



Government
Equalities Office

Victoria Atkins
Minister for Women

Government Equalities Office
c/o Sanctuary Building
Great Smith Street
London
SW1P 3BT

Philip Davies MP
House of Commons
London
SW1A 0AA

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Dear Philip,

I congratulate you again for securing the International Men's Day Westminster Hall debate on 29 November and thank you for your continued commitment to shining a light on the pressing issues facing men and boys. During the debate, you expressed your concerns about the safety of men and boys who undergo circumcision and I committed to write to you as I wanted to give this important matter due consideration.

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 that includes allowing male circumcision under religious rules. But 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 as a result.

Clinical commissioning groups (CCGs) are responsible for commissioning services to meet the health needs of local communities. I understand that the majority of CCGs do not fund routine circumcision e.g. that which is carried out for religious reasons. The NHS mainly funds circumcision that is used to treat a small number of medical conditions.

In some areas, particularly where they feel children are at risk of unsafe procedures, CCGs do work with local providers and communities to ensure that a safe and affordable service is available. Male circumcision, where it is carried out by a healthcare professional, is regulated by the Care Quality Commission (CQC), included under the regulated activity of "surgical procedures".

I am copying this letter to the Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Mental Health, Inequalities and Suicide Prevention, and the Minister for Faith.

Yours ever,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Victoria Atkins', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Victoria Atkins