Spilsby Playgroup

Female Genital Mutilation Policy

FGM

2026

Female genital mutilation (FGM)

Staff should be alert to symptoms that would indicate that FGM has occurred, or may be about to occur, and take appropriate safeguarding action. Designated safeguarding leads should contact the police immediately as well as refer to children's services local authority social work if they believe that FGM may be about to occur.

It is illegal to undertake FGM or to assist anyone to enable them to practice FGM under the Female Genital Mutilation Act 2003, it is an offence for a UK national or permanent UK resident to perform FGM in the UK or overseas. The practice is medically unnecessary and poses serious health risks to girls. FGM is mostly carried out on girls between the ages of 0-15, statistics indicate that in half of countries who practise FGM girls were cut before the age of 5. LSP guidance must be followed in relation to FGM, and the designated person is informed regarding specific risks relating to the culture and ethnicity of children who may be attending their setting and shares this knowledge with staff.

Symptoms of FGM in very young girls may include difficulty walking, sitting or standing; painful urination and/or urinary tract infection; urinary retention; evidence of surgery; changes to nappy changing or toileting routines; injury to adjacent tissues; spends longer than normal in the bathroom or toilet; unusual and /or changed behaviour after an absence from the setting (including increased anxiety around adults or unwillingness to talk about home experiences or family holidays); parents are reluctant to allow child to undergo normal medical examinations; if an older sibling has undergone the procedure a younger sibling may be at risk; discussion about plans for an extended family holiday

Further guidance

NSPCC 24-hour FGM helpline: 0800 028 3550 or email fgmhelp@nspcc.org.uk

Government help and advice: www.gov.uk/female-genital-mutilation

Legislation, policy and guidance

It is illegal to carry out FGM in the UK. It is also a criminal offence for UK nationals or permanent UK residents to perform FGM overseas or take their child abroad to have FGM carried out. The maximum penalty for FGM is 14 years' imprisonment.

Key legislation

In England, Northern Ireland and Wales, the Female Genital Mutilation Act 2003 sets out the law surrounding FGM.

What is Female Genital Mutilation (FGM)?

FGM is when a female's genitals are deliberately altered or removed for non-medical reasons. It's also known as 'female circumcision' or 'cutting', but has many other names; female circumcision, cutting, sunna, gudniin, halalays, tahur, megrez, khitan.

FGM is a form of child abuse. It's dangerous and a criminal offence in the UK.

FGM can happen at different times in a girl or woman's life, including:

- when a baby is new-born
- during childhood or as a teenager
- just before marriage
- during pregnancy

A child who's at risk of FGM might ask you for help. But some children might not know what's going to happen to them. So it's important to be aware of the signs.

Signs FGM might happen:

- A relative or someone known as a 'cutter' visiting from abroad.
- A special occasion or ceremony takes place where a girl 'becomes a woman' or is 'prepared for marriage'.
- A female relative, like a mother, sister or aunt has undergone FGM.
- A family arranges a long holiday overseas or visits a family abroad during the summer holidays.
- A girl has an unexpected or long absence from school.
- A girl struggles to keep up in school.
- A girl runs away – or plans to run away - from home.

Signs FGM might have taken place:

- Having difficulty walking, standing or sitting.
- Spending longer in the bathroom or toilet.
- Appearing quiet, anxious or depressed.
- Acting differently after an absence from school or college.
- Reluctance to go to the doctors or have routine medical examinations.
- Asking for help – though they might not be explicit about the problem because they're scared or embarrassed.

If a child reveals abuse

A child who has faced, or is worried about FGM, might not realise what's happening is wrong. And they might even blame themselves. If a child talks to you about FGM it's important to:

- listen carefully to what they're saying
- let them know they've done the right thing by telling you
- tell them it's not their fault
- say you'll take them seriously
- don't confront the alleged abuser
- explain what you'll do next
- report what the child has told you as soon as possible.

Responding to FGM

Providing support

If a child has already undergone FGM, they should be offered medical help and counselling. You should also take action to protect any other children in the family and to investigate possible risk to others in the community. Spilsby Playgroup will work with Lincolnshire Children's Services in ensuring the necessary support is provided to the child and the family.

Reporting

Mandatory reporting

In **England**, regulated health and social care professionals and teachers have a mandatory duty to make a report to the police if:

- they are informed by a child under the age of 18 that they have undergone FGM
- they observe physical signs that an act of FGM may have been carried out on a child under the age of 18 (Section 74 Serious Crime Act 2015).

The Mandatory reporting of female genital mutilation - procedural information (Home Office, 2016) sets out this duty in further detail. See appendix 1.

If we think that a child may be at risk of FGM or if we suspect that FGM has already occurred, we:

- Will contact the police as a part of our mandatory duty.
- We will refer to Lincolnshire Children's Safeguarding Team.

If we think a child is in immediate danger, we will contact the police on 999.

If we're worried about a child but they are not in immediate danger, we will share our concerns by;

- Contacting Lincolnshire Children's Safeguarding Team as in our Child Protection Policy..
- Contact the FGM helpline on 0800 028 3550 or by emailing fgmhelp@nspcc.org.uk.

Record keeping

Throughout the process, we will;

- Ensure that we keep a comprehensive record of any discussions held and subsequent decisions made, in line with standard safeguarding practice.
- Record the circumstances surrounding the initial identification or disclosure of FGM,
- details of any safeguarding actions which were taken, and
- The date our concerns were reprted
- How we reported and to who, including any reference numbers.
- Throughout the playgroup DSL will work with the owner manager.

Informing the child's family

In line with safeguarding best practice, we will contact the girl's parents or guardians as appropriate to explain the report, why it is being made, and what it means. Wherever possible, we will have this discussion in advance of/in parallel to the report being made.

However, if we believe that telling the parents about the report may result in a risk of serious harm to the child or anyone else, or of the family fleeing the country, we will not discuss it.

Advice and support will be sought from Lincolnshire Safeguarding Team.

Appendix 1

Making a report to the police

It is recommended that a report be made orally by calling 101, the single non-emergency number.

When you call 101, the system will determine your location and connect you to the police force covering that area. You will hear a recorded message announcing the police force you are being connected to. You will then be given a choice of which force to be connected to – if you are calling with a report relating to an area outside the force area which you are calling from, you can ask to be directed to that force.

Calls to 101 are answered by trained police officers and staff in the control room of the local police force. The call handler will log the call and refer it to the relevant team within the force, who will call you back to ask for additional information and discuss the case in more detail.

You should be prepared to provide the call handler with the following information:

- explain that you are making a report under the FGM mandatory reporting duty
- your details:
    - name
    - contact details (work telephone number and e-mail address) and times when you will be available to be called back
    - role
    - place of work
- details of your organisation's designated safeguarding lead:
    - name
    - contact details (work telephone number and e-mail address)
    - place of work
- the girl's details:
    - name
    - age/date of birth

    - address
- if applicable, confirm that you have undertaken, or will undertake, safeguarding actions, as required by the Working Together to Safeguard Children (in England)