

No.13 FGM

Overview

Female genital mutilation (FGM) is the partial or total removal of external female genitalia for non-medical reasons. It's also known as female circumcision or cutting. Religious, social or cultural reasons are sometimes given for FGM.

However, **FGM is child abuse**. It's dangerous and a criminal offence. There are no medical reasons to carry out FGM. It doesn't enhance fertility and it doesn't make childbirth safer. It is used to control female sexuality and can cause severe and long-lasting damage to physical and emotional health.

Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) is **illegal in England and Wales** under the FGM Act (2003). It is a form of child abuse and violence against women. A mandatory reporting duty requires teachers to report 'known' cases of FGM in under 18s, which are identified in the course of their professional work, to the police.

What should staff be vigilant for?

It is essential that all staff and volunteers are aware of possible signs and symptoms of FGM that may include:

- A long holiday abroad or going 'home' to visit family
- Relative or cutter visiting from abroad
- A special occasion or ceremony to 'become a woman' or get ready for marriage
- Female relative being cut – a sister, cousin, or an older female relative such as a mother or aunt
- Behaviour change on return from a holiday abroad
- Bladder or menstrual problems
- Finding it difficult to sit still and looking uncomfortable
- Complaining about pain between the legs
- Mentioning something secretive somebody did to them
- Secretive behaviour, including isolating themselves from the group
- Reluctance to take part in physical activity
- Repeated urinal tract infection
- Disclosure

How to report:

As with Forced Marriage there is the 'One Chance' rule. It is essential that settings /schools/colleges take action without delay and make a referral to children's services through MASH or the Police should their concern be such that the child is at immediate risk of harm or has already been subject to this procedure.

Any concerns should be shared with the designated safeguarding lead.

If a teacher is informed by a girl under 18 that an act of FGM has been carried out on her or a teacher observes physical signs which appear to show that an act of FGM has been carried out on a girl under 18 and they have no reason to believe the act was necessary for the girl's physical or mental health or for purposes connected with labour or birth, the teacher should personally make a report to the police force in which the girl resides by calling 101.

Parents/carers should not be informed of any such enquiry if FGM is the cause for concern.

There are no circumstances in which a teacher or other member of staff should examine a girl.

Further sources of information

NSPCC:

[NSPCC female-genital-mutilation](#)

[National FGM Centre](#)

NHS:

[NHS female-genital-mutilation](#)

Gov.uk:

[Home Office FGM The Facts](#)

[Resources preventing FGM free online training](#)