

## **Breast Ironing**

### **Introduction**

Breast Ironing also known as “Breast Flattening” is the process whereby young pubescent girls breasts are ironed, massaged and/or pounded down through the use of hard or heated objects in order for the breasts to disappear or delay the development of the breasts entirely. It is believed that by carrying out this act, young girls will be protected from harassment, rape, abduction and early forced marriage and therefore be kept in education.

Much like Female Genital Mutilation (FGM), Breast Ironing is a harmful cultural practice and is child abuse. Professionals working with children and young people must be able to identify the signs and symptoms of girls who are at risk of or have undergone breast ironing. Similarly to Female Genital Mutilation (FGM), breast ironing is classified as physical abuse therefore professionals must follow their Local Safeguarding Children’s Partnerships Procedures.

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Local authorities should review their internal Violence against Women and Girls strategy and ensure it reflects breast ironing as a form of gender based violence.

The rights of women and girls are enshrined by various universal and regional instruments including the Universal Declaration of Human Rights ([http://www.ohchr.org/EN/UDHR/Documents/UDHR\\_Translations/eng.pdf](http://www.ohchr.org/EN/UDHR/Documents/UDHR_Translations/eng.pdf)), the United Nations Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women (<http://www.ohchr.org/Documents/ProfessionalInterest/cedaw.pdf>), the Convention on the Rights of the Child ([http://www.unicef.org.uk/Documents/Publication-pdfs/UNCRC\\_PRESS200910web.pdf](http://www.unicef.org.uk/Documents/Publication-pdfs/UNCRC_PRESS200910web.pdf)), the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights (<http://www.humanrights.se/wp-content/uploads/2012/01/African-Charter-on-Human-and-Peoples-Rights.pdf>). All these documents highlight the right for girls and women to live free from

immigrants have brought breast ironing practice with them to the UK and it has been estimated that 1,000 per year have been subject to this abuse within the UK. In their efforts to reduce the number of affected girls and women, CAME provides training for Cameroonian organisations working to protect girls from being abused through breast ironing and supporting families and communities.

### Health consequences

Due to the instruments which are used during the process of breast ironing, for example, spoon/broom, stones, pestle, breast band, leaves etc. combined with insufficient aftercare, young girls are exposed to significant health risks. Breast ironing is painful and violates a young girl's

## Contact Us

To find out more about our Safeguarding Children from Diverse and Faith Communities Training Course contact us on: 0189 5449 910 or email [admin@reconstruct.co.uk](mailto:admin@reconstruct.co.uk)

To find out more about working with tri.x contact us on: Telephone: 024 7667 8053

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