



## **OxfordAgainstCutting** StopFemaleGenitalMutilation

### **Press release: Speak up about FGM this cutting season – everyone can help!**

Local charity, Oxford Against Cutting, has released a new message this summer to help protect girls at risk of female genital mutilation (FGM). The message is for fathers, brothers and grandfathers and reads: “Men! Speak up to protect a girl at risk of FGM – everyone can help”.

FGM can involve the cutting of the clitoris and labia and stitching the vaginal opening. Girls, usually aged between babyhood and 15 years of age, may be at increased risk during the summer “cutting season”. Families who want their daughters cut usually return to countries of origin to carry out the practice as part of a cultural ceremony. This also means wounds can heal over the long summer break and girls return to school without being in obvious pain.

Last year, Oxford Against Cutting ran a poster campaign depicting a girl taking off a gag to speak up against FGM. The poster was based on the winning drawing by a young artist who entered the charity’s art competition. This year, the charity is appealing to a wider audience and encouraging men to take an active role to help stop the practice. The winning artist has created a new drawing, this time with an African man taking off a gag to speak up. Helpline numbers are listed for advice and support. The posters will be displayed across Oxford in GP surgeries, community centres, police stations and schools.

Fatou Ceesay, Community Outreach Director of the charity, said “FGM, sometimes known as female circumcision, affects whole families and should not be seen as purely a “girls’ and women’s issue”. If a girl is cut, she is likely to suffer pain and trauma in her married life and this can cause great unhappiness between couples. FGM can lead to health problems such as infertility, post-traumatic stress disorder and difficulty in labour. FGM is often arranged by mothers, grandmothers and aunts but the harm impacts everyone in the family. Although men may not be the decision-makers when it comes to FGM, they certainly have a role to play and could stop it happening in families if they speak up”.

Kate Agha, Executive Director said: “We set up the charity early last year and have witnessed many girls and women in Oxford joining initiatives to help tackle FGM. We now need to move to the next stage and identify the men who can help prevent the practice. It is important that men from FGM communities understand what happens if their daughter is cut and how this will impact on her life. FGM is a difficult subject to talk about in any culture, for both men and women, however it’s only by talking to each other we can end harmful cultural practices and focus on enjoying the non-harmful practices”.

Kaddy Touray, Rose Community Trainer and Advisor said “People are nervous about speaking up because they are worried about offending people. It is not always straight forward to assess a girl’s risk but if anyone is at all worried, they should get advice. Our message in this campaign is to speak

up. The helplines are for everyone, not only girls at risk. You can call anonymously and the people on the helpline will tell you if there are concerns and whether they need more information.”

Oxford Against Cutting works to help prevent FGM of girls and women living in Oxford by facilitating arts projects with schools, education, training for school staff and awareness-raising campaigns. The charity has also set up the Rose Community, a network for survivors and people who care and runs regular events.

If you or someone you know may be at risk of FGM, please speak up and call the **NSPCC** 0800 028 3550 (FGM Helpline) - a free 24hr service for advice, information or support (or email: [fgmhelp@nspcc.org.uk](mailto:fgmhelp@nspcc.org.uk)) or MASH, Oxfordshire Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub on **0845 050 7666** (or email: [mash-childrens@oxfordshire.gcsx.gov.uk](mailto:mash-childrens@oxfordshire.gcsx.gov.uk)). If someone is at immediate risk, call the police on 999. The Oxford Rose Clinic, a specialist FGM clinic based at the John Radcliffe Hospital, accepts self-referrals via email: [oxfordrose.clinic@nhs.net](mailto:oxfordrose.clinic@nhs.net) and is a confidential service open to pregnant and non-pregnant women that is run by a female doctor.

For further information visit the charity's website: [www.oxfordagainstcutting.org](http://www.oxfordagainstcutting.org)