



COUNTRY FOCUS

UK

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COUNTRY CONTEXT

/ FACTS AND FIGURES

The UK has a long history of migration from African and other countries affected by FGM. Data from the Office of National Statistics (2015) based on the 2011 census indicate that FGM-affected communities in London originated from 29 (mainly African) countries, including Djibouti, Egypt, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Ivory Coast, Kenya, Nigeria, Sierra Leone, Somalia and Sudan. The Government Equalities Office (2009) also identified significant numbers from other FGM-affected countries, such as India, Indonesia, Iraq, Kurdistan and Yemen.

Over the past five years, the UK's policy and legislative frameworks on FGM have been significantly strengthened, including cross-government action by the Home Office, Department for Education, Ministry of Justice and Department of Health. However, despite over 30 years of anti-FGM legislation, there has yet to be a successful prosecution of FGM in the UK.

While the UK does not have a specific national action plan on FGM, there have been efforts to address the practice within overarching strategies on violence against women and girls, and through the development of a government structure to coordinate work on FGM, based in the Home Office.

Recent efforts to intensify work to end FGM have resulted in greater media attention, spurred by high-profile campaigners. At the same time, local-government authorities, statutory agencies, the police and professional bodies have all developed FGM intervention strategies. The role of community organisations in tackling FGM has also become more visible, as a result of the six-year Female Genital Mutilation Initiative, which has funded the activities of over 50 community and civil society organisations.

According to research published in 2007 (Dorkenoo, Morison & Macfarlane), there were nearly 66,000 FGM-affected women and girls living in the UK. A subsequent study by City University and Equality Now (2014), found the number of FGM-affected individuals living in England and Wales had risen to an estimated 137,000, with 144,000 girls born to mothers from FGM-affected countries between 1996 and 2010, including 60,000 under-15s deemed to be potentially at risk.

However, both of these studies were based on census data and thus do not take account of whether a girl/woman was born in a country other than parents' countries of origin, nor the under-reporting of undocumented migrants. More importantly, census figures do not take account of migration flows into the UK since 2011. In addition, country-of-origin prevalence data based on DHS figures may no longer be relevant in the UK context, as they may not reflect changes in behaviour due to migration.

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Country context



/ HEALTH AND POLICE RECORDS ON FGM

Health: In 2014, the UK government introduced mandatory recording of FGM cases in all acute hospital trusts, requiring National Health Service (NHS) staff to record evidence of FGM in a patient's clinical record when identified in the normal course of duties. Enhanced dataset mandatory recording, introduced by the Department of Health in April 2015, increased the detail of individual-level data collected and applies to all acute trusts in England, including mental health trusts, GP practices and community services within mental health trusts.

According to annual data released by the Department of Health in 2016 (for the period April 2015 to March 2016), there were 8,656 total attendances where FGM was identified or a procedure for FGM was undertaken. Of these, 5,702 were newly recorded cases. In terms of the types of FGM recorded, the majority were classified as 'type unknown' (3,039 cases), followed by type 1 (893), type 2 (789) and type 3 (573). Type 4 and 'not recorded' accounted for 136 and 135 cases, respectively.

The majority of newly recorded cases (just over 3,500) did not have their country of birth recorded. Of those whose country of birth was recorded, the largest number came from East Africa (nearly 2,000). The same pattern is repeated in response to the question asking country in which FGM was performed i.e. that the largest numbers came from East Africa. Although, a significant number (n=4,467) did not have that data recorded.

Of particular concern are the 106 girls subjected to FGM under the age of 18, as well as five girls reported to have been subjected to FGM (excluding genital piercings) in the UK.

There are two main caveats regarding the data presented above. First, the data set includes a significant number of non-responses (unknowns, not recorded). Second, the small number of cases may have required the exclusion of some details in order to protect the identity of the woman or girl concerned. Nevertheless, the data set provides a useful starting point in gathering information on the needs of affected women and girls.

Protection Orders: With regard to newly legislated FGM protection orders, the Family Court Statistics Quarterly indicates that from October to December 2015, 47 applications for FGM protection orders were made to UK courts, of which 32 were granted.

