

What is FGM?

The term Female Genital Mutilation FGM has been defined by the World Health Organisation as all procedures involving partial or total removal of the external female genitalia or other injury to the female genitalia for non-medical or cultural reasons¹. In the UK all types of FGM are prevalent with an estimation of around 137,000 women who have experienced or undergone FGM³. FGM has no health benefits and is actively harmful and painful to women and girls. It is mainly practiced in 28 African countries, parts of the Middle East and parts of Central and South America. With increased immigration the practice has spread to Europe, North America, and Australia. There is no basis in any religious writings for the practice of FGM: it is an ancient and deeply rooted cultural practice that varies between communities, tribes, and families. It is important to note that some girls may not realise that they have had this done or that their cycle isn't 'normal'.

Types of FGM

There are four main types of Female Genital Mutilation¹:

Type I – Clitoridectomy: Partial or total removal of the clitoris and/or the prepuce (the clitoral hood or fold of skin surrounding the clitoris).

Type II – Excision: Partial or total removal of the clitoris and the inner labia with or without the excision of the outer labia.

Type III – Infibulation: Narrowing of the vaginal opening by creating a covering seal. The seal is formed by cutting and repositioning the inner or outer labia, with or without the removal of the clitoris.

Type IV – Other: All other harmful procedures to the female genitalia for non-medical purposes. This includes but is not limited to pricking, piercing, incising, scraping, and cauterising (burning) the genital area.



One Minute Guide

Female Genital Mutilation (FGM)

June 2023

FGM and the Law

Female Genital Mutilation has been illegal within the UK since 1985 and is a form of child abuse. There is a maximum penalty of 14 years' imprisonment for this crime². It is not only illegal to carry out FGM within the UK but also to plan to take a child to another country for the procedure, even if the cutting procedure is not illegal in the destination country. A parent or carer may be investigated for 'failure to protect' if that child is cut even if they are not present. To see more please use the [FGM Legal Factsheet](#).

Signs that FGM may have occurred



Prolonged absence from school



Frequent need to go to the toilet



Long break to urinate



Urinary tract infections



Noticeable behaviour changes



Talk of something somebody did to them that they are not allowed to talk about



Change of dress from tight to loose fitting clothing



Menstrual problems - including irregularity or absence of a regular cycle



Difficulty in sitting down comfortably



Complaints of pain between their legs

Indicators

The girl may confide that she is going to have a special procedure or ceremony that will make her a woman or ready for marriage. If the family belong to a community where FGM is practiced there might be talk of a holiday or an absence from school. A female relative being cut is also an indicator.

Reporting FGM

If you think a child may be at risk of FGM, you must seek help and advice. If you think a child is in immediate danger, then contact the police on 999. If not, then you should inform Children's Services directly. Within education, the Designated Safeguarding Advisor should be informed. You should also Contact Coventry Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub on 024 7678 8555.

In 2015, a mandatory reporting duty came into force that requires health professionals, teachers and social care professionals to make a report to the police where, in the course of their professional duties, they either:

- Are informed by a girl under 18 that an act of FGM has been carried out on her
- Observe physical signs which appear to show FGM has been carried out on a girl under 18.

Please note that the relevant age is the girl's age at the time of the disclosure/identification of FGM. It does not apply where a woman aged over 18 discloses FGM carried out when she was under 18 ².

Female Genital Mutilation Protection Order

An FGMPO is a legal means to protect and safeguard victims and potential victims of FGM. They are granted by a court and contain conditions to protect for example, they could order the surrender of a passport to prevent the person at risk being taken abroad.

Anyone (including children under 18) can apply for a FGMPO for themselves or somebody else. It is free of charge to apply, and the link can be found in the Further Information section⁴.

What are the Health Risks?

Immediate Risks

- Excruciating pain
- Shock
- Excessive Bleeding
- Infections including tetanus, sepsis, and HIV
- Organ damage
- Urine retention
- Death

Long-term Risks

- Chronic pain
- Infections
- Abscesses
- Difficulty in menstruation
- Difficulty in pregnancy and childbirth
- Infertility and damage to reproductive systems
- Recurrent bladder infections
- Post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD)
- Depression
- Flashbacks
- Self-harm and mental health problems

As stated on the National FGM Centre Website ¹

If you are interested in further training on this topic, please contact us via email at training@coventry.gov.uk

Key Contacts and Further Information

[Coventry Safeguarding Children Partnership](#) ¹[The National FGM Centre](#)

²[Coventry City Council FGM guidance](#) ³[FGM migrant health guide](#) ⁴[FGMPO Information](#)

[Petals for professionals Coventry](#)

[Coventry Haven FGM](#)

[FGM Resource Pack](#)

[NSPCC FGM Helpline](#)

[FGM Awareness Webinar Coventry City Council](#)