

7 Minute Briefing

July 2024

1 Background

Female genital mutilation (FGM) is widespread in 30 countries, primarily in Africa, Middle East, and Asia, including among migrants. It is a global issue affecting girls in the UK and abroad.

2 Why it matters

Over 200 million girls and women have undergone Female Genital Mutilation (FGM), a harmful practice with no health benefits, leading to physical and psychological consequences. It can occur at various stages of life and is not linked to any religion, sometimes associated with forced marriage and honour-based violence.

3 The Law

Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) is illegal in the UK with penalties including up to 14 years imprisonment. The Female Genital Mutilation Act 2003, amended by the Serious Crime Act 2015, offers lifelong anonymity for victims, FGM Protection Orders, and mandates professionals to report known cases involving individuals under 18 to the police.

4 Risk Indicators

- Mother has undergone FGM
- Girl discusses special occasion/ceremony to 'become a woman' /prepare for marriage
- Long holiday abroad/ going 'home' visiting family
- Unexpected absence from school and is from a practicing community
- Avoids exercise
- Spends longer in bathroom and has recurrent urinary, menstrual or stomach problems
- Difficulty walking, standing or sitting
- Reluctant to undergo routine medical examinations

5 Key Guidance

Home Office co-ordinates efforts and offers outreach support to local areas. [Multi-agency statutory guidance on FGM \(Home Office, April 2016\)](#). [Mandatory Reporting Guidance \(Home office 2016\)](#). Further documents and resources for professionals are available [here](#).

6 What To Do

- Follow local FGM protocol
- Speak to your team lead/ safeguarding lead If you think a child is in immediate danger - call the police
- [Training: ELFH FGM Training](#)
- Local Safeguarding Adult Board or Safeguarding Children Partnership Training

7 Support

[National FGM support clinics](#)

[Womankind Worldwide](#)

Questions:

- Do you routinely consider FGM?
- Do you know what FGM is and how to spot the signs
- Do you use independent interpreters?
- Do you know what to do if you suspect/find FGM