LEGISLATIVE FRAMEWORK

/ INTERNATIONAL AND EUROPEAN CONVENTIONS

The UK has ratified a number of international human rights instruments addressing FGM, including the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR, signed 1950 and ratified 1951), the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW, ratified 1986), the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (CAT, signed 1985 and ratified 1988), the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC, signed 1990 and ratified 1991), the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR, signed 1950 and ratified-except Protocol 1-1951). All of these reinforce the principle of the equality of women (and girls) and demand that state parties take steps to ensure that equality of the sexes is promoted. The UK government has also signed the Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence (Istanbul Convention), although it has yet to be ratified.

/ CRIMINAL LAW

The first FGM-specific legislation in the UK was the 1985 Prohibition of Female Circumcision Act, the provisions of which were repealed and re-enacted by 2003 Female Genital Mutilation Act. The 2003 law increased the maximum penalty for performing FGM to 14 years' imprisonment and introduced the concept of extraterritoriality, providing protection for UK nationals or permanent residents anywhere in the world, irrespective of their age. It is worth noting that The Female Genital Mutilation Act 2003 and the Serious Crime Act 2015 currently only applies in England, Northern Ireland and Wales. However, the Prohibition of FGM (Scotland) Act 2005 is closely aligned with the 2003 Act.

Legislation on FGM was further strengthened with the enactment of the 2015 Serious Crime Act (SCA 2015), which amended the 2003 Act to extend extra-territoriality to apply to habitual, as well as permanent, residents and nationals of the UK.

The 2015 Act also introduced four new laws. The first was the new offence of 'failing to protect a girl from the risk of FGM' while the second introduced 'life-long anonymity for victims of FGM', prohibiting the publication of information that would identify a victim of FGM. Both laws came into force in May 2015. Legislation on FGM protection orders (FGM POs), which can be used by judges to prevent, compel and restrict actions in relation to FGM, came into force in July 2015. Legislation on mandatory reporting for regulated health, social services and education professionals in England and Wales came into force in October 2015, requiring the reporting of all known cases of FGM in girls under 18 to police in the first instance, ideally within 24 hours.

/ CHILD PROTECTION LAW

A number of UK laws are applicable to child protection. These include the Children Act (1989 and 2004), the Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups Act (2006), the Protection of Freedoms Act (2012), the Children and Families Act (2014), the Adoption and Children Acts (2002 and 2006), the Keeping Children Safe in Education: Statutory Guidance

02
Legislative
Framework

for Schools and Colleges, the FGM Act (2003) and the Children and Young Person Act (2008). Similar laws apply in Scotland and Northern Ireland. All these acts aim to protect children from any form of harm—physical, sexual and emotional. With regard to FGM, statutory agencies with responsibility for child protection are not only required to work within the parameters of FGM-related legislation but also to adhere to several guidance documents, including the Multi-agency Statutory Guidance on Female Genital Mutilation (2016), Working together to Safeguard Children (2015) and Safeguarding Children: Working together under the Children Act 2004 (2007-Wales)

/ ASYLUM LAW

The International Refugee Rights Initiative reports that a growing number of asylum claims in the UK have been made on grounds of FGM, either by parents on behalf of daughters or by girls and adult women on their own behalf.

In order to be recognised as a refugee under UK Asylum Law, the applicant must

- > be unable to return to their country (unless stateless, this is the country they usually live in) because they fear persecution
- > be unable to live safely in any part of their country
- > have failed to get protection from authorities in their country

Ordinarily, persecution must be on the basis of race, religion, nationality or political opinion. However, the UK Border Agency (responsible for assessing asylum claims) states that it “accepts that acts of gender-specific nature, other than sexual violence, may also constitute persecution.” Guidelines for immigration officers refer to FGM as a form of gender-based persecution, recognising that this form of harm can occur in the family, community and/or at the hands of the state. As such, members of immigration staff are guided to consider FGM legitimate grounds for asylum, based on an assessment of the relevant country context.

/ PROFESSIONAL CONFIDENTIALITY

General legislation on professional codes of conduct, secrecy and disclosure applies to reported cases of FGM. The 2004 Children’s Act requires all professionals with statutory responsibilities to safeguard and promote the welfare of children. In the 2015 “Working Together” guidelines, all professionals are required to contribute to whatever actions are needed to safeguard and promote a child’s welfare....’ In addition, the 2015 mandatory reporting requirements detail the sanctions to be imposed on members of regulated professions who fail to report to police a known case of FGM in a girl under 18 years of age.

