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FEMALE GENITAL MUTILATION

Keeping your girls
safe from FGM:
Summer Holidays, the law and YOU

FORWARD

What is Female Genital Mutilation (FGM)?

Female genital mutilation (FGM), which is also called cutting or circumcision, involves the cutting or removal of the female genitals. This can mean anything from a prick to cutting and stitching. FGM is a human rights violation that is harmful to the health and wellbeing of girls and women.

Why are summer holidays important?

Summer holidays are a time when there is a high risk that FGM will happen to girls. This is because some families choose to do FGM over the summer holidays in the UK or may go to their home countries or abroad to have the practice done. This is also the time when families may come under pressure from relatives or friends in the UK or home country to have their daughters cut.

As a parent or guardian you have a duty to protect your girls from FGM at all times.



FGM is a criminal offence – it is child abuse and a form of violence against women and girls, and therefore should be treated as such.

- Home Office Multi-Agency
Statutory Guidance on FGM'

What is the UK LAW on FGM?

FGM has been illegal in the UK since 1985. It is also illegal to take a British girl or habitual British resident to another country to have FGM done or to help arrange for FGM to be done to a girl.

Anyone caught doing or arranging FGM will be sentenced to up to 14 years in prison and/or fined.

In 2015 new changes were made to the law on FGM. These changes include:

FGM Protection Orders – anyone can ask for a court to issue a protection order if they think that a girl is at risk of FGM. If the court believes that a girl is at risk of FGM they can give instructions to the family to protect that girl. For example, the court can seize the girl's passport or require that a girl is brought back to the UK from abroad.

Mandatory reporting duty - requires that all regulated professionals, including teachers, social care and health care professionals report to the police any known cases of FGM in girls under 18 years. Known cases are when a girl tells someone she has had FGM or it is seen by professionals in the course of their work.

Failure to Protect – parents have a legal duty to protect their daughters from FGM. This means that parents can be prosecuted if they do not prevent FGM happening to their daughter. For example, leaving a girl with a relative when you think FGM could be a risk and failing to ensure that your daughter does not undergo FGM.

Parents! What does the law mean for YOU?

As a parent or guardian you are responsible for protecting your children. It is important to understand what the law on FGM means and what will happen if you fail to protect your daughter from FGM. In the UK teachers, health professionals and the border police are all working to ensure that girls are not put at risk of FGM.

What can you do to ensure that your daughter is safe from FGM over the summer holiday?

- Speak to your extended family to make sure they know about the UK law and the legal consequences doing FGM to your daughter will have for you
- Share this leaflet with your family and friends
- Discuss the risks of doing FGM with all family members to ensure they understand and are able to protect your daughter from FGM
- Make sure you do not leave your daughter with people or in places where she may be at risk of FGM
- Develop a plan with your daughter so that she understands what FGM is, that no one is allowed to do it to her and that she must come to you if she thinks she is at risk of FGM.

What can you do if you are at risk?

What can you do if you feel at risk of FGM or want to protect your sister or friend from going through FGM? There are a number of places where you can seek help.

You can talk to your teacher, your GP or your school nurse about your concerns.

If you are in the UK you can also ring a support service especially for girls at risk of FGM, like the **NSPCC Helpline** on **0800 028 3550**, **FORWARD** on **0208 960 4000** or the **Police** on **101**. See the back of this leaflet for other contact details and information.

If it is an emergency and you think you or someone you know are at immediate risk of being taken out of the UK for FGM, ring one of the numbers above or the police on 999. If you do not have access to a phone, tell an official at the airport before you leave the country.

If you are abroad and think you are at risk of FGM then tell a trusted adult, tell them that it is illegal to be forced to go through FGM and show them this leaflet. If you are able to, get the number for the British High Commission for the country you are in, ring them and tell them. They have a duty to protect you from FGM in any country. You can find a list of High Commissions and their phone numbers on this website: www.gov.uk/government/world/organisations.

You can also seek help from the Foreign and Commonwealth Office in the UK on +44 (0) 207 008 1500.

I think FGM should not be happening so we should prevent this from happening. To do this, we should work together. I think all adults should know about this too. (Just in case!) This should stop in the UK!

- Girl, 8 years old, London



Contact details

FORWARD An African women-led charity that can provide support and advice
0208 960 4000, Ext 1
(Open Mon-Fri 10.00 - 17.30)
support@forwarduk.org.uk
www.forwarduk.org.uk

NSPCC FGM Helpline for support and advice
0800 028 3550
(Open 24 hours a day, 7 days a week)
fgmhelp@nspcc.org.uk

ChildLine For support and advice
0800 1111
(Open 24 hours a day, 7 days a week)

Police For reporting when you know a girl is at risk of FGM
101
(Open 24 hours a day, 7 days a week)