

FEMALE GENITAL MUTILATION Policy

Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) is a form of physical abuse against children. FGM is also known as female circumcision or female genital cutting. FGM has no health benefits, and it harms girls and women in many ways. It involves removing and damaging healthy and normal female genital tissue, and interferes with the natural functions of girls' and women's bodies. FGM is defined by the World Health Organisation as "all procedures involving partial or total removal of the external female genitalia or other injury to the female genital organs for non-medical reasons". FGM can cause severe bleeding and problems urinating, and later cysts, infections, infertility as well as complications in childbirth.

The *Female Genital Mutilation Act* was introduced in 2003 and came into effect in March 2004. It was made illegal to: practice FGM in the UK; take girls who are British nationals or permanent residents of the UK abroad for FGM whether or not it is lawful in that country; and aid, abet, counsel or procure the carrying out of FGM abroad.

The age at which girls undergo FGM varies enormously according to the community. The procedure may be carried out when the girl is newborn, during childhood, adolescence, at marriage or during the first pregnancy. However, in the majority of cases, FGM takes place between the ages of 5-8 years, and therefore girls within that age bracket are at a higher risk.

The signs that children may be at risk of FGM are as follows: it is spotted during nappy changing, the child is from a culture where FGM is practised, and parents request an extended summer holiday to the country of origin.

If staff at Grassroots are concerned that a child is at risk of FGM, they will tell the Designated Safeguarding Officer (Kimberley How) or Deputy Designated Safeguarding Officer (Vikkie Marsden) who will inform the police.

In line with safeguarding best practice, Grassroots will contact the parents or guardians to explain the report, why it is being made, and what it means. Wherever possible, we will have this discussion in advance of/in parallel to the report being made. However, if we believe that telling the child's parents about the report may result in a risk of serious harm to the child or anyone else, or of the family fleeing the country, we will not discuss it, in this situation we will leave it in the hands of the police.

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Signed: (Proprietor/Manager)	
Signed: (Deputy Manager)	