



12th June 2024

Deputy Dáil Eireann
Kildare Street
Dublin 2.

Re: PQ 23852/24

To ask the Minister for Health if he will provide an update on the HSE's mapping exercise undertaken as part of action 2.4.12 of the Implementation Plan for the Third National Strategy on Domestic, Sexual and Gender-based violence; the gaps that were identified in specialist support services for survivors of female genital mutilation; what strategy has been put in place to address same; and if he will make a statement on the matter.

Dear Deputy Hourigan,

I refer to your above PQ which had been referred to the Health Service Executive for direct response.

The mapping of service provision is complete and involved meetings with services funded to provide Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) services on behalf of the HSE. Issues raised included; an increase in demand for FGM services in Dublin and nationally, an increasing complexity of cases requiring clinical expertise and psychology support and the need to upskill healthcare professionals in FGM.

As part of our commitments to implement actions under the Third National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security and the Third Strategy on Domestic, Sexual and Gender Based Violence (DSGBV), the HSE National Social Inclusion Office (NSIO) provide funding to the Irish Family Planning Association (IFPA) FGM Treatment Service and AkiDwA annually. Following the mapping exercise, additional funding was made available to IFPA in 2023 and in 2024. A business case is being developed for additional funding.

IFPA provides free specialised medical care and counselling to women who have experienced FGM. The service model involves four key components: (1) clinical service provision, including referral pathways to secondary care; (2) training and capacity-building with service providers; (3) sexual and reproduction health outreach with affected communities; and (4) building and maintain relationships with key stakeholders.

In 2014, the IFPA collaborated with AkiDwA, the migrant Women's Network to provide specialised care and support to women and girls affected by FGM in the community. AkiDwA has been working to



combat FGM and engage with a broad range of organisations at local, regional and national level to deliver training to frontline services and healthcare professionals, as well as raising awareness of FGM among affected communities, targeting women, young people, men, faith/religious leader and others.

The HSE Women's Health Service (WHS) / Anti Human Trafficking Team are trained in prevalence and impact of FGM. FGM is included in the assessment of trafficked victims. A specialist psychologist is available to both services. Referrals for medical treatment are made to Irish Family Planning Association FGM treatment service. The WHS operates sexual health clinics and outreach support.

Action 2.4.12 aligns with Actions 2.1.6 and 2.1.7. of the Third Strategy on DSGBV, where the HSE has commenced work on the development of a National HSE Domestic, Sexual and Gender Based Violence (DSGBV) Training Strategy and Resource Development. FGM training needs assessment is included in the development of this national training strategy and resource development. A DSGBV Training and Resource needs analysis was carried out with HSE staff from December 2022 to January 2023.

Module 1 of a 4 module DSGBV training programme was launched on December 11th, 2023 and is available to access on www.hseland.ie. The modules will support staff to understand an intersectional approach regarding the needs of more excluded groups (e.g. Travellers, other ethnic minorities, migrants, individuals with disabilities, members of the LGBTI+ communities and others). FGM is included in the development of this national training programme and content from AkiDwA's Handbook – Female Genital Mutilation Information for Healthcare Professionals Working in Ireland ¹– and recommendations from IFPA have been included. The revised and updated Third edition of the FGM Handbook for Healthcare professionals working in Ireland has been widely circulated to HSE staff. Additionally, AkiDwA has delivered FGM training to HSE National Social Inclusion staff on March 20th, 2024. The HSE NSIO and AkiDwA are working together to promote uptake of training with targeted staff disciplines and promoting awareness of FGM.

The HSE NSIO has also undertaken a review of the resources on FGM and service support included in the NSIO website and updated accordingly. The office has also reviewed FGM related content on Mychild.ie.

I trust this information is of assistance to you but should you have any further queries please contact me.

Yours sincerely,



Joseph Doyle
National Lead, Social Inclusion

¹ "Female Genital Mutilation Information for Healthcare Professionals Working in Ireland: 2021"
<https://www.hse.ie/eng/about/who/primarycare/socialinclusion/domestic-violence/fgm-handbook-3rd-edition-2021.pdf>