

Fact Sheet – Female Genital Mutilation (FGM)

What is FGM?

FGM is when a woman or girl's genitals are deliberately cut, injured or changed for no medical reason. The practice can cause severe pain and there may be immediate and/or long-term consequences, including mental health problems or difficulties in childbirth. The consequences may also be fatal.

It is usually carried out on young girls between infancy and 15 years old but can be carried out on adult women.

FGM is illegal in England, Wales & Northern Ireland under the Female Genital Mutilation Act 2003. The Serious Crime Act 2015 strengthened the legislative framework around tackling FGM.

Whilst FGM may be an isolated incident of abuse, it is important to recognise that it may also be associated with other forms of violence or abuse such as honor-based abuse or domestic abuse.

Prevalence of FGM

The prevalence of FGM in England and Wales is difficult to estimate because of the hidden nature of the crime. However, a 2015 study estimated that:

- approximately 60,000 girls aged 0-14 were born in England and Wales to mothers who had undergone FGM (see [Annex B](#) for risk factors); and
- approximately 103,000 women aged 15-49 and approximately 24,000 women aged 50 and over who have migrated to England and Wales are living with the consequences of FGM. In addition, approximately 10,000 girls aged under 15 who have migrated to England and Wales are likely to have undergone FGM.

Safeguarding children and adults

If any child (under the age of 18) discloses to a regulated professional that they have had FGM, or if a professional observes that the girl has

had FGM, they must report it to the Police, using the 101 non-emergency number.

There is no requirement for an automatic referral of adult women with FGM to adult social services or the Police. However, if the adult has care and support needs which mean they are unable to protect themselves from the abuse or risk of abuse, this should be reported to the relevant Local Authority safeguarding team.

Care and Support:

Health services

Women and girls who have had FGM can have a variety of different needs for care and support, and may seek help from a range of places.

The appropriate treatment will depend on the girl/woman's individual circumstances and an assessment of her needs. This will normally include considering her symptoms, type of FGM and whether she is pregnant. As with all health services, an individual care plan should be agreed with the patient and put in place to meet her specific needs.

The Department of Health FGM safeguarding pathway is available [here](#)

Read about [National FGM Support Clinics and where to find them](#).

Counselling and psychological support

Case histories and personal accounts taken from women indicate that FGM can be an extremely traumatic experience which stays with them for the rest of their lives.

National FGM Support Clinics are community based clinics that offer a range of support services for women who have experienced FGM, including emotional support and counselling.

For more information [click here](#)

NHS Services

The adult may also choose to contact a therapist themselves. The adult can refer themselves directly to an NHS talking therapies service without a referral from a GP.

[Find NHS talking therapies for anxiety and depression - NHS](#)

Legal interventions

Consider a Female Genital Mutilation Protection order [Get a female genital mutilation protection order - GOV.UK](#)

Voluntary organisations

Halo Project – Provides advice and support to victims of forced marriage, honor-based violence and female genital mutilation through a helpline and live chat. The Project can also offer advice to concerned relatives or friends.

Tel: 0164 268 3045 or 0808 178 8424 (freephone)

haloproject.org.uk

FORWARD – Provides advice, one-to-one support and signposting to other services for women and girls affected by any form of violence.

Tel: 0208 960 4000

E-Mail: support@forwarduk.org.uk

www.forwarduk.org.uk

Further support, guidance & resources:

[Multi-agency Statutory Guidance On Female Genital Mutilation](#)

NHS England: Female Genital Mutilation: A guide for health care professionals [click here](#)

[Female genital mutilation - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)

The National FGM Centre - [National FGM Centre – Developing excellence in response to FGM and other Harmful Practices](#)

NHS – Female Genital Mutilation – Overview [Click here](#)