

SAFEGUARDING BULLETIN

FEBRUARY 2026

Welcome to the Trust Safeguarding Bulletin focusing on FGM.

Keeping Children Safe in Education 2025 (paragraph 12) details...all staff should receive safeguarding and children protection (including online safety) updates (for example, via email, e-bulletins, and staff meetings) as required, and at least annually, to continue to provide them with relevant skills and knowledge to safeguard children effectively.

Please take the time to read this e-bulletin in line with statutory guidance.

Thank you,
Nicola Spray, Director of Safeguarding and Attendance

FGM – 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 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.

- 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 approximately 60,000 girls aged 0-14 were born in England and Wales to mothers who had undergone FGM.
- 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 illegal in the UK

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.

Consequences of FGM

FGM can have serious consequences for a female's health and in some instances can lead to death.

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 not supported by any religious doctrine

Female Genital Mutilation is not a religious requirement or obligation. FGM has no link with Islam and is neither a requirement nor a 'Sunna' in Islam.

UK law:

In England, criminal and civil legislation on FGM is contained in the Female Genital Mutilation Act 2003 (the Act²). The Act covers mutilation of the whole or any part of a girl's or woman's labia majora, labia minora or clitoris. It is an offence for any person (regardless of their nationality or residence status) to:

- perform FGM
- assist a girl to carry out FGM on herself
- assist a non-UK person to carry out FGM outside the UK on a UK national or UK resident.

If the mutilation takes place in England or Wales, the nationality or residence status of the victim is irrelevant.

If FGM is committed against a girl under the age of 16, each person who is responsible for the girl at the time the FGM occurred could be guilty of the offence of failing to protect her from the risk of FGM.

- It is also an offence for a UK national or UK resident (even in countries where FGM is not illegal) to perform FGM abroad
- assist a girl to perform FGM on herself outside the UK
- assist (from outside the UK) a non-UK person to carry out FGM outside the UK on a UK national or UK resident.

An offence of failing to protect a girl from risk of FGM can be committed wholly or partly outside the UK by a person who is a UK national or UK resident. The extra-territorial offences of FGM are intended to cover taking a girl abroad to be subjected to FGM.

What are the signs that a girl may be at risk of FGM or has undergone FGM?

Suspicious may arise in a number of ways that a child is being prepared for FGM to take place abroad.

These include knowing both that the family belongs to a community in which FGM is practised and is making preparations for the child to take a holiday, arranging vaccinations or planning absence from school. The child may also talk about a special procedure/ceremony that is going to take place.

Indicators that FGM may already have occurred include prolonged absence from school or other activities with noticeable behaviour change on return, possibly with bladder or menstrual problems. Some teachers have described how children find it difficult to sit still and look uncomfortable, or may complain about pain between their legs, or talk of something somebody did to them that they are not allowed to talk about.

Risk indicators for FGM

High risk indicators:

- A girl discloses she has undergone FGM (if under 18, mandatory reporting applies)
- A parent/carer discloses they believe FGM is a requirement and/or indicates they plan to arrange FGM for their daughter
- A girl has an older sibling/cousin who has already undergone FGM
- A girl/sibling/cousin/ third party discloses she or another girl is at risk of FGM or has undergone FGM

Other risk indicators:

- A girl discloses she is worried about a holiday and/or upcoming ceremony/ coming of age party
- A girl returns from a holiday and appears to be in pain or discomfort, or is absent from school
- Parent(s)/carer(s) are going on holiday (to a country of prevalence) and are reluctant to discuss the details of the holiday with the school
- A girl's behaviour changes. She becomes withdrawn, depressed and doesn't take part in usual activities
- A girl has not returned from a holiday when she was supposed to, especially from a country where FGM is practised

Keeping Children Safe in Education 2024 – Paragraph 42

Whilst all staff should speak to the Designated Safeguarding Lead (or a Deputy) with regard to any concerns about female genital mutilation (FGM), **there is a specific legal duty on teachers.**

If a teacher, in the course of their work in the profession, discovers that an act of FGM appears to have been carried out on a girl under the age of 18, **the teacher must report this to the police.**

Help and information

National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children (NSPCC)
FGM Helpline 0800 028 3550 email: fgmhelp@nspcc.org.uk

Home Office FGM Unit
email: FGMEnquiries@homeoffice.gov.uk

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

Foundation for Women's Health Research & Development (FORWARD)
www.forwarduk.org.uk

Childline
Tel: 0800 1111 www.childline.org.uk

**If someone is at imminent risk of FGM,
you should contact the police immediately.**