



Student Wellbeing Resource

Female Genital Mutilation

Female Genital Mutilation (FGM)

Overview

Female genital mutilation (FGM) is a procedure where the female genitals are deliberately cut, injured or changed, but where there's no medical reason for this to be done. FGM is also referred to as female circumcision or cutting as well as many other names including: sunna, gudniin and tahur but these other terms have been criticised for underplaying the severity of FGM or being used to justify it. FGM has no health benefits for girls but instead causes adverse effects like severe bleeding, problems urinating, infections and problems in childbirth. FGM is mostly carried out on young girls between infancy and the age of 15. FGM is illegal in the UK and is classed as child abuse. If someone is found guilty of carrying out this procedure (or arranging for it to be carried out – in the UK or elsewhere) on a young girl it can lead to up to 14 years imprisonment.

The justifications for FGM vary between cultures, families and communities. The most common reasons given are:

- Belief that it is a necessary part of raising a girl, it prepares her for adulthood and marriage.
- It is a social norm in many places so FGM is performed so girls are accepted socially in their community as there is a lot of pressure on them to conform.
- FGM is often driven by ideas about acceptable sexual behaviour. It is believed in some communities that FGM ensures premarital virginity and marital fidelity. It is also believed to reduce a woman's libido, to help her resist extramarital sexual acts.
- It is thought that girls must be clean and beautiful so the removal of body parts that are considered unclean, unfeminine or male is promoted.

Signs a young person is at risk or has already undergone FGM include:

- The family belongs to a community that practices FGM and they are preparing their child for a holiday e.g. vaccinations, planning absence from school
- The child has talked about a special procedure/ceremony that is going to take place.
- If the child comes back from a prolonged absence with a behaviour change or bladder/menstrual problems.
- They may find it hard to sit still and complain about pain between their legs.
- If a child has said someone did something to them but they aren't allowed to talk about it.

Key Facts

- An estimated 17,292 children have a female parent who is a • 60,000 girls under 15 are at risk of FGM in the UK¹.
- 137,000 girls and women are living with the consequences of FGM in the UK².
- FGM procedures are usually carried out outside of the UK.
- FGM Protection Orders can be applied for by a local authority; or any other person with the permission of the court (for example, the police, a teacher, a charity or a family member)³.

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✓ Best Practice

Sheffield has an agreed multi-agency pathway – see resources.

If a girl or young woman is at risk of FGM it is important to act swiftly – make a referral to the Sheffield Safeguarding Hub.

If a girl or young woman under 18 discloses that they have undergone FGM it is mandatory to inform the police.

📄 Resources

Sheffield Safeguarding Children Board procedures re. FGM
http://sheffieldscb.proceduresonline.com/chapters/p_female_gen.html?zoom_highlight=FGM

Sheffield FGM pathway
<http://sheffielddact.org.uk/domestic-abuse/resources/pathways/>

Sheffield FGM Strategy
<http://sheffielddact.org.uk/domestic-abuse/resources/local-strategies/>

Government FGM Unit resources and information
<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/female-genital-mutilation>

Short video explaining different types of FGM and its complications.
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HN1mulqww5g>

Video about FGM. 3 women share their stories plus professional opinions.
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=04qAO5ZzZdY>

📍 Local Offers and Providers

Provider	What they offer	Cost	Contact details
Ashiana	Awareness raising and support around harmful practices most prevalent in BME communities (Domestic Abuse, FGM, Forced Marriage, 'honour' based violence, CSE, grooming).	Free	info@ashianasheffield.org 0114 255 5740
Action	Systems of Abuse training for staff (covering HBV, forced marriage and FGM).	Free	http://www.actionorg.uk/domestic-abuse-training/

📖 References

¹ https://www.city.ac.uk/_data/assets/pdf_file/0004/282388/FGM-statistics-final-report-21-07-15-released-text.pdf

² ibid

³ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/fgm-protection-orders-factsheet>