POLICY FRAMEWORK

The 2016-20 UK government strategy on ending violence against women and girls reiterates the position that FGM is an unacceptable form of abuse and violence against girls and women, and the government's commitment to preventing FGM. The strategy states that real, sustainable progress to end FGM will depend on cooperation between national and local government, agencies, partners and communities, to prevent women and girls becoming victims in the first place.

The strategy outlines key actions required to achieve expected outcomes by 2020, including a reduction in the prevalence of all forms of violence against women and girls; increased reporting, police referrals, prosecution and convictions; earlier intervention and prevention; and ensuring that affected women and children receive appropriate support.

A number of statutory agencies with child protection responsibilities have produced guidance/policy documents and position papers for use by members responding to FGM, including local Children's Safeguarding Boards and the Royal Colleges of nurses, midwives, paediatricians, general practitioners and obstetricians and gynaecologists, in addition to guidance provided by the Department of Health. The government produced the Multi-agency Statutory Guidance on Female Genital Mutilation in 2016, following requests by campaigners.

Despite repeated appeals to government for a national action plan (NAP) on FGM in England, Wales and Northern Ireland, culminating in the 2014 House of Commons Home Affairs Committee hearing outlining the case, only Scotland has such a NAP (entitled FGM: Scotland's National Action Plan to Prevent and Eradicate Female Genital Mutilation, 2016-20). The aim of Scotland's NAP is "banishing FGM", described as requiring a better understanding of why practising communities sustain the tradition, which in turn requires the support of affected communities and individuals, as well as information, guidance and training for the statutory and third sector. However, the NAP is not resourced.

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Policy Framework

MILESTONES AND PROMISING PRACTICES

/ MILESTONES

04

Milestones /
promising practices

Specialist health clinics: FGM was first identified in the UK before the 1985 legislation was enacted, when Somali and Sudanese refugees attended hospital in labour with Type-III FGM—a development for which health professionals were initially unprepared. The first specialist service for FGM-affected women was the African Well Woman Clinic, established in 1993 by FORWARD and Northwick Park Hospital. The clinic also established protocols for care that are still in use today, and provided the template for 25 such clinics across the UK, serving women and girls with all types of FGM.

All-Party Parliamentary Group on FGM: All-Party Parliamentary Groups (APPG) are informal cross-party groups that have no official status within the UK Parliament, but which are run by and for Members of the Commons and Lords. The first APPG on FGM was launched in 2011 (with Equality Now as the Secretariat), with the purpose of raising awareness of the problems caused by FGM in the UK and globally. The first-ever parliamentary hearing on FGM was organised in 2000 by the APPG on Population, Development and Reproductive Health, which recommended a review of the UK law.

National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children (NSPCC) helpline: in June 2013 the NSPCC launched an FGM helpline. Information gathered from calls to the helpline will help police and child protection agencies take action against those planning to subject girls to FGM.

Girl Summit: The 2014 Girl Summit hosted by the Prime Minister focused on child marriage and FGM and was led by the UK Department for International Development (DfID) and UNICEF. The Summit provided a platform for policymakers and other key stakeholders to define action plans to address FGM and child marriage, and to make public pledges of monetary support for their implementation. DfID has since been allocated £35 million to tackle FGM in Africa.

University College London Hospital (UCLH) clinic: The first specialist FGM service for under-18s suspected to have had or be at risk of FGM was opened in UCLH in 2014. The clinic assesses if FGM has occurred, provides follow-up intervention to assess if other girls in the family are at risk and offers a counselling service. Members of clinic staff work in close liaison with the police, social care and local community groups, preparing documentation for and attending court hearings. By the end of 2015 the clinic had had 38 referrals, of which 18 involved FGM.

/ PROMISING PRACTICE

Young people

Over the past five years an increasing number of young people have become advocates and campaigners against FGM, encouraged by projects such as Integrate Bristol, Youth for Change and Young People Speak Out. The result has been to change the discourse on FGM in the UK, especially among young people from affected communities.

Community advocates and champions

The emergence of survivors as campaigners, advocates and community role models has also increased significantly over recent years, compelling communities to reflect on their views, values and practices. Many survivors have professional qualifications, which they use in their interventions and activism. However, these pioneering women bear an exceptional burden in their willingness to speak out: it is important that as the fight against FGM moves forward, structures are put in place to support them individually and in their work.

