



Female Genital Mutilation: The Facts

What is female genital mutilation?

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

FGM has been categorised into four types, ranging from a symbolic prick to the clitoris or prepuce, to the fairly extensive removal and narrowing of the vaginal opening. All these forms of FGM have been found in the UK.

FGM is sometimes known as 'female genital cutting' or female circumcision. Communities tend to use local names for referring to this practice, including 'sunna'. FGM is considered a grave violation of the rights of girls and women.

FGM affects girls and women in the UK

The World Health Organisation estimates that three million girls undergo some form of the procedure every year in Africa alone. It is practised in 28 countries in Africa and some in the Middle East and Asia. FGM is also found in the UK amongst members of migrant communities. It is estimated that over 20,000 girls under the age of 15 in the UK are at risk of FGM each year.

If you have concerns about someone with FGM or have experienced FGM yourself, please call the NSPCC FGM helpline for

more information on 0800 028 3550 or email: fgmhelp@nspcc.org.uk

UK communities that are most at risk of FGM include Kenyan, Somali, Sudanese, Sierra Leonean, Egyptian, Nigerian and Eritrean.

Non-African communities that practise FGM include Yemeni, Afghani, Kurdish, Indonesian and Pakistani.

FGM is child abuse

Usually it is a girl's parents or her extended family who are responsible for arranging FGM. Some of the reasons given for the continued practice of FGM include; protecting family honour, preserving tradition, ensuring a woman's chastity, cleanliness and as a preparation for marriage.

Whilst FGM is often seen as an act of love, rather than cruelty, it causes significant harm and constitutes physical and emotional abuse. FGM is considered to be child abuse in the UK and is a violation of the child's right to life, their bodily integrity as well as of their right to health.

FGM can kill

FGM can have serious consequences for a woman's health and in some instances can lead to death. Infections, severe pain, bleeding and tetanus are just some of the short term consequences.

In the long term women can suffer pain and discomfort during sex, chronic pain, infection, cysts, abscesses, difficulties with periods and fertility problems. Women also often suffer severe psychological trauma, including flashbacks and depression.

FGM is illegal in the UK

Under the Female Genital Mutilation Act 2003, it is an offence in England, Wales and Northern Ireland for anyone (regardless of their nationality and residence status) to:

- perform FGM in the UK
- assist the carrying out of FGM in the UK, or;
 - assist a girl to carry out FGM on herself in the UK; and
 - assist from the UK a non-UK person to carry out FGM outside the UK on a UK national or permanent UK resident

It is also an offence for UK nationals or permanent UK residents to:

- perform FGM on any person overseas;
 - assist FGM carried out abroad by a UK national or permanent UK resident – this would cover taking a girl abroad to be subjected to FGM;
 - assist a girl to perform FGM on herself outside the UK; and
 - assist FGM carried out abroad by a non-UK person on a girl/woman who is a UK national or permanent UK resident – this would cover taking a girl abroad to be subjected to FGM; even in countries where the practice is not a criminal offence.

Any person found guilty of an offence under the Female Genital Mutilation Act 2003 will be liable to a maximum penalty of 14 years' imprisonment or a fine or both.

What do you do if you are concerned about someone who is at risk of FGM?

Talk to them about your concerns, but use simple language and straightforward questions. Be sensitive and let them know that they can talk to you again. Consult a child protection advisor and make a referral to children's social care or the police.

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What to do if you have experienced FGM?

You can seek medical advice and help from specialist health services. There are 15 specialist clinics around the UK and in some of these you can have a reversal procedure.

Call the NSPCC FGM helpline on 0800 028 3550 or for more information or email: fgmhelp@nspcc.org.uk.

Visit www.gov.uk and search for information and advice on female genital mutilation.

What to do if you are worried you may be at risk of FGM?

Talk to someone you trust, maybe a teacher or a school nurse. They are here to help and protect you. Remember that no-one is allowed to hurt you physically or emotionally, and FGM is not allowed in this country. You can get help.

Call the NSPCC FGM helpline on 0800 028 3550 or for more information or email: fgmhelp@nspcc.org.uk.

Further help and information

HomeOffice
FGMEnquiries@homeoffice.gsi.gov.uk

Metropolitan Police Child Abuse Investigation
Command/Project Azure
Tel: 020 7161 2888

Foundation for Women's Health Research
& Development (FORWARD)
Tel: 020 8960 4000 www.forwarduk.org.uk

Childline
Tel: 0800 1111 (24 hr)
www.childline.org.uk

Daughters of Eve
A non-profit organisation that works to protect girls and women who are at risk of FGM www.dofeve.org
Foreign and Commonwealth Office

Telephone: 020 7008 1500
From overseas: +44 (0)20 7008 1500
NELFT safeguarding duty desk 03005551200 ext 64715

Visit NELFT safeguarding resource centre at:
<http://nelftintranet/departments-and-services/safeguarding/domestic-violence.htm>

