



FGM (Female Genital Mutilation)

Background

FGM is a harmful practice which involves the partial or total removal of the external female genitalia, or injury to female genital organs, for supposed cultural, religious or non-medical reasons. FGM (also known as female circumcision or cutting) can affect females from birth to pregnancy.

FGM inflicts severe physical and psychological damage which can last a lifetime. While there is some intelligence to suggest that FGM is being physically performed in the UK, most victims are usually taken abroad, commonly in the school holiday periods.

Where can I find further information?

- [West Midlands Interagency Safeguarding Procedures](#)
- [Safe in Warwickshire – FGM link](#)
- [National FGM Centre website](#)
- [NSPCC website](#)
- [FORWARD website](#)
- [FGM NHS Overview](#)
- [National FGM Centre website](#)
- [NHS – FGM Information Sharing](#)

Is FGM legal in the UK?

In England, Wales, and Northern Ireland all forms of FGM are illegal under the Female Genital Mutilation Act 2003, and in Scotland it is illegal under the Prohibition of FGM (Scotland) Act 2005. FGM has been a criminal offence in the UK since the Prohibition of Female Circumcision Act 1985 was passed. It is illegal to take a child abroad for FGM and there are orders in place to prevent this.

What do I do if I suspect FGM?

In line with child protection procedures, a [referral](#) should be made to Children & Families Front Door in accordance with the [Referrals procedure](#) to ensure the child/ren are immediately protected. Regulated professionals in Health and Social Care and teachers in England and Wales have a duty to report 'known' cases of FGM in under 18s which they identify in the course of their professional work to the police.

Minute briefing

Signs that FGM may happen

- Mention of a ceremony where a girl 'becomes a woman' or is 'prepared for marriage'
- A female relative has undergone FGM (mother/sister)
- Missing episodes from school or home
- A family arranges a long holiday overseas or visits a family abroad during school holidays
- A girl has an unexpected or long absence from school

Identifying a child who has been subject to or who is at risk of FGM

FGM is typically performed on females between infancy and the age of 15. It is sometimes carried out as early as a couple of days after birth. Professionals in all agencies, including in the community, need to be alert to the possibility of a child being at risk of or having experienced female genital mutilation.

[Click here](#) for further information and potential indicators

Signs that FGM may have taken place

- Change in behaviour following absence from school, appearing quiet, anxious, or depressed
- Difficulty or discomfort walking, standing or sitting
- Complaints of pain between legs
- Spending longer than normal in the bathroom or toilet
- Mentioning that someone did something to them that they are not allowed to talk about

Click [HERE](#) for the National FGM Centres FGM Map. This map contains information about the prevalence rates of FGM (inc. types of FGM) in different countries across the world.