



FGM is illegal in the UK. 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. UK communities that are at risk of FGM include Somali, Kenyan, Ethiopian, Sierra Leonean, Sudanese, Egyptian, Nigerian, Eritrean, Yemeni, Kurdish and Indonesian women and girls.

FGM is a complex issue - despite the harm it causes, many women and men from practising communities consider it to be normal to protect their cultural identity.

FGM is believed to be a way of ensuring virginity and chastity. It is used to safeguard girls from sex outside marriage and from having sexual feelings. Although FGM is practised by secular communities, it is most often claimed to be carried out in accordance with religious beliefs. FGM is not supported by any religious doctrine.

Criminal law in England and Wales

Under section 1 of the act, a person is guilty of an FGM offence if they excise, infibulate or otherwise mutilate the whole or any part of a girl's or woman's labia majora, labia minora or clitoris. To excise is to remove part or all of the clitoris and the inner labia (lips that surround the vagina), with or without removal of the labia majora (larger outer lips). To infibulate is to narrow the vaginal opening by creating a seal, formed by cutting and repositioning the labia.

Safeguarding

The action we take to promote the welfare of children and protect them from harms such as FGM is everyone's responsibility. Everyone who comes into contact with children and families has a role to play. More information is available in the following guidance:

- [Working together to safeguard children \(England\)](#)
- [Working together to safeguard children \(Wales\)](#)
- In 2014 the government published updated [multi-agency guidelines on FGM](#) for professionals, including teachers, GPs, nurses and the police.
- The guidelines aim to raise awareness of FGM, highlight the risks that people should be aware of, and set out clearly the steps that should be taken to safeguard girls and women from this abuse. FGM is a form of child abuse and violence against women and girls, and therefore should be dealt with as part of existing child and adult protection structures, policies and procedures.
- The Serious Crime Act 2015 includes provision for statutory guidance on FGM. This will help to increase awareness of FGM and improve compliance with good practice, and to increase referrals and reports to the police and afford victims and survivors of FGM the greatest possible protection.

Mandatory reporting of FGM

- Since 31 October 2015, regulated health and social care professionals and teachers in England and Wales have been legally required to report known cases of FGM in under 18-year-olds, which they identify in the course of their professional work, to the police.

Sourced from Home Office FGM resource pack updated 24 November 2015