



Department  
of Health &  
Social Care

From Maria Caulfield MP  
Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for  
Mental Health and Women's Health Strategy

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Iain Stewart MP

By email to: [iain.stewart.mp@parliament.uk](mailto:iain.stewart.mp@parliament.uk)

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Dear Iain,

Thank you for your correspondence of 28 July on behalf of a number of your constituents about circumcision and female genital mutilation (FGM). Please accept my sincere apologies for the delay in replying.

The practice of male circumcision is not an offence in the UK. There are significant differences between male circumcision and FGM, with very different risks and outcomes. However, mutilation of the male genitalia, other than circumcision and legitimate body piercing, could in some circumstances be covered by laws that cover offences against the person.

The UK is a world leader on religious freedom, and this includes allowing male circumcision under religious rules. However, as your constituent notes, these are qualified rights, and the safety of the child must always be the priority. Many faith communities have very clear protocols and safeguards in place to ensure this.

Local commissioners are responsible for commissioning services to meet the health needs of their communities, and the majority do not fund routine circumcision. NHS England mainly funds circumcision to treat a small number of medical conditions, and circumcisions that are carried out for religious reasons would not be included.

However, in some areas of the UK, particularly where they feel children are at risk of unsafe procedures, commissioners work with local providers and communities to ensure that a safe and affordable service is available. Male circumcision carried out by a healthcare professional is regulated by the Care Quality Commission as a surgical procedure.

The Government accepts that the issue of male circumcision is concerning for many; however, as the law stands, the issue of consent is important. Medical practitioners take this into consideration as part of their professional responsibilities when carrying out non-therapeutic male circumcision.

I hope this reply is helpful.

Yours sincerely,

**MARIA CAULFIELD MP**