

Safeguarding 7 minute briefing: Female Genital Mutilation (FGM)

Effects of FGM

There are no health benefits to FGM. It can cause serious harm, including:

- *severe and/or constant pain
- *infections, such as tetanus, HIV and hepatitis B and C
- *pain or difficulty having sex
- *infertility
- *bleeding, cysts and abscesses
- *difficulties urinating or incontinence
- *organ damage
- *problems during pregnancy and childbirth,
- *mental health problems,
- *death from blood loss or infections.

Signs FGM might happen cont...

- A family arranges a long holiday overseas or visits a family abroad during the summer holidays.
- A girl has an unexpected or long absence from school.
- A girl struggles to keep up in school.
- A girl runs away – or plans to run away - from home.

Signs FGM might happen

- A relative or someone known as a 'cutter' visiting from abroad.
- A special occasion or ceremony takes place where a girl 'becomes a woman' or is 'prepared for marriage'.
- A female relative, like a mother, sister or aunt has undergone FGM.



Background

(HM Government, April 2016). This guidance sets out the obligations on all health, education and social care professionals who become aware of FGM or its possible/probable commission. FGM has 4 degrees of severity and has been classified as 'significant harm' for the purposes of the protection of children, by The Family Division of The High Court.

Why it matters?

FGM is a procedure where the female genital organs are cut, removed, sutured closed, injured or changed where there is no medical reason. It is a traumatic & violent act; performed in nonmedical settings, sometimes abroad, without aesthetic and may cause lasting physical & psychological harm. It is dangerous, illegal and can cause pain, infection & even death. As the girl grows up, she may suffer complications in menstruation & childbirth as well as psychological problems.

Information

FGM is illegal in the UK under the Female Genital Mutilation Act 2003, as well as a mandatory reporting duty requiring health, education & social care professionals to report known and suspected cases of FGM in under 18s to the Police.

Information cont.....

It is a cultural, not a religious practice and pre-dates both Christianity and the Muslim faith. The reasons for still doing it are shrouded in myth and tradition, none which has any medical foundation.

The following are some signs that the child may be at risk of FGM:

- A female child in a family where other females have undergone FGM.
- The family is from a nation, region or community in which FGM is practised.

[Click here for quiz](#)

Who's at risk

Girls living in communities that practise FGM are most at risk. It can happen in the UK or abroad.

In the UK, the Home Office has identified girls and women from certain communities as being more at risk:

- Somali
- Kenyan
- Ethiopian
- Sierra Leonean
- Sudanese
- Egyptian
- Nigerian
- Eritrean
- Yemeni
- Kurdish
- Indonesian.

Signs FGM might have taken place

- Having difficulty walking, standing or sitting.
- Spending longer in the bathroom or toilet.
- Appearing quiet, anxious or depressed.
- Acting differently after an absence from school or college.
- Reluctance to go to the doctors or have routine medical examinations.
- Asking for help – though they might not be explicit about the problem because they're scared or embarrassed.

FGM terms: what they mean

You might have heard some FGM terms that you're not familiar with, including:

•'Cutter'

A 'cutter' is somebody who carries out FGM. They might use things like knives, scalpels, scissors, glass or razor blades to carry out the procedure.

•'Cutting season'

This refers to the summer months – often July, August and September – when many girls are on break from school.

This is often the period when girls have time to undergo FGM. Girls might be flown abroad during this time, so it's important to be aware of this risk.

Other names for FGM

You might have heard female genital mutilation (FGM) be called a different name. Some common names for FGM include:

- female circumcision
- cutting
- sunna
- gudniin
- halalays
- tahir
- megrez
- khitan.