



[www.safeguardingchildren.stoke.gov.uk](http://www.safeguardingchildren.stoke.gov.uk)

## NEW Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) Duty on Schools

Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) is the non-medical partial or total removal of the external female genital organs. This procedure is typically carried out on young girls, although it can happen later. FGM is illegal in the UK and particularly affects girls from Africa.

Since 1985 it has been a serious criminal offence under the Prohibition of Female Circumcision Act to perform FGM or to assist a girl to perform FGM on herself. The Female Genital Mutilation Act 2003 tightened this law to criminalise FGM being carried out on UK citizens overseas. Anyone found guilty of the offence faces a maximum penalty of 14 years in prison.

The Serious Crime Act 2015 strengthened further the legislation on FGM and now includes:

- the right to anonymity for victims
- the offence of failing to protect a girl aged under 16 from the risk of FGM
- the provision of Female Genital Mutilation Protection Orders (FGMPO); and
- the duty on professionals (including teachers) to notify police when they discover that FGM appears to have been carried out on a girl under 18.
  - NB For school staff this will occur from a disclosure and not a physical examination

Although at the time of writing there has never been a successful prosecution for an FGM offence, since the implementation of the Serious Crime Act 2015 police have made a number of FGMPOs.

**Professionals should note that girls at risk of FGM may not yet be aware of the practice or that it may be conducted on them, so sensitivity should always be shown when approaching the subject.**

FGM can occur anywhere in the UK. The most significant countries for FGM are:

- Burkina Faso
- Djibouti
- Egypt
- Eritrea
- Ethiopia
- Guinea
- Liberia
- Mali
- Mauritania

- Sierra Leone
- Somalia
- Sudan
- The Gambia

Although FGM takes place between birth and around 15 years old; it is believed that the majority of cases happen between the ages of 5 and 8.

Risk factors for FGM include:

- low level of integration into UK society
- mother or a sister who has undergone FGM
- girls who are withdrawn from PSHE
- visiting female elder from the country of origin
- being taken on a long holiday to the country of origin
- talk about a 'special' procedure to become a woman

**Further information:**

[FGM \(Serious Crime Act 2015\) Fact Sheet Ministry of Justice/Home Office](#)

[Female Genital Mutilation Multi-agency Guidelines](#)

**NSPCC FGM Helpline**

Telephone: 0800 028 3550

Email: [fgmhelp@nspcc.org.uk](mailto:fgmhelp@nspcc.org.uk)