

Say NO

To Female
Genital
Mutilation

Contents

	page
What is FGM?	3
Where is FGM practiced?	4
Statistics on FGM	6
Consequences of FGM	7
Reasons used to justify FGM	8
What does religion say?	10
Spotting the signs of FGM	12
What does the law say?	13
Comments by survivors	14
Men against FGM	15
NHS Specialist FGM Services	16
Where to get help	18



What is FGM?

Female genital mutilation (FGM), which is also known as female genital cutting (FGC) is defined by the World Health Organisation (WHO) as the range of procedures which involve “the partial or complete removal of the external female genitalia or other injury to the female genital organs whether for cultural or any other non-therapeutic reason”.

WHO has classified FGM into four types (WHO, 2014):

TYPE 1 Clitoridectomy	TYPE 2 Excision
Partial or total removal of the clitoris (<i>a small, sensitive and erectile part of the female genitals</i>) and, in very rare cases, only the prepuce (<i>the fold of skin surrounding the clitoris</i>).	Partial or total removal of the clitoris and the labia minora (<i>‘the inner lips’ that surround the vagina</i>), with or without excision of the labia majora (<i>the ‘outer lips’ that surround the vagina</i>).
TYPE 3 Infibulation	TYPE 4 Other
Where the clitoris and labia minora are completely removed and the vaginal opening is stitched or narrowed leaving only a small opening (1-2 cm) for the passage of urine and menstrual blood.	All other harmful procedures to the female genitalia for non-medical purposes, e.g. pricking, pinching, piercing, incising, scraping and cauterising the genital area.