Communities tackling change

The Tackling FGM Initiative is a £2.8-million intervention founded in 2012 and funded by Trust for London, the Esmée Fairbairn Foundation, Rosa, the UK Fund for Women and Girls and Comic Relief. The initiative has been at forefront of preventive community action against FGM, funding 14 organisations through its main grants programme and a further 39 through small grants. The Initiative has also published Communities Tackling FGM in the UK a Best Practice Guide for (Khalifa & Brown, 2016).

Local Authority integrated approaches to tackling FGM

Other integrated models on tackling FGM include the Bristol FGM Safeguarding Group, a multi-agency collaboration delivering a holistic response to FGM, centred on key communities. The Bristol Model on FGM includes key statutory agencies from health, education, police and social care, along with the voluntary sector, young people and other organisations. Strategies include youth empowerment, women's leadership and community engagement, policy action and a delivery group (to support wider actions with key agencies).

The Harmful Practices Pilot launched in 2014 is a pan-London project organised by the Department for Education and the Mayor of London's Office for Policing and Crime, which seeks to introduce systemic models of change working with health, social care and communities to prevent and address FGM. Individual London authorities have launched community projects to address FGM, including the Boroughs of Tower Hamlets, Newham, Waltham Forrest, Kensington and Chelsea, Hounslow and Westminster.

Grassroots/user-led organisations

The increase in anti-FGM grassroots/user-led organisations reflect a rising community commitment to take charge of the anti-FGM movement in their own communities—a major development in terms of sustaining changes in attitudes and behaviour in relation to FGM.

Working in schools

Innovative initiatives aimed at working with and in schools (including primary schools) have had excellent results with regard to safeguarding. Projects include training of school staff and student awareness-raising sessions, aimed at educating and empowering students to take action to protect themselves and others from FGM. The FORWARD schools programme has developed structured lesson plans, teacher-training modules and accredited resources.

Men speak out

Engaging men is a highly constructive means of enabling and requiring men to be accountable for the role they have played in the persistence of FGM and the new role they can play to end it. NGOs such as FORWARD in London, the Alliance of Cohesion and Racial Equality (ACRE) in Reading, Community Info Source in Glasgow and the Bolton Solidarity Community Association have made significant advances towards helping men break their silence on FGM. A number of local authorities have also instigated small-scale initiatives, employing men to work with men. These include the boroughs of Tower Hamlets, Waltham Forest, Kensington and Chelsea and Westminster. These initiatives are very new and their effectiveness has yet to be evaluated. However, early signs are encouraging, helping to reframe the issue of FGM as everybody's business.

Provision of Specialist Services

As mentioned previously, there are currently 25 clinics (sometimes described as African Well Women Clinics) providing health services to FGM-affected girls and women (usually Type III) including advice, de-infibulation and related counselling. However, these clinics tend to be overrepresented in London and the south of the country. Given the 'dispersal policy' aimed at relocating migrants, including FGM-affected communities, all over the country, there is an increasing need for quality FGM-specialist services outside the capital.

Psychological services

There has recently been increased interest in the mental-health support services required by FGM-affected girls and women. In February 2016, the Minister for Public Health stated that the government was "working with professionals, campaigners and survivors to plan how to deliver and embed these services in the health system" as part of activities marking the week of action of zero tolerance to FGM day.

There are currently only a few counselling, therapeutic and support services available for FGM-affected women, most provided by NGOs such as Ashiana, the Dahlia Project, FORWARD, IKWRO and the Women and Girls Network, among others. A service for under-18 girls (and boys) is run by the UCHL FGM clinic. However, services for boys and young men are in general virtually non-existent.

ADVICE AND SUPPORT

A number of organisations in the UK provide advice and support on FGM, including the small, poorly funded black and minority-ethnic community organisations that first took up the challenge of tackling FGM. Larger INGOs and other organisations that have recently mainstreamed FGM into their existing work portfolios are now also involved, along with statutory sector actors, such as the Crown Prosecution Service, education authorities, the police (particularly Project Azure), the NSPCC, health services and associated Royal Colleges. The Home Office and Department of Health have also taken the lead in FGM-prevention projects, providing information on legislation and professional guidelines.



Africa Advocacy Foundation Lewisham 0208 698 4473, www.a-af.org, Africa Advocacy Foundation is a community-based charity that promotes health, education and life opportunities for disadvantaged people. They provide advocacy services, campaigns and support on FGM and domestic violence.



