

DIARY DATES

Mental Health Awareness Week
13-17 May 2019

Child Safety Week
3-7 June 2019

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FGM: Mother guilty of genital mutilation

A woman who mutilated her three-year-old daughter has become the first person in the UK to be found guilty of Female Genital Mutilation (FGM). The 37-year-old mother from East London wept in the dock as she was convicted after a trial at the Old Bailey.

Spells and curses intended to deter police and social workers from investigating were found at the Ugandan woman's home, the trial heard. Her 43-year-old partner was acquitted by the jury.

Prosecutors said the mother 'coached' her daughter to lie to the police, so she wouldn't get caught.

The defendants, who cannot be identified for legal reasons, denied FGM and an alternative charge of failing to protect a girl from risk of genital mutilation. Mrs Justice Whipple warned of a lengthy jail term as she remanded the woman into custody to be sentenced on the 8 March.

FGM – intentionally altering or injuring the female external genitalia for non-medical reasons – carries a sentence of up to 14 years in jail.

During the trial, the woman claimed her daughter, then aged three, 'fell on metal and it's ripped her private parts' after she had climbed to get a biscuit in August 2017.

Medics alerted police to the girl's injuries after they treated her at Whipps Cross Hospital, in Leytonstone. She lost a significant amount of blood as a result of the injuries they had delivered and inflicted on her, jurors were told.

While the parents were on bail, police searched the mother's home and said they found evidence of 'witchcraft'.

Prosecutor Caroline Carberry QC said two cow tongues were bound in wire with nails and a small blunt knife embedded in them. Forty limes and other fruit were found with pieces of paper with names written on them stuffed inside, including those of police officers and social workers involved in the investigation.

For more information on this case and for the full article from the BBC, please follow this [link](#).

Freephone helpline for stressed families launched

A national freephone helpline for people in stressed-out families who feel they have no one else to talk to has been unveiled by the Duchess of Cambridge.

Aimed at people struggling with issues including family rows, money worries, new parenthood and relationship difficulties, Family Line has recently been launched by the Duchess, who is focusing her charity work on early intervention in domestic problems, including supporting people who are about to start family life.

The link will be open every weekday evening from 6pm-10pm and at weekends from 10am-1pm. Its launch follows research suggesting one-third of people in families want someone to talk to about their problems as social isolation grows.

The service joins other free helplines, such as Childline, which was founded 33 years ago, and Samaritans, which provides support to anyone in emotional distress, struggling to cope or at risk of suicide.

David Holmes, the Chief Executive of Family Action, the charity that is running the helpline, said: “We want to help families face their pressures together. Usually, simply talking will get everyday family monsters out in the open and that will usually be enough to stop them becoming overwhelming. But when talking to family or friends is not enough, families can now call Family Line”.

For more information and the full article from The Guardian, please follow this [link](#).

Three UK doubles down on online safety with new partnership

A recent survey revealed that as many as one in five children were being targeted by online bullies. Britain’s fourth biggest mobile network operator, Three UK, has formed a strategic partnership with online security specialists Internet Matters. The partnership will see the pair working closely together to tackle a series of security challenges and improve child safety online.

“As a mobile operator we have a huge part to play in supporting parents and children to keep safe online. We felt it was important for us to become part of a trusted organisation such as Internet Matters, where we can share knowledge and collaborate with other members to ensure advice is easily accessible for the customer. We want everyone to enjoy the many benefits of mobile devices which far outweighs the negative aspects and we recognise there is a dark side. We believe that this partnership will enable us to create some meaningful resources and ways to help customers understand how to protect themselves and their children”, said Dave Dyson, CEO at Three UK.

Three UK will consult with Internet Matters over the scope of its Discovery programme – an in-store initiative which offers free training and workshops on digital and mobile technology to all individuals, communities and businesses, regardless of age.

Improving online security for young people remains one of the key challenges for network operators and Three UK hopes that its partnership with Internet Matters will provide it with a fresh perspective.

“At Internet Matters, we hear first-hand from parents who want to know how they can help their children stay safe on mobile devices. We are delighted to be working with Three as we share the same belief that technology can have a hugely positive impact on young people when it is used both smartly and safely. We believe our partnership will allow us to empower parents to protect their children from any digital harms and reap the many benefits of the online world”, said Carolyn Bunting, CEO of Internet Matters.