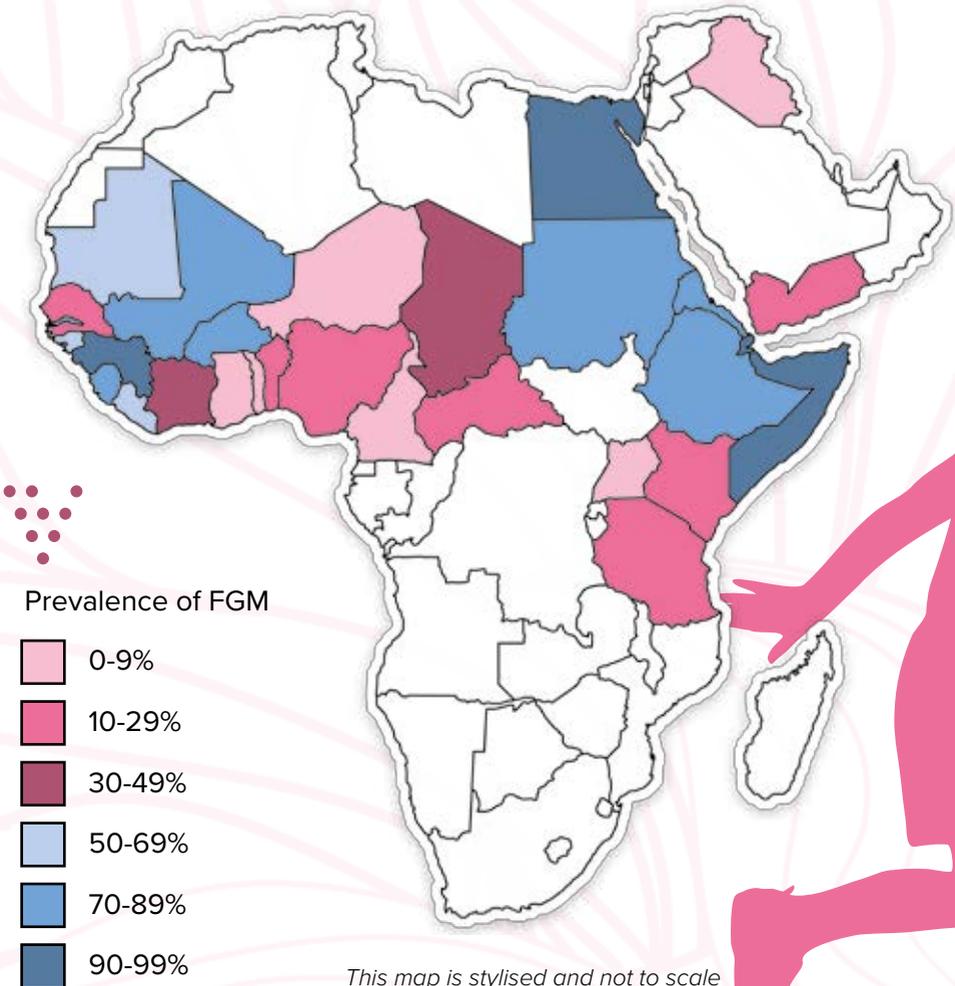
Some Other terms for FGM

In Arabic	khitan, khifad, tahoor, tahara
In Somali	gudinin, halalays qodiin

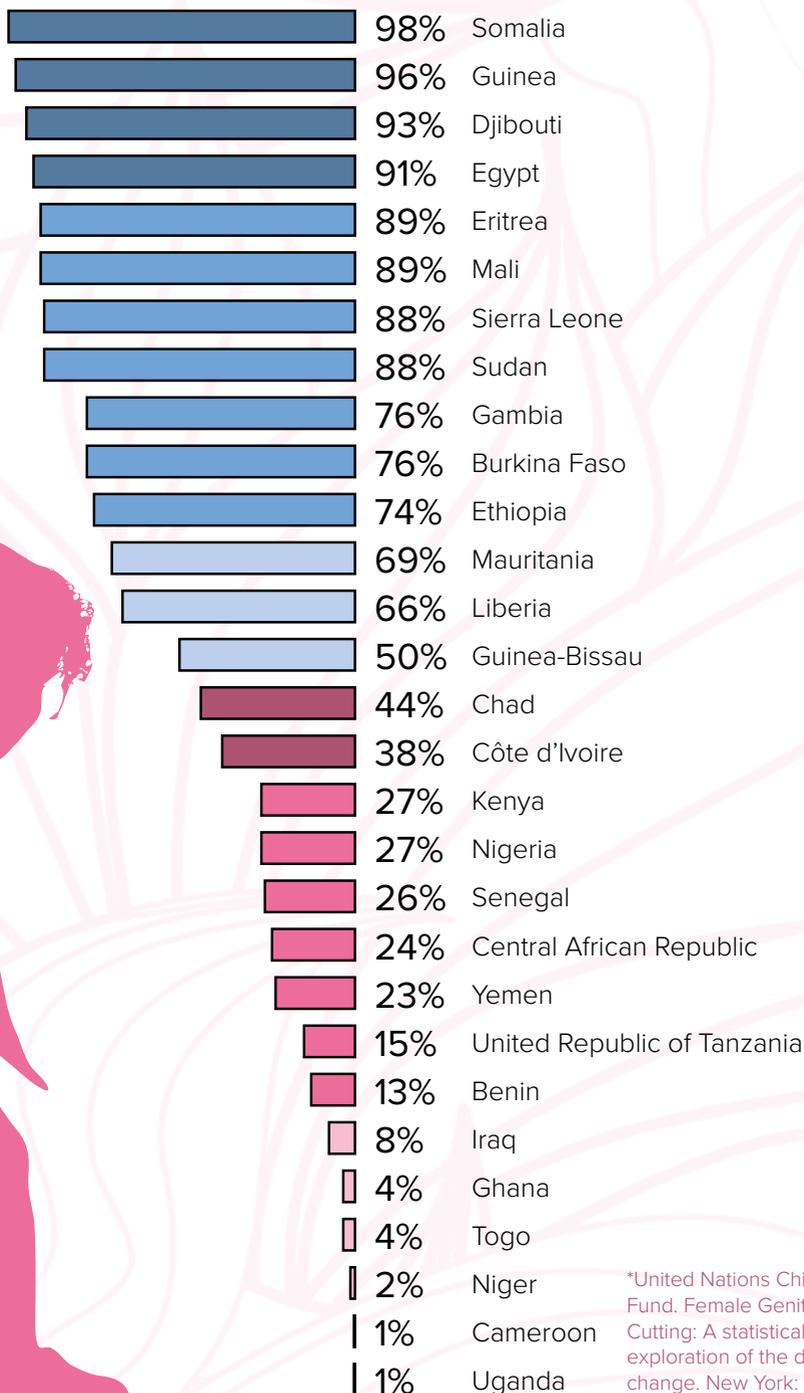
Note: the terms ‘Sunnah’ is also used to describe FGM by some communities. However, ‘Sunnah’ is an Islamic term, and using it to describe FGM can mislead people into thinking it is a religious practice sanctioned by Prophet Muhammad (pbuh), which it is not as discussed later.

