

Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) comprises all procedures involving partial or total removal of the external female genitalia or other injury to the female genital organs.

FGM is illegal in the UK & in October 2015 it became mandatory for teachers, social workers & health professionals to report **'discovered'** cases of FGM to the Police.

When FGM involves girls under 18 it is classified as child abuse with potential for long-lasting harmful physical and psychological consequences.

Girls who are threatened with, or have undergone FGM may withdraw from education, affecting their educational & personal development; they may feel unable to oppose the wishes of their parents & may suffer emotionally as well as physically.

Indicators:

The girl's community or country of origin is high risk of FGM plus the girl:

- Has a mother or female relative who has had FGM
- Is uncomfortable walking, sitting or standing
- Spends longer than usual in the toilet
- Has frequent urinary, menstrual or stomach problems.
- Has prolonged or repeated absences from the education setting

Or you may overhear references to being cut, closed, circumcised or other terms.

Staff may also become concerned about a female pupil because:

- She appears anxious, depressed & withdrawn
- Her educational performance, aspirations or motivation may decline
- Her friends report their concerns

Girls may be most at risk during the summer holiday, so pay particular attention in the summer term, & when girls return in the autumn.

Education settings can create an open and supportive environment by:

- Circulating & displaying materials about FGM
- Raising mandatory reporting duty & awareness of FGM among all staff, through e.g. training, briefing sessions, guidance, etc.
- Ensuring that the safeguarding team is fully aware of the issues around FGM
- Introducing FGM into the school curriculum within relevant classes, such as PSHE, Relationships & Sex Education (RSE), Science and Citizenship.

Actions:

- Talk to pupils/students about FGM professionally & sensitively
- Explain that FGM is illegal in the UK and that they will be protected by the law
- If you are concerned that a pupil/student is at immediate risk of, or has undergone FGM, you **must** inform your Designated Safeguarding Lead or Deputy (DSL/D) **immediately**
- Teachers must also report 'discovered' cases of FGM direct to the police by ringing **101**

The DSL/D must:

- Make an **immediate** referral to Children's Social Care, tel. **0114 2734855** for further investigation with the Police & health services
- Explain to the pupil/student about why they have made a referral (particularly if against their wishes)

Staff should NOT:

- Examine a student (unless part of their normal personal care, e.g. nappy-changing, disability care etc.)
- Treat such concerns as a 'domestic' issue
- Ignore what the student has told them or dismiss the need for immediate protection
- Decide that it is not their responsibility to follow up the allegation
- Discuss their concerns with the student's family or community, in advance of any enquiries by the police, adult or children's social care

In all situations the girl should be offered counselling and medical help; and other related females who may be at risk should be assessed.

Agencies will always work with parents, wider family, community leaders & organisations to prevent & educate about FGM & its consequences.

Useful resources:

- [Multi-agency statutory guidance on Female Genital Mutilation, HM Govt 2016](#)
- [Mandatory Reporting of Female Genital Mutilation – Procedural Information, HO 2016](#)
- [Sheffield Female Genital Mutilation strategy, 2016](#)
- [Sheffield Children Safeguarding Partnership Child Protection and Safeguarding Procedures Manual – Female Genital Mutilation](#)