

More than 180 new cases of female genital mutilation recorded in west London

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Brent saw the most new cases of FGM, or female circumcision, in west London during the first quarter of 2016

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FGM survivor Sagal Osman has campaigned for an end to the cruel and illegal practice

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More than 180 new cases of female genital mutilation (FGM) were discovered in west London during the first quarter of this year, new figures show.

A total of 185 cases of the barbaric crime came to light across west London between

January and March this year, according to figures published by the Health and Social Care Information Centre on Tuesday (June 7).

More than a third of those were recorded in Brent, which saw 65 new cases, followed by Ealing (38) and Hillingdon (26). Hounslow was the only borough where no new cases were recorded during those three months.

Across London during that period there were 640 newly reported cases of FGM, and the NSPCC (National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children) urged people to speak out if they knew of any young people at risk.

'The practice must stop'

A spokesperson for the charity said: "FGM, or female circumcision, is usually carried out for religious, cultural or social reasons. But let's be clear – it is child abuse and it causes long-lasting physical and emotional damage. The practice must stop.

"There are no medical reasons to carry out FGM. It doesn't enhance fertility and it doesn't make childbirth safer. It is used to control female sexuality and can cause severe and long-lasting damage to physical and emotional health.

"If anyone is worried a child is at risk of, or has had, FGM call the NSPCC FGM helpline free and in confidence on 0800 028 3550."

Earlier this year, **a midwife at Hillingdon Hospital spoke out against FGM** and said education was vital to eradicate the abuse.

A teenager at West Thames College last year wrote a play about FGM in an attempt to raise awareness about the issue.

The number of new cases in west London at the start of this year was down slightly from the 190 recorded in the final quarter of 2015.

However, the number of hospital attendances by FGM patients in the area rose marginally, from 733 in the last quarter of 2015 to 740 at the beginning of this year.

Third of victims were from Somalia

The vast majority (75%) of new cases were identified after being reported by the victims.

Although this is the first time these women were recorded as being victims of FGM, it does not mean they were mutilated during this period or that this was their first contact with the NHS over the issue.

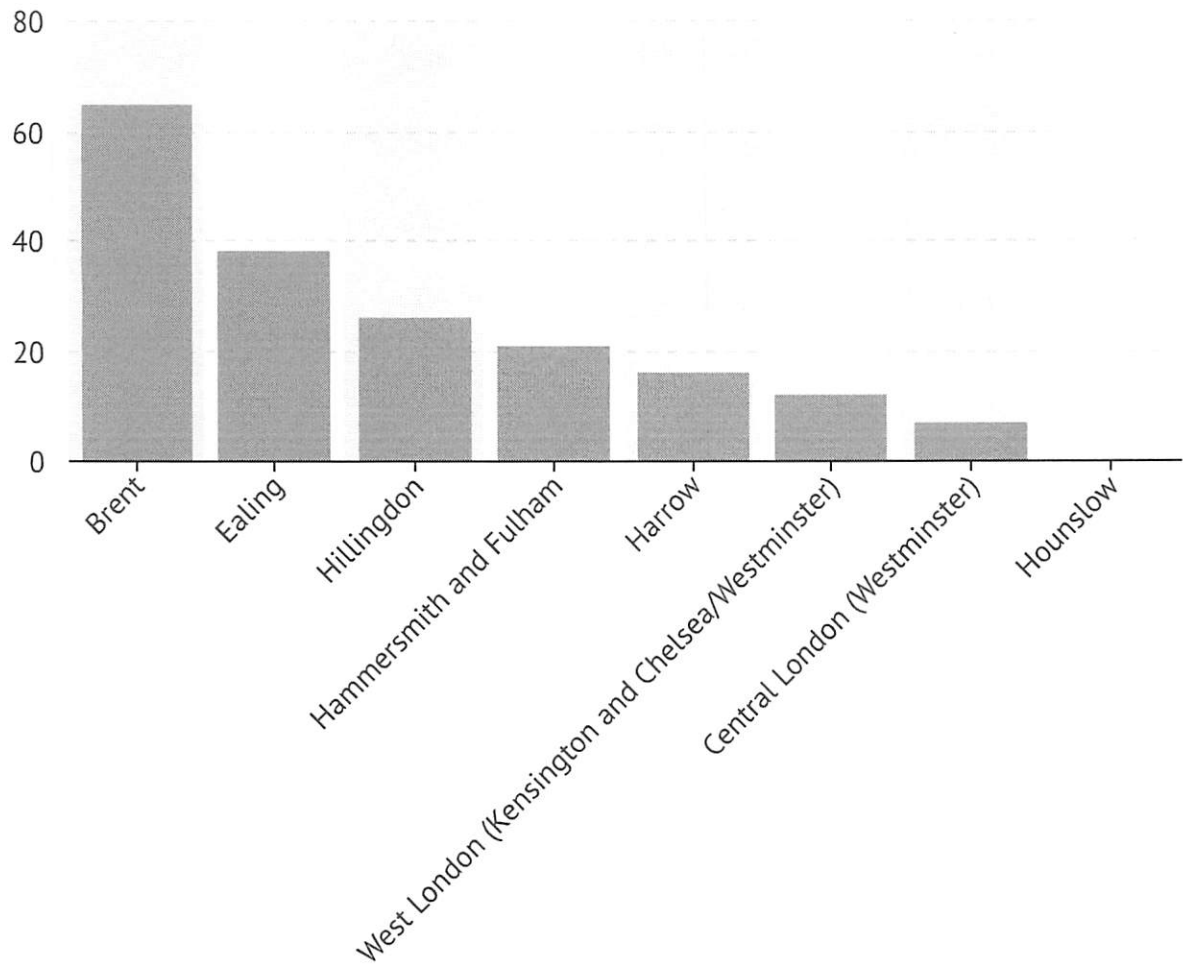
Just 11 newly recorded cases of FGM involved women and girls reported to have been born

in the UK.

More than a third of victims with a known country of birth were from Somalia, in Eastern Africa, and there were also high numbers from Eritrea, the Sudan and Nigeria.

Sagal Osman, who is campaigning to put an end to the atrocity, has previously spoken to *getwestlondon* about the trauma of being mutilated as a child.

New cases in FGM recorded between January and April 2016



Figures from the Health and Social Care Information Centre

Adwoa Kwateng-Kluyitse, Head of Global Advocacy & Partnerships at FORWARD, a charity which campaigns to safeguard the rights of African girls and women, said she had a number of concerns about the latest figures.

The biggest was that that 11 of the new victims were born in the UK and seven reported the violation had taken place in the UK.

"This deals once and for all with the myth that FGM is not happening in the UK. The implication of this is that there is a need to step up the work in communities, with

communities to change the social norm that FGM is a requirement," she said.

She also said she was disappointed by the low number of GPs making referrals.

"FORWARD would love to see GPs being proactive - having leaflets available in their surgeries, having themed display boards – just like they do for diabetes, heart disease etc so that girls and women feel comfortable with raising the issue with GPs because they know that their GP knows and understands about FGM," she said.

"We need to remove the stigma that stops women and girls seeking the quality health care they deserve."

Anyone who wants help knowing how to protect their daughter can call FORWARD on 0208 960 4000.



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