

01 Background:

Female genital mutilation (FGM) comprises all procedures that involve partial or total removal of the external female genitalia, or other injury to the female genital organs for non-medical reasons. It is a practice that takes place worldwide in at least 28 African countries and in parts of the Middle and Far East. It also takes place within parts of Western Europe and other developed countries, primarily among immigrant and refugee communities where FGM is commonly believed to be a way of ensuring virginity and chastity. The procedure may be carried out shortly after birth, during childhood or adolescence, just before marriage or during a woman's first pregnancy. The practice is not required by any religion.

Why it matters:

FGM is child abuse and a form of violence against women and girls which has immediate and long term health consequences including severe pain and blood loss, shock, mental health problems, complications in childbirth, and/or death. It is believed that **FGM may happen to girls in the UK as well as overseas**. Girls of school age subjected to FGM overseas are likely to be taken abroad (often to the family's country of origin) at the start of the school holidays, particularly in the summer, in order for there to be sufficient time for them to recover before returning to school.

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What to do?

Complete the Home Office Female Genital Mutilation Awareness Training, available [here](#). For concerns about Adults please ring Adult Care on 0300 303 8886. For concerns about Children ring Children's Social Care on 0300 303 0440, or the Police on 101, or 999 if someone is in immediate danger.

Questions:

Do you know the name of your agency lead for FGM?

Have you heard about [The Guardian Project](#) run by NESTAC and its free support services across GM?

Do you know about the advice and resources on the [rbscp.org](#) website?

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Information:

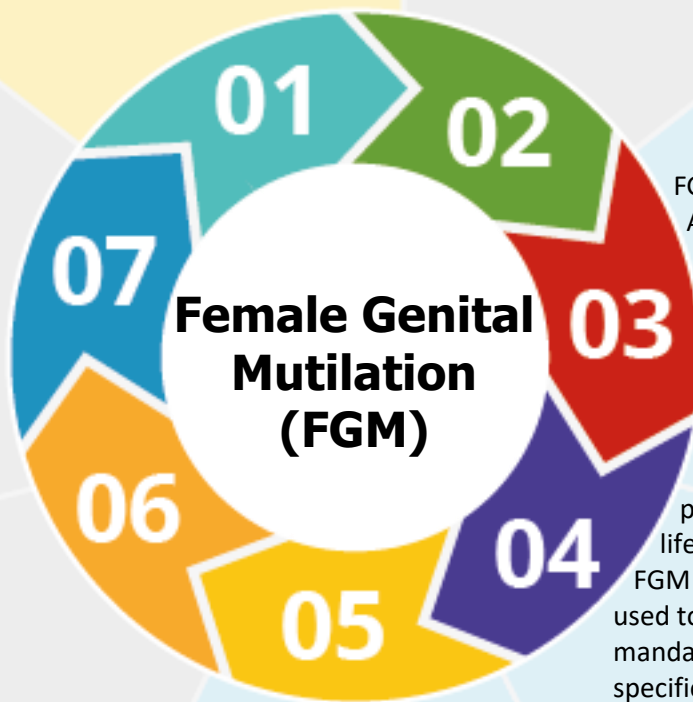
FGM is illegal in England & Wales. As amended by the Serious Crime Act 2015, the Female Genital Mutilation Act 2003 now includes: an offence of failing to protect a girl from the risk of FGM; Extra-territorial jurisdiction over offences of FGM committed abroad by UK nationals and those habitually (as well as permanently) resident in the UK; lifelong anonymity for victims of FGM; FGM Protection Orders which can be used to protect girls at risk; and a mandatory reporting duty which requires specified professionals to report known cases of FGM in under 18s to the police.

Information:

Signs that a girl or young woman may be at risk include: The family comes from a community that is known to practice FGM; mother has been subjected to FGM; Family not well integrated into UK society; parents have poor access to information on the harmful impact of FGM; Parents state that they or a relative will take the child out of the country for a prolonged period; a child may confide to a professional that she is to have a 'special procedure' or to attend a special occasion.

Often parents themselves can experience pressure to agree to FGM for their children. It is important to recognise that those seeking to arrange the cutting are unlikely to perceive it to be harmful. Whilst every attempt should be made to work with parents/carers on a voluntary basis to prevent FGM, the safety of the child must be paramount.

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