

FGM

Lea Manor High School has robust and rigorous safeguarding procedures and takes its responsibilities of child protection seriously. Female Genital Mutilation is a form of child abuse and as such is dealt with under the schools Safeguarding policy. At Lea Manor High School, the Headteacher and Governors expect Safeguarding to be everybody's responsibility expect all staff to adhere to and follow these policies.

What is it?

Female genital mutilation (FGM) is any procedure which involves the partial or complete removal of the external female genitalia, or other injury to the female genital organs for no medical reason. Many believe that FGM is necessary to ensure acceptance by their community, however this custom is against the law in the UK and many other countries. All types of FGM are illegal in the UK; it is an offence to take a female out of the UK for FGM or for anyone to circumcise women or children for cultural or non-medical reasons here in the UK.

The prevalence of female genital mutilation (FGM) in the UK is difficult to estimate because of the hidden nature of the crime. However the World Health Organisation estimates that over 20,000 girls under the age of 15 in the UK are at risk of FGM each year. It is practiced in over 28 countries in Africa, some in the Middle East and Asia, but as communities are now migrating, it is becoming a growing concern in Greater Manchester as we welcome people from these communities. Girls could be taken abroad over the holidays for the procedure or cutters are flown into the Manchester area. We see it as abuse, but female genital mutilation, sometimes known as 'female genital cutting' or female circumcision is seen by many in Somali, Egyptian, Sudanese, Nigerian, Sierra Leonean and middle eastern communities (but not exclusively these countries) as essential to preserve a girl's purity and honour. This is not the case, it is a way of socially controlling women and is a category in the government's domestic abuse definition.

Health Implications

The procedure is often carried out without anaesthetic, usually by a woman with no formal medical training using a knife or razor. Short term implications include: severe pain and shock, broken limbs (from being held down), infection, increased risk of blood borne viruses including HIV, Hepatitis B and C, urine retention, injury to adjacent tissues and immediate fatal haemorrhaging. Long term risks include: kidney, urinary and vaginal infection, sexual dysfunction and problems giving birth as well as psychological trauma. Because of its illegality, many women and girls who develop health problems avoid hospitals and doctors, seeking help from 'healers' or back-street clinics. An estimated 10% of victims die from short term effects and 25% from recurrent problems.

FGM Indicators – The Warning Signs

- The girl may confide that she is to have a "special procedure" which will make her a woman or talk of a ceremony taking place for her or other siblings. There may be talk of vaccinations or talk of absence from school. Girls are more at risk of FGM during school summer holidays

- A girl or her family may talk about a long holiday to her country of origin or to a country where the practice is prevalent. This is not enough on its own but might be significant when added to other concerns.
- A mother or an older sibling had already undergone FGM

Signs that FGM may have occurred

- Prolonged absence from school with a noticeable change in behaviour on return
- Finding it difficult to sit still and appears to be experiencing discomfort or pain v Spending a long time away from class for toilet breaks
- Asking to be excused from PE or swimming
- Suddenly visiting the school nurse more frequently
- A sudden change in dress

What to do if you are worried someone may be at risk

Advise them to talk to someone they trust, maybe a teacher or a trusted adult at school. We are here to help and protect people. Remember that no-one is allowed to physically or emotionally hurt people and FGM is not allowed in this country. If you are concerned that someone is at risk of FGM ring the police, contact Lea Manor's Child Protection Officers or the local safeguarding board, you will find the links below helpful:

Lea Manor Child Protection Officer

Ms A Vale valea@leamanor.luton.sch.uk

Telephone: 01582 652600

Domestic Abuse National Helpline

24 Hour Hotline Telephone: 0808 2000247

National Society for the Provention of Cruelty to Children (NSPCC)

Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) helpline 0800 028 3550

E-mail: fgmhelp@nspcc.org.uk

FORWARD

Telephone: 0208 960 4000

Website: www.forwarduk.org.uk

E-mail: support@forwarduk.org.uk

Daughters of Eve

Website: www.dofeve.org

E-mail: via the website

Text: 07983030488