For more information about this partnership and the full article from Total Tele, please follow this [link](#).

Stand Up to Bullying with Anti-Bullying Ambassador Training

Anti-Bullying Ambassador training days are all-day events which provide a great opportunity for your academy to meet other schools within your local community to share ideas and partake in shared activities.

The day aims to empower young people and staff members by providing knowledge of what bullying is and how to tackle it. At the end of the day, students will make an action plan of how to approach reducing bullying in their schools and will become Anti-Bullying Ambassadors.

Anti-Bullying Ambassador training empowers students and staff to change their attitudes, behaviours and cultures of bullying by building skills and confidence to address different situations both on and offline. This is all delivered through The Diana Award's renowned peer-led approach.

The expert training is offered free to schools across the UK and equips students and staff with the tools needed to tackle bullying head on, helping you transform your school's approach to bullying and create a safe and positive environment for everyone.

There is a [video](#) that explains what the Anti-Bullying Ambassador training is.

For more information, please follow this [link](#).

School defends LGBT lessons

The Assistant Headteacher of a school teaching children about homosexuality as part of a special programme has defended its decision after 400 predominantly Muslim parents signed a petition for the subject to be dropped from the curriculum.

Andrew Moffat, who was awarded an MBE for his work in equality education, claims he was threatened and targeted via a leaflet campaign after the school piloted 'No Outsiders' – a programme that runs as part of the sex and relationships education lessons. Its ethos is to promote LGBT equality and challenge homophobia in primary schools.

Children from reception age through to Year 6 were being taught five 'No Outsiders' lessons per year, each one covering topics to meet requirements in the Equality Act. Books being read by the pupils include Mommy, Mama and Me and King & King – stories about same-sex relationships and marriages.

The issue was first raised by parents Fatima Shah, who initially pulled her 10-year-old daughter out of the school, saying children were too young to be learning about same-sex marriages and LGBT in the classroom. She explained it as 'inappropriate and totally wrong'.

For the full article, please follow this [link](#).

No-deal Brexit will end access to European teacher misconduct sanctions

In a guidance document outlining no deal preparations for schools in England, the Department for Education (DfE) said the requirement for professional regulating authorities to share details of sanctions and restrictions imposed on teachers will no longer apply. This will apply to all countries in the EU, as well as Norway, Iceland and Liechtenstein, and means the Teaching Regulation Agency will no longer have data on teachers who have faced misconduct hearings in Europe.

The DfE said it would soon update its safeguarding guidance to advise schools about how a teacher's professional background can be checked in the future. The guidance document also says that the current system of reciprocal recognition of professional qualifications, including teaching qualifications, between the UK and the EU, Norway, Iceland, Liechtenstein and Switzerland will not apply after 29 March in the event of a no-deal.

However, this will not affect those who have already had their qualifications recognised or have applied for them to be so before that date. Further information on how the government intends to restore recognition of professional qualifications is due to be published 'shortly'.

For more information and the full article from Schools Week, please follow this [link](#).

National CSE Awareness Day

On 18 March, we want the world to unite against child sexual exploitation.

Child sexual exploitation (CSE) is a form of sexual abuse that involves the manipulation and/or coercion of young people under the age of 18 into sexual activity.

The National Child Sexual Exploitation Awareness Day aims to highlight the issues surrounding CSE; encouraging everyone to think, spot and speak out against abuse and adopt a zero tolerance to adults developing inappropriate relationships with other children.

NWG are committed to the fight against CSE and supporting victims and their families who are subjected to child sexual exploitation.

For more information about this day, please follow this [link](#).

Revealed: 'Dozens' of girls subjected to breast-ironing in UK

An African practice of 'ironing' a girl's chest with a hot stone to delay breast formation is spreading in the UK, with anecdotal evidence of dozens of recent cases. Community workers in London, Yorkshire, Essex and the West Midlands have told of cases which pre-teen girls from the diaspora of several African countries are subjected to the painful, abusive and ultimately futile practice.

Margaret Nyuydzewira, Head of the Diaspora group, the Came Women and Girls Development Organisation (Cawogido), estimated that at least 1,000 women and girls in the UK had been subjected to the intervention. There has been no systematic study or formal data collection exercise.