Where is FGM practiced?

FGM is practiced mainly in 29 countries across Africa and parts of the Middle East. However, it is also practiced in South East Asia and countries where migrants from FGM affected communities live. So for example in the UK we have survivors living with the consequences of FGM and girls who may be at risk of FGM.



Percentage of girls and women aged 15–49 who have undergone FGM, by region/ country. Source: UNICEF*



*United Nations Children's Fund. Female Genital Mutilation/ Cutting: A statistical overview and exploration of the dynamics of change. New York: UNICEF; 2013.

Statistics on FGM

- **60,000** girls under the age of 15 are at risk of FGM in the UK
- **137,000** girls and women are living with the consequences of FGM in the UK
- European Parliament estimates that **500,000** women and girls are living with FGM in Europe with another **180,000** at risk each year.
- Up to **2 million** girls undergo some form of the procedure each year globally.
- Over **130 million** girls and women worldwide have undergone FGM

*I had FGM
when I was about
5 or 6 years old.*

On the day I was given lots of attention and made to feel special. My mum bought me a lovely polka dot dress and I had henna put on my hands. My mother told me that all my friends will be there and that there will be a party with all my favourite foods. I couldn't believe it, it wasn't even 'Eid' Day but it felt like it. I was then taken to a room and put on a table. Ladies held me down. I can still remember how painful it was. The pain was unbearable. I kept asking what is this, then I screamed with pain and the I saw blood, lots of blood and some skin.

Afterwards I was told that I was 'clean and perfect now' and 'a good girl now.' My mother now regrets having me cut and has apologised.

Adult Survivor Story



Consequences of FGM

FGM has no medical benefits and harms physical and psychological health as well as affecting sexual functioning. Examples of problems include:

- Severe pain
- Severe bleeding (can lead to death)
- Psychological shock
- Cysts and abscesses
- Pain during sex
- Difficulty with periods
- Difficulty urinating
- Urinary & vaginal infections
- Kidney damage and possible failure
- Complications during pregnancy and childbirth
- Infertility
- Emotional and mental health problems

Note: Not all girls and women who have undergone FGM experience health problems.

“My older sisters had FGM done in Somalia before we moved to the UK. At the time I did not have it done because I was considered too young. Since childhood I have always wanted FGM done because when my cousins and sisters would get together they would talk about it and would tell me I wasn’t a woman. But then as I got older I saw the consequences of FGM; my sisters had health problems. I am now glad I did not have it done!”

Circumcisers and Methods

FGM is often performed without anaesthetic with non-sterile cutting devices such as, knives, razors, scissors, glass, sharpened rocks and fingernails. The excisers are often older women in the community. However, some families will have the FGM procedure carried out by a doctor or other health professional believing that because anaesthetic and sterile equipment are used, it is more acceptable and less harmful. Sometimes girls from the UK are flown abroad for FGM, which can include being taken to medical clinics.