Birmingham & Solihull Women's Aid Birmingham 0121 685 8687 - Option 0 or ext: 233, www.bsmaid.org, Birmingham and Solihull Women's Aid supports women and children affected by domestic violence, rape and sexual assault. Their work on FGM includes Helpline, Counselling Family Support and Drop in.



Black Association of Women Step Out Cardiff 0292 0644 633, www.bawso.org.uk, BAWSO is a Welsh Government Accredited Support Provider, delivering specialist services. Their FGM work focuses on awareness raising among affected communities about UK Law and the health and psychological risks of FGM



Black Women's Health and Family Support Tower Hamlets 0208 980 3503, www.bwhafs.com, BWHFS promotes the elimination of FGM through a women's health and holistic approach, providing advice and support to women and their families in Britain and Africa, and influencing policy.



Bolton Solidarity Community Association Bolton www.boltonbsca.com, BSCA is a self-help voluntary organisation that tackles and reduces the problems facing new migrant communities in Bolton. They do youth work, Client Drop In Service and Crime Prevention Project.



British Somali Community Camden 020 7485 2963, www.britishsomali.org, BSC is a local women's charity that works with Somali Community in Camden. Currently, BSC trains professionals who work with children, in schools and hospitals, on what FGM involves and how to prevent it.



Daughters of Eve London and Bristol 07983030488, www.dofeve.org, Daughters of Eve works to protect girls and young women who are at risk of FGM. They seek to help people who are affected by FGM by raising awareness about FGM and sign-posting support services and offering advice and support to help young people.










Eurosoma Birmingham 0121 661 9446, www.eurosoma.org, Eurosoma Cultural Centre is a representative body of Horn of African

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Advice and support

refugees and migrants. They engage and consult with young people to represent their concerns and aspirations at their management meetings, and inform their network in Birmingham.

-  **FORWARD London** 0208 960 4000 www.forwarduk.org.uk FORWARD is an African-led women's rights organisation working on equality and dignity for African women and girls in the UK and Africa. Their work on FGM includes community and youth engagement, training, policy work and providing advice, support and case work.
-  **Granby Somali Women's Group Liverpool** 0151 727 1008, www.granbysomaliwomensgroup.org, GSWG works to provide a safe environment for Somali women and children migrants and refugees targeting women, children and families residing in Princes Park Ward. They provide advice and drop in service.
-  **Integrate Bristol Bristol** www.integratebristol.org.uk, Integrate Bristol supports the integration of young people and children from other countries and cultures. They do campaign on FGM and provide education and creative to push for policies on FGM.
-  **Iranian Kurdish Women's Rights Organisation London** 020 7920 6460, www.ikwro.org.uk, IKWRO works with Middle Eastern and Afghan women and girls who are at risk of 'honour' based violence, forced marriage, child marriage, FGM and domestic violence and to promote their rights. They work in partnership to provide training and support work on FGM
-  **Manor Gardens Advocacy Project London Borough of Islington** 020 7281 7694, www.manorgardenscentre.org, Manor Gardens Advocacy project's mission is to help people take action to change their lives for the better. Their work on FGM targets campaign action, community workshops, professionals training, one to one and group support and a community champions programme.
-  **New Step for African Communities Manchester, Rochdale** 01706 868 993, www.nestac.org, NESTAC supports Africans and immigrants, particularly those living in the North West of England. They focus on FGM youth advocacy a support our sisters action and provide cross cultural therapy services
-  **Ocean Somali Community Association London Borough of Tower Hamlets** 020 7987 5833, www.oceansomali.org.uk, OSCA is an innovative charity organisation running free services for Somali residents in East London. OSCA's facilitates dialogue about FGM, its impact and its status in UK law, bringing together young people, women and other members of the community.



Somali Development Services Leicester 0116 285 5888 extn: 204,
www.sds-ltd.org, SDS was established to safeguard the well-being and human dignity of Somali people and other new arrivals in Leicester city through research, education, advocacy,



Southall Community Alliance London Borough of Ealing 020 8574 8855
www.southallcommunityalliance.org, SCA is an umbrella network of over 100 small and new, community groups working in Southall. The majority of these groups support BMER users and represent the Somali, Indian, Tamil, Afghan communities etc. The projects aims at raising aspirations, attainment & achievement in Young People, Safeguarding young people in the context of BMER & Faith Communities and women's projects.

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