

Petitioner submission of 9 January 2024

PE2052/B: Ban child circumcision unless it is medically necessary with no less invasive solutions available

There are many more arguments that can be made against child circumcision but due to the 1000 word count limit I will only be making arguments directly that relate to the Scottish government's response at this time.

Forced circumcision of minors without medical necessity should be criminalised. There is currently no requirement in law for professionals undertaking male circumcision to be medically trained or to have proven expertise. The children's bodily autonomy and religious rights should take precedence over the beliefs of the parents. The child isn't guaranteed to follow the parent's religion in adulthood and we wouldn't accept any other body parts being cut off (we wouldn't allow a child's ear/earlobe to be cut off for a parent's religious beliefs). If the child grows up and decides that they want to cut parts off of their sexual organ then they could easily do so for any reason, including religious or cosmetic. A child's bodily autonomy and religious rights supersede a parent's religious or cultural desire to cut parts off of their child's genitalia (currently the Scottish government recognises this for girls). An individual's religious rights don't extend past their own body and certainly not onto another's body. There are many males that grow up disliking or hating that parts of their genitalia were cut off in a way that they would have never consented to if their choice was protected. A question that needs to be asked: Which does the Scottish government deem a greater injustice - a parent being upset that they can't cut parts off of their child's genitalia, or a child growing up and hating that their genitalia was altered/damaged in an irreversible way without their consent?

The majority of male circumcision is forced on healthy infants/children that have no relevant issues whatsoever. This petition is primarily targeting the

majority so that healthy children are protected and can grow up to make their own decisions, but also it focuses on trying to get "medical" circumcision to follow current medical standards.

Circumcision is sometimes recommended for conditions that can be solved with non-invasive methods (phimosis - use of steroid creams for 4-8 weeks), this is not in accordance with good medical practice as the most invasive method has been selected when non/less-invasive methods have been proven to be effective

The following applies to all aspects of medical practice, including circumcision, and can be outlined as follows:

- If a condition can effectively be treated conservatively, it is accepted good practice to do so. Even limited procedures should only be carried out where there is good reason, and then only after adequate conservative treatment. The BMA opposes unnecessarily invasive procedures being used where alternative, less invasive techniques, are equally efficient and available.
- Doctors have a duty to keep up to date with developments in medical practice. Therefore, to circumcise for therapeutic reasons where medical research has shown other techniques to be at least as effective and less invasive would be unethical and inappropriate.

The Scottish Government's current view on female and male circumcision is irrelevant since this petition is calling for boys to be given the same level of protection as girls, as currently there is a severe form of discrimination against boys in this country with regards to forced genital cutting.

Male circumcision - it is currently legal to cut off around 30-50% of the motile skin of a boy's genitalia (very few adult males choose to do this, so this isn't something most males want, given the choice) for any reason including the parent's aesthetic preference, what the parent thinks the child's future partner might want or even malicious reasons like intentionally try to make it as tight and uncomfortable as possible (reduce sensitivity, make masturbation more difficult in adulthood, etc). All of this is done outside of a medical setting even though it has negative effects, eliminates

several beneficial functions and changes how the penis works during masturbation/sexual acts, greatly increases friction and causes sensitivity loss.

Female circumcision - is currently illegal (which it should be) including the types that are equal in harm as well as those less invasive and less harmful than male circumcision (ritual nick which is a pinprick or nick to the female equivalent of the foreskin [the clitoral hood], hoodectomy [cutting off the clitoral hood], etc) with no religious or cultural exceptions (which there shouldn't be, it's the child's genitalia, not the parent's. The child will grow up and be able to make their own decision).

The Scottish Government paints all FGM and the effects of FGM as type 3/infibulation (which is the most harmful and has the most severe negative effects as well as it being one of the rarer forms of FGM accounting for less than 10%). Male circumcision shares many of the negative effects of the most common forms of FGM including loss of sensitivity which was one of the main arguments for banning female circumcision.

There are studies showing that female circumcision has similarly claimed health benefits to the highly contested benefits claimed for male circumcision, as well as evidence that things such as labiaplasties can have health benefits and make hygiene easier. We rightfully recognise that none of this would ever justify the forced genital cutting of girls so we should recognise that it isn't justification for the forced genital cutting of boys. Regardless of potential benefits, it is still unethical to cut into healthy children's genitalia. If the Scottish Government views the ritual nick as "an extremely harmful practice" then there is no reason why infant/child male circumcision shouldn't also be considered as an extremely harmful practice.

This shows the insane double standards we currently have. Defenceless young boys have died because this practice was forced upon them.

All children deserve protection.