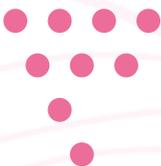
Reasons Used to Justify FGM

Parents who support the practice of FGM use a range of reasons to try and justify it, which can vary with culture. Some reasons include they are acting in the child's best interests because it:

- Brings status and respect to the girl
- Preserves a girl's virginity / chastity
- Is part of being a woman
- Is a rite of passage
- Gives a girl social acceptance, e.g. 'uncut' girls considered unmarriageable
- Upholds the family honour
- Cleanses and purifies the girl
- Fulfils a religious requirement (mistakenly believed to exist)
- Is a part of custom and tradition
- Helps girls and women to be clean and hygienic
- Is cosmetically desirable
- Makes childbirth safer for the infant

MYTHS used to propagate FGM Include:

- If the clitoris is not cut, it will carry on growing
- If the clitoris is not cut, it will harm the husband
- If the clitoris is not cut it will harm the baby during childbirth when the mother's clitoris touches the baby's head
- If the FGM is not carried out then the genitals will smell



Cleanliness and hygiene is commonly given as a reason for FGM to try and (incorrectly) connect the practice to religion because Islam places great emphasis on both physical and spiritual cleanliness and purification.

Adult Survivor Story

"I was about 6 years old when I had my FGM done. I remember that no one told me at the time what was going to happen to me. I remember that my mum had bought me a beautiful yellow dress. I also had some henna done on my hands and on my legs the night before. Mum also bought me some beautiful jewellery. She also did my hair really nicely. I didn't know why everyone was making this big fuss over me and what was going to happen to me. When we got to the place where it was going to happen, I noticed it was full of little girls and ladies. When it was my turn there were four ladies around me and my mum. Two ladies grabbed me and put me on the bed. I thought they were playing and we were going to have fun. But then they started to take my clothes off. Within the space of 20 minutes everything was done. I had become a woman. How can a 6 year old become a woman?"

I ask my mum now about what my dad thought about it. She told me dad was not happy about it and that they nearly got divorced over this issue. Everything used to happen while he was at work. By the time he got back – everything was done. He couldn't turn the clock back once his daughter had been damaged. He used to say don't touch my daughters. I am sure she would have listened to him if it wasn't for other ladies brainwashing her.

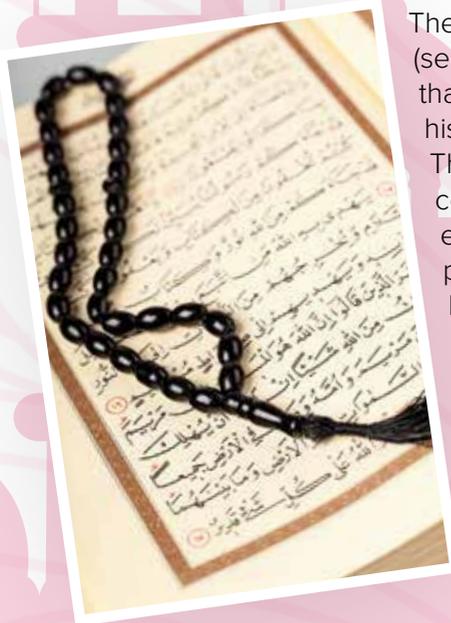
My mum is very sorry now. She said she wanted to make sure that if anyone came to ask for my hand in marriage, she could assure them that I was pure and clean and not been around with men. I have daughters and I would never do this to them. I would never put them through what I went through because you suffer the impact of FGM all your life. We all need to look after the next girl and make sure FGM does not happen to her."



What does religion say?

The practice of FGM is against all faiths. Although it is a cultural practice and understood as that by some members of FGM /C practicing communities, others are not always convinced and will provide erroneous religious justifications to reinforce its continuation.

For example, some Muslims believe it is a part of their Islamic faith. It is important to understand why these beliefs are held so they can be challenged. It is simply not enough to say it is against Islam without further debate and discussion, which too often happens. These links between religion and FGM therefore cannot be ignored especially because faith leaders themselves are providing conflicting views on the matter. For example, some scholars condemn type 3 FGM while condoning other forms.



There is no evidence in any hadiths (secondary Islamic texts) to suggest that the Prophet (pbuh) subjected his daughters or his wives to FGM. The daughters and the wives of his companions were not circumcised either. For those who say that the practice is recommended by the Prophet are overlooking the fact that he would not recommend or make obligatory something he did not do himself. If the women in his family were circumcised, it would have been well known and would be widely practiced in all Muslim majority countries, which it is not.



