

safe and confidential environment to talk about the problem and we provide referral pathways to support those in need.

We involve survivors and affected communities in our projects and we offer free training to anyone wishing to join our campaign as an FGM activist. We also engage faith leaders, health practitioners, social workers, law enforcement and education professionals in our work. We provide training to persons who deal with at-risk individuals in order to equip them the tools to identify risk factors and intervene in suspected and confirmed FGM cases.

If you are affected by FGM or wish to join our campaign, please get in touch.

## FGM and the Law

### **The Female Genital Mutilation (2003) Act and amended Serious Crime Act (2015) states that:**

- FGM is illegal in the UK
- It is illegal to remove a UK citizen from the UK in order to perform FGM on them overseas
- Performing FGM on a UK citizen is punishable by up to 14 years in prison
- Any survivors who report instances of

FGM are entitled to lifelong anonymity

- FGM Protection Orders (FGMPOs) can be issued to protect actual or potential victims from FGM under the civil law, giving professionals permission to take actions necessary to keep actual or potential victims safe
- If a child under the age of 18 confides in a health, education or social care professional that they have had or are about to undergo FGM, that professional is legally obliged to report this to the police within 48 hours.

For confidential advice and support or for further information, contact us on:

**0208 698 4473**

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## Africa Advocacy Foundation

### **Female Genital Mutilation (FGM)**



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## What is FGM?

FGM (also known as female genital cutting or female circumcision) is a procedure that involves the removal or injury of the external genitals for non-medical reasons.

It has no health benefits and it is harmful to girls and women in many ways (WHO 2013). It is often performed without anaesthetic and with unsterilised equipment.

FGM is not ordained by any of the world's major religions (including Christianity and Islam) and is an internationally recognised violation of human rights.

## Who is affected?

FGM is a huge problem in the UK and worldwide. FGM directly affects:

- 200 million girls worldwide (UNICEF, 2016)
- Around 120 000 women in the UK
  - Of which it impacts an estimated:
    - 1 in 40 women in Lewisham
    - 1 in 30 women in Lambeth
    - 1 In 20 women in the borough of Southwark, the highest prevalence rate in the UK (City University

## Types of FGM

### Type 1

Removal of the clitoral hood with or without the removal of the clitoris

### Type 2

Removal of the clitoris and partial or total removal of the vaginal lips.

### Type 3

The suturing together of the labia majora, leaving a small hole around the size of a pinhead. This hole is used for the purposes of urination, intercourse, menstruation and childbirth.

### Type 4

Other forms of injury to the genitals not included in the above definitions, such as scraping, burning, piercing, stretching or pricking.

## Health Effects of FGM

FGM is a harmful procedure and can lead to many health problems. These include:

- Painful urination
- Loss of blood and severe pain
- Difficulty menstruating
- Psychological problems such as anxiety, post-traumatic stress disorder

and depression

- Higher infant and childbirth mortality
- Renal complications
- Infection
- Problems during sex
- Difficulty walking, sitting or standing

## Why is FGM performed?

There are many reasons why FGM is practiced. These include:

- A means of preserving a woman's virginity or ensuring fidelity
- A way of controlling or limiting the pleasure women gain from sex
- Its status as a cultural tradition passed down for thousands of years
- The belief that FGM enhances the hygiene and appearance of the vagina
- The notion that the clitoris grows continuously if it is not excised

## How we can help?

We at Africa Advocacy Foundation work to reduce the prevalence of Female Genital Mutilation (FGM). We provide specialist support to survivors of FGM and we open grassroots discussions within affected communities about its dangers. We offer a