

7-minute briefing:

Female genital mutilation (FGM)

1. Background

Female genital mutilation (FGM) comprises all procedures that involve partial or total removal of the external female genitalia, or other injury to the female genital organs for non-medical reasons. It is a practice that takes place worldwide in at least 28 African countries and in parts of the Middle and Far East. It also takes place within parts of Western Europe and other developed countries, primarily among immigrant and refugee communities where FGM is believed to be a way of ensuring virginity and chastity. The procedure will be carried out shortly after birth, during childhood or adolescence, just before marriage or during a woman's first pregnancy. The practice is not required for religion.

7. What to do?

If you work with children and / or families, please complete the Home Office FGM awareness training, available [here](#)

If you have concerns about the safety of a child or young person, you must complete a referral to children's social care (MASH).

6. Questions

Bexley Solace offer support to any victim regardless of gender, age or sexuality. Solace offer a Children's Independent Domestic Abuse Advisor to provide emotional and practical support to a child or young person. For support on risk assessment and safety planning contact Solace on 020 3198 4659. Bexley.solacewomensaid.org

The [NSPCC](#) also has resources on their website and details of their helpline.

One Stop Shop every Wednesday
 12.30 -3pm at Central Library
[Bexleyheath](#).

5. Outside pressure

Often parents themselves can experience pressure to agree to FGM for their children. It is important to recognise that those seeking to arrange the cutting are unlikely to perceive it to be harmful. Whilst every attempt should be made to work with parents / carers on a voluntary basis to prevent FGM, the safety of the child must be paramount.

2. Why it matters

FGM is child abuse and a form of violence against women and girls which has immediate and long-term health consequences including severe pain and blood loss, shock, mental health problems, complications in childbirth and / or death. It is believed that FGM may happen to girls in the UK as well as overseas. Girls of school age subjected to FGM overseas are likely to be taken abroad (often to the family's country of origin) at the start of the school holidays, particularly in the summer, for there to be sufficient time for them to recover before returning to school.

3. Information

FGM is illegal in England & Wales. As amended by the Serious Crime Act 2015, the FGM Act 2003 now includes: an offence of failing to protect a girl from the risk of FGM; Extra-territorial jurisdiction over offences of FGM committed abroad by UK nationals and those habitually (as well as permanently) resident in the UK; lifelong anonymity for victims of FGM; FGM Protection Orders; and a mandatory reporting duty which requires specified professionals to report known cases of FGM in under 18s to police.

4. Information

Signs that a girl or young woman may be at risk include:

- The family comes from a community that is known to practice FGM
- Mother has been subjected to FM
- Family not well integrated into UK society
- Parents have poor access to information on the harmful impact of FGM
- Parents state that they or a relative will take the child out of the country for a prolonged period
- A child may confide to a professional that she is to have a 'special procedure' or to attend a special occasion.



For further information about domestic abuse services in Bexley please visit

www.bexleydomesticabuseservices.org or visit www.gov.uk or www.safelives.org.uk