

**FGM report falls short on community engagement measures, says academic**

A Home Affairs Committee report on the growing crisis of female genital mutilation (FGM) does not go far enough to address the issue at a community level, according to an academic at Coventry University.

Professor Hazel Barrett is leading the University's work on the European Commission's Daphne-funded [REPLACE 2](#) project, which was set up to combat FGM.

Responding to the Home Affairs Committee report, which is [published today](#), Professor Barrett said:

*"While I welcome the findings of the committee's report and am glad to see that its scope is broad and taking many of the key issues around FGM seriously, I'm also disappointed that it's short on measures addressing community engagement.*

*"If we're to work towards eradicating the practice of FGM in communities across the UK – and, indeed, across Europe and internationally – the report's recommendations need to be more comprehensive in detailing how and when this will happen beyond simply stating that the Home Office's £100,000 engagement initiative is inadequate.*

*"Funding is of course critical, and the Home Office's financial support for community engagement was a most welcome development in February. But these reports need to be initiating movements towards action on the ground to tackle the psychological and behavioural change challenges that need to be overcome before we can end FGM.*

*"These challenges include things like fully understanding the way FGM is referred to and thought of in different communities, many of which have their own definitions and language for the practice. For example, some Somali and Sudanese communities don't consider FGM to be 'mutilation', which can lead to confusion about what type of cutting is covered by legislation in this country. Others are offended by the term 'FGM' and associate it only with the worst kind of procedures, which they don't support.*

*"Our work through the REPLACE 2 programme is making progress in this area, and we're working with the charity FORWARD which gave evidence to the committee. Using community-based researchers, we spend time with groups who are affected to understand how they perceive the issue, then use a behavioural change approach to challenge and replace the social norms that support the continuation of FGM. Cultural*

*sensitivity is the key, and this kind of approach is the only effective way to prevent the practice in the long-term.*

*“Until there’s a national action plan which puts this kind of work at the very forefront of the government’s agenda on this matter, I fear progress will be slower than it could be in putting an end to FGM in the UK.”*



**REPLACE 2**

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