

Female Genital Mutilation – Factsheet for staff

What do you need to know?

- FGM is deliberate cutting, injury or change to female genitals, with no medical reason.
- It's illegal in the UK, including if a girl is taken abroad for it, and is a form of child abuse.
- It happens for cultural, religious and social reasons.
- It's a form of honour-based abuse, where crimes are committed to protect or defend the honour of the family or community.
- It can cause long-term physical problems (e.g., constant pain, repeated infections leading to infertility, and problems with sex, labour and childbirth) and problems with mental health.
- Girls are more at risk in the summer holidays, as this gives them time to “heal” before going back to school.
- It most commonly happens between the ages of 5 and 9.

Your duty to report FGM.

- Teachers have a statutory duty to report known cases of FGM on girls under 18 to the police. It's not enough to tell the DSL – you must report it yourself. You should make the report by the end of the next working day, and must make it within 1 month.
- This duty applies if:
 - A girl discloses to you that FGM has been carried out on her (if someone else tells you about FGM happening to a girl, the duty doesn't apply, but you must still report it to the DSL).
 - You see visual signs.
- As a teacher, you might see signs if you're helping a young child in the toilet or changing. If this happens, make a report, but don't further examine the child yourself.
- Even if you're not a teacher, you still have a duty to report it to the DSL as part of your safeguarding responsibilities.

What to look for.

- Signs that a girl might be at risk of FGM:
 - She comes from a family with a history of FGM or from a community known to practice FGM (there are FGM-practicing communities in many parts of Africa, the Middle East and Asia)
 - She or her family have a limited level of integration within UK community
 - Her family is not engaging with professionals or is already known to social care
 - She is from an FGM-practicing community and her family withdraws her from personal, social, health and economic education or relationships and sex education
 - You hear references to FGM in conversation
 - She confides she is going to have a special procedure or attend a special occasion to become a woman, or her friends share something similar
 - She talks about a long holiday to a country where FGM is prevalent, or her parents talk about taking her out of the country for a long period
 - She is unexpectedly absent from school
- Signs that a girl may have undergone FGM – she:
 - Asking for help, but not being explicit about the problem (due to embarrassment or fear)
 - Confides that FGM has taken place – this could be the girl or a family member
 - Has difficulty walking, sitting or standing, or looks uncomfortable
 - Finds it hard to sit still for long periods of time, and this wasn't a problem previously
 - Has been absent from school or college repeatedly or for a prolonged period of time
 - Is withdrawn or depressed, there's significant change in her behaviour, or she has other increased emotional and psychological needs
 - Talks about pain or discomfort between her legs
 - Spends longer than normal in the bathroom or toilet
 - Avoids PE and exercise
 - Has frequent urinary, menstrual or stomach problems
 - Talking about something somebody did to them that they're not allowed to talk about
 - Changing how they dress from tight to loose-fitting clothing

What to do.

- Be alert to the potential need for early help for a child who's at risk of FGM.
- If you have concerns that FGM has happened or might happen, speak to the DSL (or deputy) as soon as possible, and make a written record. Don't examine a pupil yourself.

Further Information and training.

[Mandatory reporting of FGM: procedural information, GOV.UK – Department for Education \(DfE\) and Home Office](#)

<https://fgmelearning.vc-enable.co.uk/Register/>

[Female genital mutilation: resource pack](#)

[Overview: FGM](#)

[Protecting children from FGM, NSPCC](#)

[FGM, World Health Organization](#)