



## One Minute Guide



### What is Female Genital Mutilation or FGM?

The World Health Organisation defines FGM as “...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”.

The Female Genital Mutilation Act 2003 (as amended) narrows the definition of FGM **to not include**:

- a surgical operation on a girl that was necessary for her physical or mental health, or
- a surgical operation on a girl who was in any stage of labour, or had just given birth, for purposes connected with the labour or birth

### Do I have to notify the Police if I believe someone has been the victim of FGM?

Where a person is in a regulated profession (i.e. a teacher, social worker or healthcare professional) and in the course of their work they believe that that an act of female genital mutilation appears to have been carried out on a girl who is aged under 18 years, **they must notify the police**.

### What does it mean for me?

Where you have concerns that a girl who is aged under 18 years has been the victim of, or is at risk of FGM (either through a disclosure from her or appears to have signs which indicate FGM), you are under a legal duty to notify the Police.

Concerns should be made to the 101 non-emergency crime number. This should normally be close of the **next working day**. Longer timeframes are allowed under exceptional circumstances but always discuss with your local safeguarding lead. If you are working with children and young people and you do not comply, your professional regulator may consider the circumstances under the existing ‘Fitness to Practise’ proceedings.

### What about referring to the Children and Families Service?

If you believe that a child has been the victim of, or is at risk of FGM then you should also refer the child to the Children and Families Service by following the NYSCP Referral Process. This is not part of the legal duty to refer but is the action all professionals should take to ensure the safety and wellbeing of the child.

### What about adults who have been the victim of FGM?

You should contact the North Yorkshire County Council Customer Service Centre if you have ongoing concerns that an adult (of 18 years or older) has been the victim of, or at risk of FGM. You should consider:

- Is it in the adult’s vital interests to prevent serious harm or distress or life threatening situations
- Is it in the public interest e.g. there is also a risk to other children or adults
- Whether the adult has care and support needs
- Is the adult subject to coercion or undue influence, to extent that they are unable to give consent?
- Does the adult lack the mental capacity to consent to a referral to Health and Adult Services and it is in the adult’s best interests

To raise a concern you should complete the [Raising a Concern Form](#).

Further information is available from:

- <https://www.northyorks.gov.uk/safeguarding-vulnerable-adults>

### Is there anything else I should consider if I identify or suspect that a girl or woman has been the victim of FGM?

In all cases, irrespective of the age of the person you believe has been the victim of FGM you should consider:

- Whether there are any other females in the

household at risk of FGM (e.g. children or adults)

- Whether there are any other safeguarding concerns
- Whether the person reporting, or suspected of having been the victim of FGM wishes to have their care and support needs assessed

### Indications that FGM may be about to happen

There is no clear proof for an imminent FGM but there are indicators which can possibly suggest that a girl or woman is facing FGM:

- Has the family migrated from a county with high prevalence/acceptance of FGM?
- Does the family keep themselves without interacting a lot with the majority of society?
- Has the family planned a trip to one of the parents or grandparents home countries? Do they talk about festivities or ceremonies?
- Do the parents and or the girl/woman believe in traditional and complementary gender roles and do they value their ancestors' customs and traditions generally?
- Does the family trivialise or justify FGM?
- Are there any cases of FGM known within the family?

NOTE: These are weak indicators and not proof of imminent FGM. Each case should be considered individually.

FGM is not necessarily connected to other forms of child abuse or domestic violence. Parents often subject their daughters to FGM because they love them and want the best for them. A family being loving, trustful and intact is not an indicator for a safe home.

### Where can I find out more information?

Further information is available in the NYSCP Female Genital Mutilation Practice Guidance and the NYSCP Referral Process, both of which are available from:

- [www.safeguardingchildren.co.uk](http://www.safeguardingchildren.co.uk)

### Indications that FGM may have already taken place

A person who has been a victim of FGM may not be willing to discuss what has happened to them, but there are indicators which can indicate FGM may have taken place:

- A child or young person may spend long periods of time away from the classroom during the day with urinary or menstrual problems. Frequently females who have undergone FGM find it harder to urinate and it will therefore take longer to pass urine
- There may be prolonged absences from school with noticeable behaviour changes on the child or young person's return
- A child or young person requiring to be excused from physical exercise lessons without the support of their GP and very often using the excuse that females of her faith can't exercise
- A child or young person may confide in a professional or ask for help
- Professionals encountering a child or young person who has undergone FGM should be alert to the risk of FGM in relation to:
  - Younger siblings
  - Daughters they may have in the future
  - Extended family members.

### FGM Protection Orders

An FGMPO is a legal means to protect and safeguard victims and potential victims of FGM. They are granted by a court and contain conditions to protect girls and women, for example they could order the surrender of a passport to prevent the person at risk from being taken abroad.

Anyone (including children under 18) can apply for an FGMPO for themselves or somebody else. There is no charge.

For more information visit:

- <https://www.gov.uk/female-genital-mutilation-protection-order> or see the [Factsheet](#)