

Female Genital Mutilation Information to help



May 2024

Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) is the removal of part or all of the external female genitalia and/or injury to the female genital organs for cultural or other non-therapeutic reasons.

It is also known as cutting, and sometimes referred to as female circumcision, or as a girl 'having her bath'.

FGM has no health benefits and is not supported by any religion.

FGM is child abuse. This traditional practice is an extreme form of gender-based abuse, causing significant and lifelong physical and emotional harm.

FGM is a crime in Scotland:

It is against the law to carry out FGM, assist or arrange FGM for a child in Scotland or take a girl abroad for FGM (Prohibition of FGM (Scotland) Act 2005).

It is also possible for the Scottish Courts to impose FGM Protection Orders (FGM Protection & Guidance (Scotland) Act 2020).

Female Genital Mutilation, The Gambia and West Africa

73%

of women aged 15-49
have experienced FGM

- FGM is practiced in over 28 African Countries.
- Most people in the Gambia are aware of FGM.
- Most women were younger than age 5 when they were subjected to FGM.

(GDHS Health Survey, accessed 29/04/24).



The Gambia introduced a law to ban FGM in 2015. However, politicians and influential leaders are trying to overturn the ban and change the law.

This change is based on ill-founded views of upholding religious loyalty and safeguarding cultural values.

A decision on the new law in the Gambia is imminent but would put women and girls at risk.












West African Families and Communities in Edinburgh

We welcome and respect vibrant and diverse cultural communities in the city. We should be aware that parents and carers from the Gambia or other West African countries may be influenced in their views on FGM by their families, friends or other community leaders in the UK.

Also, Families returning to West Africa for a holiday or extended stay, may face undue pressure or coercion which can place the girls in their care at great risk. FGM can be performed in secret and often against the parents’ wishes.

Indicators of FGM

 <p>A girl discloses she has undergone FGM (if under 18, mandatory reporting applies)</p>	 <p>A parent/carer discloses they believe FGM is a requirement and/or indicates they plan to arrange FGM for their daughter.</p>	 <p>A girl has an older sibling/cousin who has already undergone FGM.</p>	 <p>A girl/sibling/cousin/third party discloses she or another girl is at risk of FGM or has undergone FGM.</p>	 <p>A girl discloses she is worried about a holiday and/or upcoming ceremony/coming of age party</p>
 <p>A girl returns from a holiday and appears to be in pain or discomfort, or is absent from school</p>	 <p>Parent(s)/carer(s) are going on holiday (to a country of prevalence) and are reluctant to discuss the details of the holiday with the school</p>	 <p>A girl's behaviour changes. She becomes withdrawn, depressed and doesn't take part in usual activities</p>	 <p>A girl has not returned from a holiday when she was supposed to, especially from a country where FGM is practiced</p>	

Given many of the indicators are linked to imminent travel, it is important to address this in a timely fashion before the school summer holidays.

Speaking to Parents/Carers

Before making a referral, we suggest you explore:

- your concerns with the parent(s)/carer(s) first (unless there is immediate danger) and advise them of any actions you need to take (unless it puts the girl at further risk);
- the ethnic group/tribe and country of origin the family are from or identify with;
- whether other family members have experienced FGM and what their attitudes are toward the practice;
- whether you have had any previous concerns about the family.

You are not alone. Speak to your safeguarding lead, consider other services that are involved, and what needs to happen to keep the girl safe.

Try to remember trauma informed and responsive principles when talking to a child and their family.

This is a sensitive subject for individuals & families to address, especially as they tell their own stories.

Reporting Concerns

Professionals in all agencies need to be confident and competent in sharing information appropriately, both to protect children from being abused through FGM and to enable children and women who have been abused through FGM to receive physical, emotional and psychological help.

FGM should always be seen as a cause of significant harm and the Multi-Agency Child Protection procedures should be invoked, by making a Child Protection Referral to [Social Care Direct](#) or by contacting 0131 200 2327.

Key Questions for holiday plans:

- **When** they are travelling and when they are due to return?
- **Where** they are travelling, as specific as possible?
- **Who** they are travelling with?
- **What** are they planning to do on the trip?

Include this information in the referral to public protection services.

Speaking to a Young Person

Depending on the age and stage of the child or young person, you may explore their views and feelings about a holiday or other up-coming circumstances of concern (unless there is immediate danger).

As with any child protection concern, you should reassure the child and explain any actions you need to take.

Further Advice

Please follow the [Edinburgh & Lothians Inter-Agency Procedures for the Protection of Girls and Women at Risk of Female Genital Mutilation \(FGM\)](#).

There are also leaflets and posters available for the public on the [Scottish Government Website](#).

If you would like more guidance and support on FGM or to make a referral for support in the community, the following organisations and services can help:

Aditi

Provides one to one mental health and wellbeing support to Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) women in a range of languages who are affected by domestic and honour-based abuse.

0131 603 4865

aditi@sacro.org.uk

Amina – The Muslim Women’s resource centre

Offers a range of tailored support services on a one to one basis, national ‘listening ear’ helpline which also offers Islamic advice through a scholar, employability guidance, befriending, as well as through peer group support.

0141 212 8420

0808 801 0301

[Visit Amina](#)

Bright Choices

Supports any woman, man, child or family affected by honour based violence, including forced marriage and Female Genital Mutilation (FGM). This service is provided by the Multicultural Family Base.

0131 622 7500

[Visit Multicultural Family Base](#)

Children 1st

Children 1st supports children in Scotland to live in safe, loving families and to build strong communities. They provide holistic family support and trauma recovery in neighbourhoods across Scotland and work with children, young people and their families to uphold and progress their rights and to strengthen and improve the systems that are there to support them.

08000 28 22 33 available Monday to Friday between 9am and 9pm and Saturday and Sunday between 9am and 12pm

cfs@children1st.org.uk

[Visit the Children 1st](#)

Saheliya

Is a Women’s mental health organisation, which provides services to support the mental health and wellbeing of black, minority ethnic, asylum seeker, refugee and migrant women and girls age +12 in Edinburgh.

0131 556 9302

[Visit Saheliya](#)

Scottish Women’s Rights Centre

Offers free and confidential information and advice. Also offers weekly surgeries in Glasgow.

08088 010 789 available Tuesdays 6pm to 9pm, Wednesdays 1.30pm to 4.30pm and Fridays 10am to 1pm

Scotland's Domestic Abuse and Forced Marriage helpline

Provides help, advice and information in absolute confidence, 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

0800 027 1234

helpline@sdafmh.org.uk

[Visit Scotland's Domestic Abuse and Forced Marriage helpline](#)

Passion 4 Fusion

A Scottish Black and Minority Ethnic organisation motivated to create support structures to meet the needs of diverse ethnic communities, particularly of young women and girls.

0131 210 0192

[Visit Passion 4 Fusion](#)

Shakti Women's Aid

Based in Edinburgh, Shakti helps women who are experiencing domestic abuse and 'honour' based abuse. They offer support and information to all black minority ethnic women over 16 years and their children.

0131 475 2399

[Visit Shakti Women's Aid](#)

Project Esperanza

Based in Edinburgh, Project Esperanza offer practical, emotional and integration support to families of African heritage and other multi-ethnic backgrounds.

07305774133

[Visit Project Esperanza](#)

Fantanka Diaspora

Support Project for women and girls of African or Caribbean heritage in Scotland.

07429944340

info@fantaka.org