

# Female Genital Mutilation – a Safeguarding Issue

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The logo for Liverpool Women's NHS Foundation Trust features a stylized profile of a woman's head in shades of purple and pink, with a flowing ribbon-like element above it.  
**Liverpool Women's**  
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# The origins of safeguarding and FGM

- FGM is violence against female children and women
- Protecting children and mothers from FGM is everyone's business

# Legislation

- A person is guilty of an offence if s/he excises, infibulates or otherwise mutilates the whole or any part of the girl's labia majora, labia minora or clitoris
- FGM is an offence which extends to acts performed outside the UK and to any person who advises helps or forces a girl to inflict FGM on herself

# Legislation

- Under the Children Act 1989 local authorities can apply to the courts for various orders to prevent a child being taken abroad for mutilation.

# Children's rights

- Article 2 – the rights of the child should be respected without discrimination
- Article 19 – each child has a right to be protected from all forms of violence, injury and abuse
- Article 24 – a child has the right to enjoy the highest attainable standard of health
- Article 37 – each country should prohibit torture and inhuman treatment

# How FGM became a safeguarding issue

- Every Child Matters
- Children's NSF
- Children Act 2004
- All professionals and volunteers from all agencies have a statutory responsibility to safeguard children from being abused through FGM

# FGM as “an act of love”

- Brings status and respect to the girl
- Preserves a girl’s virginity / chastity
- Part of being a woman
- A rite of passage
- Social acceptance
- Upholds family honour
- Gives the girl and family a sense of belonging

# Impact of FGM on the child

Dependent on;

- Severity and nature of the violence
- The individual child's innate resilience
- The warmth and support the child receives in their relationship with their parents
- The nature and length of the child's wider relationships and social networks
- Previous or subsequent traumas
- Particular characteristics of the child



# Principles surrounding FGM as a safeguarding issue

- Safety and welfare of the child is paramount
- All agencies should act in the interests and rights of the child
- FGM is illegal
- FGM causes significant harm in the short and long term and constitutes physical and emotional abuse to children.

# Working together to safeguard children

- All decisions or plans for the child/ren should be based on good quality assessments and be sensitive to the issues of race, culture, gender, religion and sexuality, and avoid stigmatising the child or the practicing community as far as possible

# Working Together to Safeguard Children

- All agencies should work in partnership with members of local communities to empower individuals and groups to develop support networks and education programmes

# Identifying a child who is at risk of being abused through FGM

- Any female child born to a woman who has been subject to FGM must be considered to be at risk, as must other female children in the extended family.

# Identification

- Questions about FGM must be incorporated when routine patient history is taken

# Professional Response

FGM requires identification and intervention

- Where a child is at risk of FGM
- Where a child has been abused through FGM
- Where a prospective mother has undergone FGM

# Professional Response

- Follow child protection procedures to ensure
- Immediate protection and support for the child/ren
- That the practice is not perpetuated

# Response

- Any child at immediate risk of or who has undergone FGM should result in a child protection referral to the local authority
- Seek advice through the safeguarding leads
- Reinforce information about health consequences and the law
- Include information in post natal discharge summary / HPL



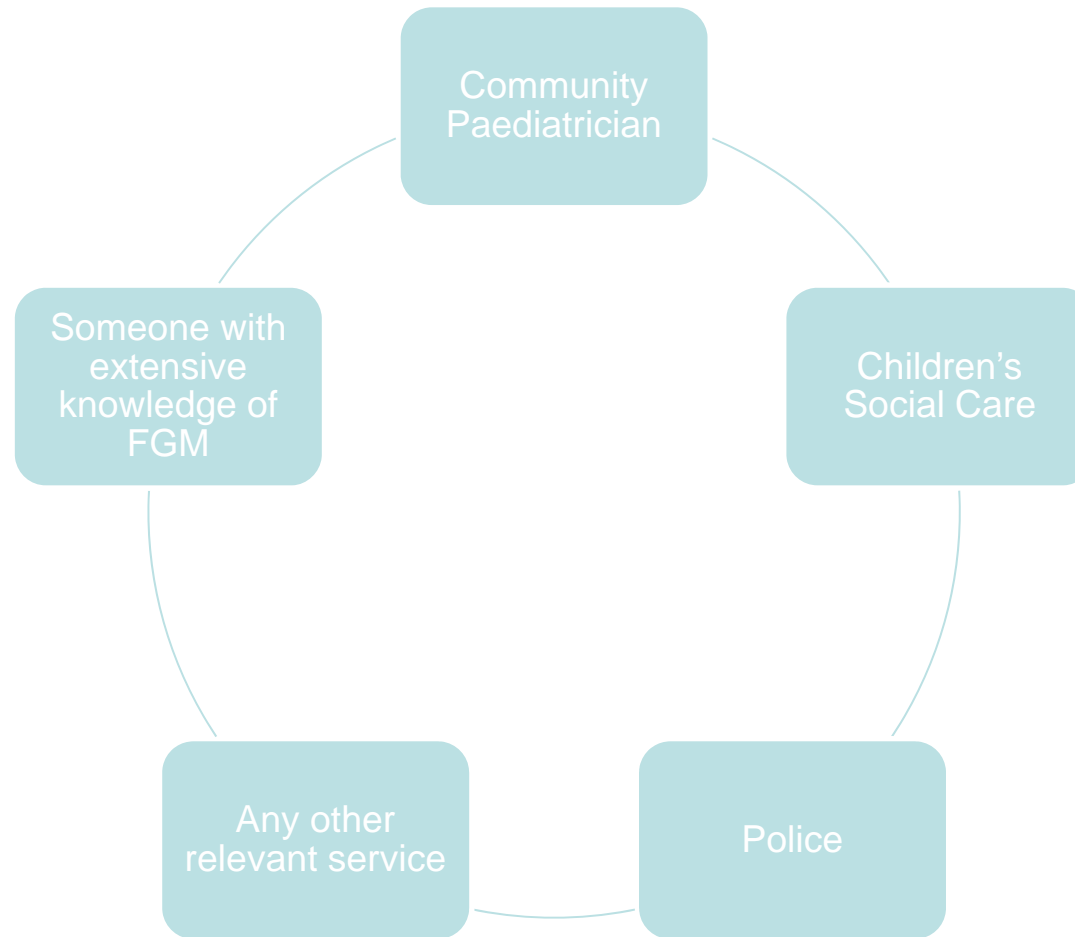
# Actions to take

- Arranging for a professional interpreter
- Being sensitive to the intimate nature of the subject
- Making no assumptions
- Asking straightforward questions
- Being willing to listen
- Being non-judgemental (condemning the practice but not blaming the girl/woman)
- Understanding how she may feel
- Giving a clear explanation that FGM is illegal

# Initial Assessment

- Has the parent / carer had information on the harmful aspects of FGM
- Offer education
- Offer therapeutic services

# Strategy Meeting



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- How, when, where and when the procedure was performed
- Access for support services
- Assess the needs of any other girls in the family
- Offer access to counselling and medical help
- Legal action – Prohibited Steps Order

# Child Protection Case Conference

- Convened if there is no agreement by the family that FGM should be avoided
- If the process has happened and there are other children at risk.