RELIGIOUS TEXT USED	CHALLENGING THE TEXT
<p>PROPHET DID NOT BAN FGM</p> <p>Narrated Umm Atiyah al-Ansariyyah: A woman used to perform circumcision in Medina. The Prophet (peace be upon him) said to her: Do not cut severely as that is better for a woman and more desirable for a husband (Abu Dawud 41:5251).</p> <p>Some scholars will argue that the Prophet (pbuh) did not ban the practice thereby justifying its permissibility and / or as he was prohibiting more severe types, less severe FGM is more acceptable.</p>	<p>These scholars are ignoring the fact that if the words attributed to the Prophet (pbuh) were actually spoken by him, he is making a statement that does not translate into an injunction for cutting.</p> <p>Also this narration has been widely regarded as weak or poor in authenticity amongst Islamic scholars throughout history because it does not meet the strict criteria to be considered unquestionable.</p>
<p>FGM IS RECOMMENDED BECAUSE IT IS HONOURABLE</p> <p>Abu al- Malih ibn `Usama's father relates that the Prophet said: <i>“Circumcision is a law for men and a preservation of honour for women.”</i> (Ahmad Ibn Hanbal 5:75; Abu Dawud, Adab 167).</p> <p>This text is used to justify it is a recommended practice even if it is not obligatory.</p>	<p>This narration is regarded as weak and fails the test for being authentic. Also some scholars interpret this narration to mean that when a woman is married to a circumcised (i.e. ritually clean) man, it is an honour for her. It does not mean that it is an honour to subject the woman herself to circumcision</p>
<p>RELIGIOUS TEXTS INDICATE WOMEN WERE CUT</p> <p>Muslim (349) narrated that 'Aa'ishah (may Allah be pleased with her) said: The Messenger of Allah (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said: <i>“When a man sits between the four parts (arms and legs of his wife) and the two circumcised parts (al- khitaanani) meet, then a ritual bath (ghusl) is obligatory.”</i></p> <p>Some scholars say that the two circumcised parts are referring to that of the husband and of the wife, indicating that women were circumcised. They therefore use this text to provide evidence that women were cut historically to justify continuing the practice. Proponents consider this hadith to be one of the strongest justifications for FGM in Islam because this is regarded as authentic.</p>	<p>Others scholars point out that the term khitaan in Arabic strictly refers to male circumcision and FGM is referred to as khifaadh. The term khitaanani, though in dual, is not evidence for FGM because the use of one word or quality to refer to two different persons or things is an acceptable Arabic language style. In this case khitaanani refers to the male and female organs but which are different with respect to circumcision i.e. male is circumcised, the female is not. The feature of the more common or prominent one i.e. male circumcision is used.</p>

Spotting the signs of FGM

Indicators that FGM may have occurred include:

- Prolonged absence from school
- Noticeable behaviour change particularly after long absence from school or after a family holiday abroad
- Spending longer than normal in the bathroom or toilet
- Bladder and menstrual problems
- Difficulty in walking, sitting or standing
- Complaint about pain in between the legs
- Reluctant to undergo normal medical examinations
- Asking for help, but may not be explicit about the problem due to embarrassment or fear
- Talking about what somebody did to them but are not allowed to talk about it.



If you or someone you know is at risk of FGM - talk to someone you trust, maybe a teacher or a school nurse. You could also contact the police. They will all be able to help protect you. If you are concerned that a citizen in Britain may be taken overseas for the purpose of FGM, call the Foreign and Commonwealth Office on **0207 008 1500** or email fgm@fco.gov.uk



What does the law say?

FGM is Against the Law

FGM is a form of child abuse and violence against women. It was made illegal about 30 years ago by the Female Circumcision Act in 1985. However families were bypassing the law by taking girls abroad to have the procedure. The Act was therefore replaced by the Female Mutilation Act 2003, which made it illegal to take women and girls overseas for the purpose of FGM. It has also been unlawful in Scotland since 1985 and a conviction can result in a prison sentence of up to 14 years.



