

**General Medical Council, October 2007 (republished March 2013):**

**0–18 years: guidance for all doctors**

**Procedures undertaken mainly for religious, cultural, social or emotional reasons**

**34** Both the GMC and the law permit doctors to undertake procedures that do not offer immediate or obvious therapeutic benefits for children or young people, so long as they are in their best interests (see paragraphs 12 and 13) and performed with consent (see paragraph 27).

**35** To assess their best interests you should consider the religious and cultural beliefs and values of the child or young person and their parents as well as any social, psychological and emotional benefits. This may be relevant in circumcision of male children for religious or cultural reasons<sup>15</sup>, or surgical correction of physical characteristics that do not endanger the child's life or health.

[Paragraphs 12 / 13 state:

An assessment of best interests will include what is clinically indicated in a particular case. You should also consider:

- (a) the views of the child or young person, so far as they can express them, including any previously expressed preferences
- (b) the views of parents
- (c) the views of others close to the child or young person
- (d) the cultural, religious or other beliefs and values of the child or parents<sup>2</sup>
- (e) the views of other healthcare professionals involved in providing care to the child or young person, and of any other professionals who have an interest in their welfare
- (f) which choice, if there is more than one, will least restrict the child or young person's future options.

This list is not exhaustive. The weight you attach to each point will depend on the circumstances, and you should consider any other relevant information. You should not make unjustified assumptions about a child or young person's best interests based on irrelevant or discriminatory factors, such as their behaviour, appearance or disability].

[Paragraph 27 states:

If a child lacks the capacity to consent, you should ask for their parent's consent. It is usually sufficient to have consent from one parent. If parents cannot agree and disputes cannot be resolved informally, you should seek legal advice about whether you should apply to the court]