What does a ‘known case of FGM’ mean and what does this mean to you?

A known case is when a child discloses they have had FGM or a parent discloses the child has had FGM or physical signs of FGM are observed by a professional.

Why do my female children have to be referred to children’s services, because I underwent FGM as a child?

In line with UK legislation and our local safeguarding procedures, any female infants in the care of a female who has undergone FGM are deemed as an increased safeguarding risk. In view of this, all children who are identified as being at an increased risk will require a safeguarding referral to children’s services. This is so that the health, safety and wellbeing of the child can be ensured. It also supports children’s services to ensure that the delivery of important information such as the legal and health complications can be discussed with you. This doesn’t mean that your health professional assumes you agree with FGM and would put your child at risk. It is more for information sharing purposes and to ensure the protection of children is met.

What can you do if you feel you are at risk of FGM or a friend/family member is in danger?

There are a number of places where help can be sought; your concerns can be discussed with any healthcare professional, social services, teachers, police or support agencies such as BAWSO, NSPCC.

If you are in the UK:
- NSPCC 24 hour helpline 0800 0283550 fgmhelp@nspcc.org.uk
- FORWARD on 0208 960 4000
- Police on 101

If you are in Cardiff, Wales:
- BAWSO 24 hour helpline 0800 7318147.
- Children’s Services 02920 536400 or 02920 788570 - Emergency Out of Hours
- Cardiff & Vale UHB - For advice: Lead FGM Midwife, Women’s Wellbeing Clinic, CHAP, CRI. 02920 335449 CAV_CHAP@wales.nhs.uk

If it is an emergency and you think you or someone you know are in immediate danger of FGM, ring the Police on 999.

If you are abroad then the Foreign and Commonwealth Office in the UK should be contacted immediately on +44 (0) 207 008 1500.

Female Genital Mutilation (FGM): Raising Awareness Patient Information

Cardiff & Vale FGM Lead Midwife
What is Female Genital Mutilation (FGM)?

FGM is a form of both Gender/Honour Based Violence and is a form of child abuse. It is a cultural practice that is usually carried out between infancy and up to the age of 15; with most reported cases performed prior to puberty. FGM can also be known as ‘Cutting’, ‘Circumcision’ or in other languages; terms such as ‘Sunna’, ‘Halalays’, ‘Bolokoli’ or ‘Tahur’.

It is an irreversible procedure where the female genitalia are deliberately cut, injured or changed for non-medical purposes (this can include pulling of the labia and genital piercing).

What are the health complications of FGM?

There are no health benefits for FGM and it can cause life-long harm for individuals.

Complications from FGM can include:

- Increased pain (Physical & Psychological)
- Repeat infections (Urine & Vaginal)
- Problems getting pregnant
- Excess bleeding, cysts or increased scarring
- Problems passing urine
- Period problems
- Pain during sex
- No sexual pleasure
- Flashbacks, depression or other psychological illness
- Pregnancy and childbirth complications

What should I expect from my health professional if I disclose I have had FGM?

Health professionals are there to support you with all your health needs; this includes both physical and psychological aspects of care.

Questions around FGM are becoming a routine question within health services. So health professionals may ask you questions such as ‘have you ever had FGM?’ or ‘do you intend to have your daughters cut?’ during routine health appointments. If you disclose you have had FGM, you can expect to be cared for by your health professional in a non-judgmental manner and with respect, privacy and dignity. If you have any language barriers and do not speak English, an interpreting system can be used. Please let your health professional know if you need any translation support.

There are different types of FGM and in order to provide you with the appropriate management and treatment on disclosure of FGM. The health professional caring for you, may ask for your consent to examine your genitalia. This will only be carried out with your consent.

Why might you be offered an examination?

The purpose of being offered an examination is because we are aware that FGM can carry with it health problems. In some cases, FGM may also require a procedure to ‘re-open’ the female genitalia in order to help improve the health and well-being for the individual. This procedure is known as de-infibulation. If you are offered a de-infibulation procedure by your health professional, further information will be provided to you before you make you make your decision.

What is the UK law around FGM?

FGM is a violation of human rights and is illegal under UK legislation. The FGM Act (2003) makes it an offence for UK nationals or anyone in the UK to:

- Perform FGM in the UK or abroad
- Assist the carrying out of FGM in the UK or abroad
- Assist a girl to carry out FGM on herself in the UK or abroad

The legislation is outlined in a small health passport ‘Statement Opposing FGM in the UK’ that can be printed in various languages:

It is worth taking this health passport with you when visiting your home country.

What is the health professional’s duty in relation to the recent amendments to the legislation (Serious Crime Bill 2015) & what does that mean for you?

In view of the recent changes to the legislation, your health professional has an obligation by law to report all ‘known cases’ of FGM in girls under the age of 18 to the police as well as children’s services. This duty is no different to reporting any other forms of abuse against children. The ‘mandatory reporting’ is for all females under the age of 18 who have a history of known FGM. If a referral is required, this will be done in a sensitive manner and discussed with you prior to referral.