

FEMALE GENITAL MUTILATION FACT SHEET

Definition

- Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) describes all procedures involving the complete or partial removal or alteration of female external genitalia, for non-medical reasons. The age at which girls undergo FGM varies enormously according to their community. It may be carried out when the girl is new-born, during childhood or adolescence, just before marriage or during the first pregnancy. However, the majority of cases of FGM are thought to take place between the ages of 5 and 8. FGM has been classified by the World Health Organization into four types: Type 1 – Clitoridectomy, Type 2 – Excision, Type 3 – Infibulation, Type 4 – Other.
- Under the Female Genital Mutilation Act 2003, it is illegal to perform FGM or assist a girl to carry out FGM on herself in England, Wales or Northern Ireland (regardless of the nationality or residence status of the victim) or to assist a non-UK person to carry out FGM outside the United Kingdom (UK) on a UK national or permanent UK resident. It is also illegal for a UK national or permanent UK resident to perform FGM or assist a girl to carry out FGM when outside the UK.
- The Serious Crime Act contains a number of new measures to extend existing legislation on FGM. The changes will mean that a non-UK national who is 'habitually resident' in the UK and commits such an offence abroad can now face a maximum penalty of 14 years imprisonment. It will also be an offence to assist a non-UK resident to carry out FGM overseas on a girl who is habitually (but not permanently) resident in the UK. Civil protection orders will also be introduced to protect potential victims of the crime. This will mean that the victims, potential victims or any relevant third parties, who believe there is a real risk of FGM taking place, can apply to the court for an order. The Act also places a duty on frontline professionals to report cases of FGM.

Key Drivers and Risk Factors

Motives

- FGM is a complex issue, with a variety of misguided explanations and motives given by individuals and families who support and pursue the practice, including:
 - It brings status and respect to the girl / woman, upholds the family honour or preserves a girl/woman's virginity/chastity.
 - It gives the girl/woman and her family a sense of belonging to the community, gives a girl/woman social acceptance, especially for marriage.
 - It perpetuates a custom/tradition, is a rite of passage, fulfils a religious requirement believed to exist (it is carried out by communities from different religions).
 - It helps girls and women to be clean and hygienic, is aesthetically desirable, cleanses and purifies the girl.
 - It is believed to make childbirth safer for the baby.
 - It rids the family of bad luck or evil spirits.

Indicators of Increased Risk

- There are a number of indicators that a girl/woman could be at increased risk of being subjected to FGM:
 - Victims, or their families, are from a community that is known to practice FGM, particularly parts of Africa, Asia and the Middle East.
 - The position of her family within the community and their level of integration within UK society.
 - Her mother or other female relatives have undergone FGM.
 - They are withdrawn from Personal, Social and Health Education as a result of her parents wishing to keep her uninformed about her body and rights.

Indicators that FGM May be About to Happen

- Girls of school age who are subjected to FGM overseas are often taken abroad at the start of the school holidays, particularly in the summer holidays, in order for there to be sufficient time for her to recover before returning to her studies. It may also happen in the UK when a female family elder visits. There are a number of signs that this may be about to happen:
 - A girl may make reference to FGM in conversation, for example when talking to other children about it.
 - A girl may mention that she is to have a 'special procedure' or to attend a special occasion to 'become a woman'.
 - Parents state that they or a relative will take the child out of the country for a prolonged period.
 - A girl may talk about a long holiday to her country of origin or another country where the practice is prevalent.

Indicators that a Girl/Woman Has Already Been Subjected to FGM

- There are a number of indications that a girl or woman has already been subjected to FGM:
 - A girl or woman may have difficulty walking, sitting or standing and may even look uncomfortable.
 - A girl or woman may have frequent urinary, menstrual or stomach problems and may spend longer than normal in the bathroom.
 - There may be prolonged or repeated absences from school or college, particularly with noticeable behaviour changes (e.g. withdrawal or depression).
 - A girl or woman may be particularly reluctant to undergo normal medical examinations.

Local and National Picture

National

- The prevalence in the UK is difficult to estimate because of the hidden nature of the crime.
- A Home Office funded study by Equality Now and City University (July 2014), estimated that:
 - Approximately 60,000 girls aged 0-14 were born in England and Wales to mothers who had undergone FGM.
 - Approximately 103,000 women aged 15-49, 24,000 women aged 50 plus and 10,000 girls aged under-15 who have migrated to England and Wales are likely to be living with the consequences of FGM.
- The MPS investigated 46 allegations of FGM in 2008/09 and 58 in 2009/10. However, no prosecutions have been brought under the legislation prohibiting FGM.
- A report published by FORWARD in 2007 estimated that in 2001, 4.5% of maternities in Greater London were to women who were born in FGM practising countries and had undergone some form of FGM.

