



# Female Genital Mutilation

Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) comprises all procedures involving partial or total removal of the external female genitalia or other injury to the female genital organs.

FGM is illegal in the UK and **mandatory** reporting to the Police will commence in October 2015.

FGM is classified as a form of child abuse for girls under 18 years old, with long-lasting harmful consequences.

Girls who are threatened with, or who have undergone FGM may withdraw from education, restricting their educational and personal development.

They may feel unable to go against the wishes of their parents and consequently may suffer emotionally as well as physically.

## Indicators:

Staff may become aware of a student because:

- She appears anxious, depressed and withdrawn
- Her educational performance, aspirations or motivation may decline
- She absents herself from lessons, possibly spending prolonged periods in the bathroom
- Her friends report their concerns

Girls may be most at risk during the summer holiday, so staff may wish to pay particular attention in the summer term, and when girls return to school or college in the autumn.

## Education settings can create an 'open' and supportive environment by:

- Circulating and displaying materials about FGM
- Making a private telephone available for students to seek advice discreetly
- Raising mandatory reporting duty & awareness of FGM among all staff, e.g. training, briefing sessions, guidance, etc.
- Ensuring that the safeguarding team is fully aware of the issues around FGM
- Introducing FGM into the school curriculum within relevant classes, such as PSHE, Sex and Relationship Education (SRE), Science and Citizenship.

## Actions:

- Talk about FGM professionally & sensitively
- Explain that FGM is illegal in the UK and that they will be protected by the law
- If you are concerned that a student is at immediate risk of, or has undergone FGM, you **must** inform your Designated Safeguarding Lead or Deputy (DSL/D) **immediately**

## The DSL/D must:

- Make an **immediate** referral into Children's Social Care for further investigation alongside the Police and health services
- Talk to the student about why they have made a referral (particularly if against their wishes)

## Staff should not:

- Examine a student (unless part of their normal personal care, e.g. nappy-changing, disability care etc.)
- Treat such concerns as a 'domestic' issue
- Ignore what the student has told them or dismiss the need for immediate protection
- Decide that it is not their responsibility to follow up the allegation
- Discuss their concerns with the student's family or community, in advance of any enquiries by the police, adult or children's social care

Agencies will always work with parents & wider family on a voluntary basis to prevent the abuse, including community leaders & organisations.

In all situations the girl should be offered counselling and medical help, and assess other related females who may be at risk.

## Useful resources:

- **Female genital mutilation: guidelines to protect children and women**, HO & DFE 14
- Sheffield Safeguarding Children Board Child Protection and Safeguarding Procedures Manual – **Female Genital Mutilation**
- Sheffield Safeguarding Children Board (SSCB) **FGM fact sheet**