrant children and talk to you about the practice that is known as Female Genital

Mutilation or FGM in the UK. I am from one of the affected communities and I will love to see this practice eradicated not only in the UK but in the world. Although the UK government has done and continues to do a lot in stopping this practice, I have few concerns in the way it is tackled.

This is why I decided to do my PhD research on this subject and consult these communities in the UK to find out from them the best way to eradicate FGM. I would have liked to see the UK government consult community organisations like FORWARD where I am based part-time and Victoria Climbié Foundation.

These organisations are community based and they have a well informed and an effective approach in the eradication of FGM because they have the knowledge, understanding and compassion for those affected by it. It is assumed that when it comes to FGM, yesterday's victims or / and survivors automatically become today's perpetrators and hence it falls under the category of child abuse within UK context but that is not how it is seen by those within affected communities.

These organisations provide an education for those who still do not comprehend that this practice is harmful to their daughters and a violation of their children's rights. Although the law could be argued to have had a deterring affect in some members of the community in the UK it has not changed their hearts and minds.

We can see this fact from the 1st law that prohibited FGM in 1985 and how the community still took their daughters to their countries of origin to have FGM done to them. This was followed by making it illegal for UK permanent resident but another loophole appeared that had to be filled with another law that has to protect all UK residents and not only the permanent ones. Lack of prosecution is a clear proof that there is a complete failure in a joint work between the affected communities and UK authorities in safeguarding our children from this harmful practice. I hope that this advisory group will be given the means to help in the daunting task of eradicating FGM in consultation with all the concerned parties.

In my research I am finding out that education has a major role in combatting this old and out-dated tradition among the affected communities but education has also a part to play in preparing British professionals how to address FGM. In my work as a psychotherapist, I lead the support team at FORWARD and I am finding out how willingly families are questioning the reasons behind FGM practice. I truly believe that they will think twice before they blindly follow it if they received therapy support and education that connects them to their feelings.

I am also finding out the fear that the last law on FGM mandatory reporting has created in regulated British professionals such as health and social care workers and teachers. I feel that the current policy is faced with the practice of FGM that immigrated with these communities from foreign countries and they have no idea how to handle it apart from pass laws to stop it happening in its territory and to its residents. However, there are constant reports that FGM is happening right here in the UK. We have no way of finding out about this unless we are willing to work with the community and the current policy that is based only on the reporting legislations does not succeed in identifying

perpetrators of FGM so we need other methods that does not intensify the mentality of them vs us.

Members of FGM affected communities or / and women who have gone through FGM such as myself have been contributing to the British society and we want to be supported so we can support our communities who want to also eradicate FGM but we do not want to be antagonised and given negative labels.

We have to avoid the negative messages in the media that addresses FGM as a “barbaric” practice because that is not going to help in the work we are doing. It is through education and research that we can combat myths and establish truth.

It is a shame that the current policy on FGM is inadequate and it appears that there is a lack of understanding of how to address the issue. I will conclude my talk because I have only 5 minutes by saying again I am proud to be part of this advisory group with its expertise in different fields to come together and offer our service to our government in safeguarding our children whether they were born here or they immigrated here. I am willing to serve my country and its people and above all its children. I offer my knowledge and skill fully and truly.

Thank you very much for your patience and for listening.