

# Personal Development Resources

## Safeguarding - Female Genital Mutilation

Quick Guide



# Safeguarding - Female Genital Mutilation

**Female genital mutilation** is a collective term for procedures that remove part or all of the external female genitalia for cultural or other non-medical reasons.

Female genital mutilation is a form of child abuse.



## What is Female Genital Mutilation?

The issue is complex and despite its very severe health consequences, parents and others who have the procedure carried out on their daughters may not intend it, or regard it, as an act of abuse but as a cultural practice.

*It is estimated that more than 200 million girls and women alive today have undergone female genital mutilation in the countries where the practice is concentrated. Furthermore, there are an estimated 3 million girls at risk of undergoing female genital mutilation every year. The majority of girls are cut before they turn 15 years old.*

World Health Organisation website United Nations Children's Fund, Female Genital Mutilation/Cutting: A global concern, UNICEF, New York, 2016.

*"Figures show that FGM was listed in 1,960 social work assessments by councils in 2017/18, compared to 970 cases the previous year."* **Lizzie Dearden, The Independent**



## Indicators of FGM

- A conversation with a child may refer to female genital mutilation i.e. she may express anxiety about a "special procedure" or event that is to take place
- A prolonged absence from school and a noticeable change in the child's behaviour on their return, including a reluctance to take part in physical activity
- A prolonged family trip to the country of origin
- A child may spend long periods of time away from class during the day – perhaps indicating bladder or menstrual problems
- A midwife/obstetrician/gynaecologist/general practitioner may become aware that FGM has occurred when treating a female patient. This should trigger concern for other females in the household



## Female Genital Mutilation Act (2003)

The Female Genital Mutilation Act (2003) makes it an offence for UK nationals or permanent UK residents to carry out FGM abroad, or to aid, abet, counsel or procure the carrying out of FGM abroad, even in countries where the practice is legal (HM Government 2006)

Female genital mutilation is a criminal offence in the UK.



## What should I do if I suspect FGM?

**Raise your concern to t2's Safeguarding & Prevent Lead, Stacy Preston on 07876 824157.**

### What NOT to do

- Never keep concerns about a learner's safety to yourself.
- Do not make promises you can't keep – you cannot promise to keep secrets for learners.
- Do not panic or show that you are shocked about what is being said to you. It is important to remain calm and in control of your feelings. Remember that although this is new to you, the individual may have been living with this for a long time.
- Do not initiate physical contact.
- Do not ask intrusive questions. Listen but don't pry. Respect the individual's need for privacy. Remember they may have to re-tell their story later on, so you only need to gather enough information to help you make a decision about what to do next.
- Do not make interpretations or assumptions about what has been said to you.
- Don't jump to conclusions.