

FGM Kirklees Screening Toolkit 1



Tips for opening up a conversation

What follows are a series of questions you can use as the basis for discussions with girls or women you are concerned may be at risk. Any discussion needs to be taken at a pace and in a way that is sensitive to the difficulties this subject raises for survivors, victims and potential victims of FGM, or for those who may be at risk of an honour crime.

1. Try to start with information gathering questions before moving on to more intimate questioning. This will give the person time to settle and engage with you and their surroundings.
2. Frame your questions carefully so as not to turn a conversation or discussion into a cross examination. Where ever possible, try to use open questions. In other words, questions that invite the person to give you more than a yes or no answer.
3. Use silences. If someone doesn't answer you immediately, wait and give them time. Don't feel you have to jump into silences. They may be about to tell you something very important to them and may need the time to do so.
4. Watch the body language and non-verbal responses carefully. Do the verbal answers tie up with their non-verbal language? If they don't use a follow up acknowledgement, such as " I can see that you found it difficult to answer, could you tell me a little more about that" or " I wonder if there is something more you need or want to say about that ?".
5. Use acknowledgement often as it helps individuals to feel that they are being heard and their difficulties appreciated.
6. Reflecting back what you think has been said ensures there has been a common understanding. "So what I have heard you say is that ..." It can also help you to build from that reflection to your next question for example. So what I have heard you say is that there are things that happen in your family that you are worried about, could you tell me a bit more about what they are or give me an example."
7. Think about how you would feel about some of the questions being asked. Would you feel they were intrusive or embarrassing? If so hen think about how you would like the questions to be asked of you – what would make the question right?
8. Once you have established that a person is at risk, think about how best you are able to advise and support them.