Local

- Over the four year period 1st October 2010 to 30th September 2014, there were four police recorded incidents of FGM in Royal Greenwich. All four were 'crime related incidents' and no offences were committed, as detailed below:
 - A male suspect was discussing FGM, which was reported by witnesses.
 - A rape victim disclosing that she had also been a victim of FGM as a child.
 - A mother who was due to leave the UK and was concerned about her child (mother had been victim of FGM).
 - A report that a victim had been taken out of the country in order to have FGM

performed.

- Of the two identified victims, one was aged 19 (when reported) and IC3 (Afro-Caribbean) and the other was aged 15 and IC4 (Asian); both lived in the SE18 area.
- For the period of September 2014 to December 2014, Lewisham and Greenwich NHS trust identified 49 women who have undergone FGM. Nationally, 1,946 newly identified cases were reported in this time.
- In July 2015, a local solicitor, Hudgell and Partners, working with the Her Centre, police and the local authority were successful in securing London's first FGM Protection Order to safeguard local children identified as at risk of FGM.

Resources for Professionals

- DVD for Secondary School Staff on How to Tackle FGM Issues: Available from Integrate Bristol, a charity that works towards equality and integration. www.integratebristol.org.uk
- Ending FGM Campaign Materials: Posters produced by the Home Office. _____
- FGM – A Councillor's Guide: Published by the Local Government Association and designed to provide councillors with an introduction to FGM (February 2015). Available [here](#).
- FGM Educational Resource for Nursing and Midwifery Staff: Produced by the Royal College of Nursing (2015). Available [here](#).
- FGM Fact File - Interactive Teaching Resource: Teaching resource by the Foundation for Women's Health Research and Development (FORWARD) for use in secondary schools as part of personal, social and health education. The overview is available [here](#) and the teachers pack is available [here](#).
- FGM: Guidelines to Protect Children and Women: Guidelines to support and assist frontline professionals, such as teachers, health professionals, police officers and social workers, in safeguarding children and protecting adults from the abuses associated with FGM (July 2014). Available [here](#).
- FGM National Clinical Group: Resource targeted at specialists, practitioners and educators in the UK and abroad, giving an overall context of FGM and its current standing within healthcare and political arenas. www.fgmnationalgroup.org
- FGM Prevention Programme: Requirements for NHS staff (December 2014). Available [here](#).
- Home Office FGM Unit: Co-ordinates efforts across government, provides outreach support to local areas and acts as a hub for effective practice. fgmenquiries@homeoffice.gsi.gov.uk
- London FGM Resource Pack: Produced by London Safeguarding Children Board. Available [here](#).
- Responding to FGM: A guide for key professionals from FORWARD. Available [here](#).
- National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children (NSPCC) Helpline: 24 hour helpline offering advice and support for anybody with concerns about a child. 0800 5000 or www.nspcc.org.uk

Services for Victims

- Acton African Well Woman Clinic - Imperial College Healthcare NHS Trust: Provides counselling and support for women with FGM, a de-infibulation service for women with Type 3 FGM using local anaesthetic and a referral. 07956 001 065 or 0208 383 8761 or

07730970738

- African Well Women's Clinic - Whittington Hospital: Provides advice, counselling, ante natal care and assessment, de-infibulation, post-surgery and post natal follow up. 0207 2883482/3 or 07956257992
- African Women's Clinic - University College London Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust: Provides an FGM clinic and an affiliation with the urogynaecology service. 07944 241992
- Dahlia Project: Support group for women who have undergone FGM. Available [here](#).
- National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children (NSPCC) FGM Helpline: Available for anyone who is worried about a child who is at risk of FGM or has had FGM. www.nspcc.org.uk/fgm
- Queen Charlotte's & Chelsea Hospital African Well Woman Clinic - Imperial College Healthcare NHS Trust: Provides counselling and support for women with FGM, a de-infibulation service for women with Type 3 FGM using local anaesthetic, and a referral service for women with complex perineal trauma as a result of FGM. 07956 001 065 or 0208 383 8761 or 07730970738
- West London African Women's Service – Chelsea and Westminster Hospital NHS Trust: Provides sexual health, maternity and gynaecology advice and treatment for women affected by FGM. 020 3315 3344
- Childline (National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children): 24 hour helpline for young people. 0800 1111 or www.childline.org.uk
- Greenwich Domestic Violence and Abuse Services: Provides a specialist Information Line, outreach and accommodation services for women and children experiencing domestic abuse. www.gdva.org.uk
- Her Centre: Provides support and advocacy for victims residing in Royal Greenwich. 0203 260 7772 or www.hercentre.org
- Metropolitan Police Service Community Safety Unit: Every London borough has a team of specially trained officers whose task is to investigate crimes of domestic abuse. Available [here](#).
- Victim Support: Provides emotional support and practical information for all victims of crime. 0808 1689 111 or www.victimsupport.org.uk

Further Information

This information has been taken from the Violence Against Women and Girls Strategy 2015-18. For more information contact the Safer Communities Team on 020 8921 8396 or community-safety@royalgreenwich.gov.uk