Another community activist, who did not wish to be named, said she was aware of 15-20 recent cases in Croydon alone. "It's usually done in the UK, not abroad like Female Genital Mutilation (FGM)", she said, describing a practice whereby mothers, aunts or grandmothers use a hot stone to massage across the breast repeatedly in order to 'break the tissue' and slow its growth. Sometimes they do it once a week, or once every two weeks, depending on how it comes back, she added.

The perpetrators, usually mothers, consider it a traditional measure which protects girls from unwanted male attention, sexual harassment and rape. Medical experts and victims regard it as child abuse.

For the full article, please follow this [link](#).

Fears of 'suicide generation'

It recently emerged that the teenage suicide rate has almost doubled in eight years, as ministers vowed to crack down on the internet giants accused of fueling youngsters' distress.

New figures show the rate among children aged between 15-19-years-old has risen, despite falling for most other age groups. The provisional Office for National Statistics data for last year reveal that suicides are running at more than five in 100,000 among teenagers in England.

In 2010, the rate was just over three in 100,000. It comes after the grieving father of 14-year-old Molly Russell accused Instagram of 'helping to kill her' after the schoolgirl took her own life. Ian Russell, 55, of Harrow, North-West London, said Molly had gone to bed in a good mood but decided to kill herself after looking at troubling images that night. He added: "I have no doubt that Instagram helped to kill my daughter".

Education Secretary, Damian Hinds said, social media firms have a moral duty to act on harmful images hosted on their sites. Pilot scheme has recently been launched in schools to boost mental health, and Dame Sally Davies, the Chief Medical Officer, announced her findings that teenage suicides are linked with self-harm and spending more than four hours a day on social media apps.

She informed technology giants such as, Facebook, Instagram and Snapchat that they have a duty of care to users.

For more information, please follow this [link](#).

Home Office reducing support for internally trafficked children despite surge in UK victims

The Home Office is cutting support for children who fall prey to ruthless ‘county lines’ drug-dealing gangs despite a surge in youngsters being exploited in the UK, it has emerged.

Specialised one-to-one support is to be denied to those trafficked within Britain, leaving young people exploited by gangs vulnerable to criminalisation and having their status as victims of trafficking overlooked, campaigners said.

It comes amid a 66% increase in British nationals identified as potential child trafficking victims, with the figure rising to 2,118 in 2017, of which almost half (1,002) were said to have been exploited within the UK.

The rise has been attributed in large part to an increase in county lines gang exploitation, which sees children – often from disadvantaged households – targeted and groomed by criminal gangs who offer them large amounts of money, sometimes £700 a week, for selling class A drugs.

Since 2017, the Independent Child Trafficking Advocate (ICTA) scheme has allocated victims an advocate to fight their corner when decisions are made by authorities. But the government has made cuts to the scheme so that the advocates will not be available to internally trafficked children, meaning more than 1,000 young victims are set to lose out on support.

The Home Office said the changes mean the service the child receives would depend on whether or not there was someone in the UK who has effective parental responsibility for them.

But charities warned that while victims may have a parent or guardian, such carers are often ill-equipped to navigate complex legal cases and protect them from falling back into exploitation.

For more information and the full article from The Independent, please follow this [link](#).

County Lines: Drug gangs ‘exploiting children as young as 11’

The National Crime Agency (NCA) said there had been a rapid rise of ‘county lines’, where city-based gangs exploit people to sell drugs in smaller towns. It told the Commons Home Affairs Committee that more than 2,000 phone lines are being operated by gangs across the UK – up from 720 a year ago.

Twenty-three police force areas were now involved, the NCA said. They also explained that the most vulnerable people exploited were children aged 15-17-years-old.

‘County Lines’ is a tactic whereby gangs in places such as London, Liverpool and Birmingham introduce untraceable phones to a different area to sell drugs at street level. Local runners – often teenagers – are used to transport the drugs.

Nikki Holland, Director of Investigations at the NCA, told MPs that the latest assessment showed law enforcement agencies had ‘greater awareness’ of the problem. But she warned that the issue had spread from London, the West Midlands and Merseyside to involve more than half of the UK’s police force areas. In an annual report on the issue, the NCA said that data from last year showed that victims were younger than previously identified, with ages ranging between 11-56.

Gangs establish contact and build relationships before the exploitation takes place, so some may have been approached at an even younger age, the NCA said. They targeted children with backgrounds of poverty, family breakdown, exclusion from school or behavioural and development disorders.

For more information and the full article from the BBC, please follow the below link.

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-47043251>