

**For release on 4 June. Interviewees available. Contact [kate.agha@oxfordagainstcutting.org](mailto:kate.agha@oxfordagainstcutting.org), 07909 510 840**

## **LAUNCH OF ANTI-FGM POSTER CAMPAIGN TO PROTECT GIRLS AT RISK AND SUPPORT SURVIVORS**

South East-based anti-female genital mutilation (FGM) charity, Oxford Against Cutting (OAC), is launching its latest summer campaign to raise awareness and connect girls who are at risk of undergoing the practice with frontline services.

The campaign, launching on 4th June 2018 across Oxfordshire, East Berkshire, West Berkshire and Buckinghamshire, will see eye-catching posters displayed in bus stops, schools, GP surgeries, hospitals, community centres, a billboard and panels in buses.

OAC's latest summer poster campaign is being rolled out alongside the expansion of the charity's school safeguarding training on FGM across the Thames Valley, working with new local community partners.

The posters' appearance coincides with what is known as "cutting season" when many girls around the UK may be at higher risk of undergoing FGM during the summer school holidays.

FGM is the removal of a girl's external genitals. It is a human rights violation that impacts at least 200 million women and girls worldwide, and it is estimated that at least 137,000 women and girls in the UK are affected by the practice.

The practice can have physical and psychological impacts that last a lifetime. FGM happens in at least 45 countries around the world, in Africa, the Middle East, Asia and within the global diaspora.

FGM is a social norm, which continues because families believe it is the right thing to do for their daughters, and because it is an expectation held in place within practicing communities.

Some girls may be at risk of being taken from the UK to undergo FGM in a traditionally practicing country, which has been illegal in the UK since 2003. Some girls may also be at risk of undergoing FGM within the UK, which has been illegal since 1985.

OAC hopes the posters will help to link people to frontline services, whether they are at risk of FGM themselves, or they know a girl who may be at risk. Services highlighted on the posters also link survivors of FGM to medical support available at the Oxford Rose Clinic and the Rose Centre in Reading.

Registered Charity Number 1161597  
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The poster features a group of children looking towards the horizon to symbolise a positive future where FGM is no longer practiced. It also lists contact details for frontline FGM services, including survivor groups, the NSPCC, Childline, local safeguarding services and the police.

The charity also hopes to highlight positive changes that are happening within FGM-affected communities in the UK, as they are aware that more and more families are choosing to not cut their daughters.

OAC's poster campaign has been running in Oxfordshire since 2015 and has been funded by the Allen Lane Foundation in 2017 and 2018. This year, funded by an anonymous donor, the campaign has been extended to include East Berkshire, West Berkshire and Buckinghamshire.

Lena El-Hindi, one of OAC's directors, commented "Oxford Against Cutting's latest poster campaign is important to raise public awareness around FGM.

People concerned that a girl is at risk can use the information on the posters to connect with frontline services, to hopefully prevent FGM from taking place.

FGM survivors can also link with the frontline services to connect with support groups around the South East".

Dr Brenda Kelly, Director and Founder of the Oxford Rose Clinic - a dedicated clinic for FGM survivors based at the John Radcliffe Hospital in Oxford - was able to work with one patient who had lived with the impacts of FGM for many years with no support, and contacted the Rose Clinic after seeing a campaign poster from Oxford Against Cutting in 2017.

Dr Kelly, who is also the Patron for Oxford Against Cutting, commented: "FGM can lead to serious and lasting problems for physical, sexual and emotional well-being. Many find it difficult to talk about such problems or may not know that help is available".

"At the Oxford Rose Clinic, we have a specialist team with experience in providing sensitive and compassionate care for women and girls living with complications of FGM. This is a free and confidential service. Girls and women can self-refer (details below) to the Rose Clinic or speak to their GP to be referred to us."

ENDS

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### **About Oxford Against Cutting**

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Oxford Against Cutting is a rights-based group working to help prevent female genital mutilation (FGM) of girls and women living in Oxfordshire and the Thames Valley.

We believe in the personal integrity and dignity of the female body.

Our mission is to:

Raise awareness.

Share information.

Support survivors.

Develop projects to empower young people to champion anti-FGM initiatives.

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