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Background

(HM Government, April 2016). This guidance sets out the obligations on all health, education and social care professionals who become aware of FGM or its possible/probable commission. FGM has 4 degrees of severity and has been classified as 'significant harm' for the purposes of the protection of children, by The Family Division of The High Court.

2

Why it matters

FGM is a procedure where the female genital organs are cut, removed, sutured closed, injured or changed and where there is no medical reason for this. It is a traumatic and violent act for the victim; performed in nonmedical settings, sometimes abroad, without aesthetic and may cause lasting physical and psychological harm.

3

Information

FGM is illegal in the UK under the Female Genital Mutilation Act 2003, as well as a mandatory reporting duty requiring health, education and social care professionals to report known and suspected cases of FGM in under 18s to the Police.

4

It is a cultural, not a religious practice and pre-dates both Christianity and the Muslim faith. The reasons for still doing it are shrouded in myth and tradition, none which has any medical foundation.

5

The following are some signs that the child may be at risk of FGM:

A female child in a family where other females have undergone FGM.

The family is from a nation, region or community in which FGM is practised.

6

What to do

If you fear a girl or woman is at risk of this procedure and may leave your presence/location ring the police on 999 or 101 immediately.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/mandatory-reporting-of-female-genital-mutilation-procedural-information>

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Questions to consider

Have the family makes preparations for the child to take a holiday, e.g. arranging vaccinations, planning an absence from school?

Is the child talking of a 'special ceremony' that is going to happen?