FGM Protection Orders

FGM Protection Orders contain legally binding conditions, prohibitions and restrictions to protect the person at risk of FGM and may include:

- Confiscating passports or travel documents of the girl at risk and/or family members or other named individuals to prevent girls from being taken abroad;
- Ordering that family members or other named individuals should not aid another person in anyway to commit or attempt to commit an FGM offence, such as prohibiting bringing a “cutter” to the UK for the purpose of committing FGM.

(The Orders came into force on 17 July 2015 and apply to England, Northern Ireland and Wales).

Mandatory Reporting

Mandatory reporting to police is required by regulated health and social care professionals and teachers if:

- They are informed by a girl under the age of 18 that she has undergone an act of FGM
- They observe physical signs that an act of FGM may have been carried out on a girl under the age of 18.

(The legal duty came into force on 31 October 2015).

Comments by survivors

“My marriage eventually ended because of the domestic violence that was associated with my FGM. My husband would hit me when I would not sleep with him.”

“I do not get sexual pleasure and have problems with intimacy. I’m not whole. I’m not intact. Something was taken away from me.”

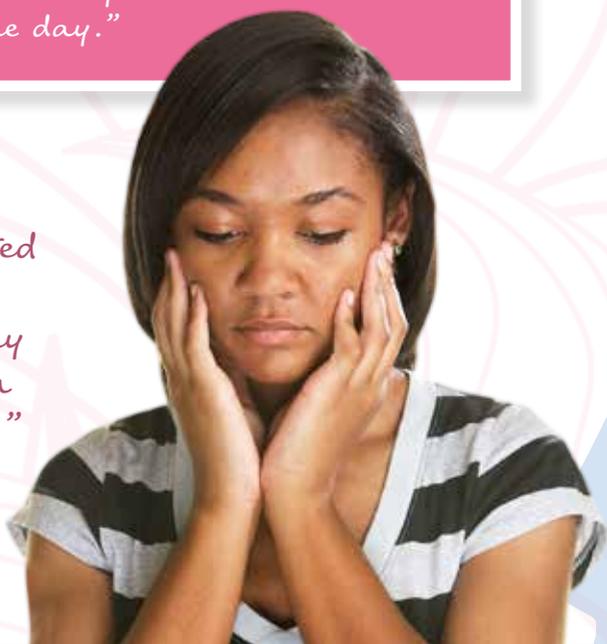
“I have had problems with my periods since childhood and had to be ‘cut open’ on my wedding night. Sex is still painful and sometimes I make excuses. I have to sit in cold water afterwards every time.”

“Men don’t understand the pain for women (on having sex) and end up beating their wives and they just accept this as a way of life.”

“My father was against it so my mother carried it while he was out for most of the day.”



“I have also suffered each time when giving birth and my children were born through caesarean.”



Men against FGM

Husband of a Survivor (Gambian)

“My wife had FGM, as well as all the girls in her family otherwise they would have been ostracised. My father was really upset when my sister had it done. He was a religious man and really against it. He threatened to divorce my mother if she did it again to any of the other daughters. I have daughters but they have not been cut because me and my wife do not believe in it. However, my mother in law keeps contacting us asking to bring our daughters back to Gambia to get them cleaned. Now I no longer allow my daughters to speak with their grandmother. I started to speak out against FGM within the community but faced fierce criticism and intimidation by some people from within my community.”

Faith Leader (Somali)

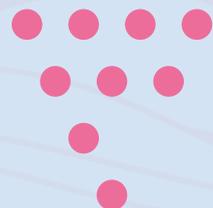
“Too many people in the community think it is a women’s issue so men don’t talk about it and it is about time religious leaders were provided training on this issue. “We don’t get taught about issues that affect women. I know that many of the couples that come to me for issues of their marriage come to me because of bedroom issues and issues of domestic violence that result from bedroom issues, and most probably we have to ask the question why is this?”

Son and Brother of Survivors (Yemeni)

“FGM is everyone’s business. I am making it my business. It happened to my mum and my sisters. Had I been born a girl, I would have been here as a survivor of FGM and all the horrors that go with it.”

School Pupil (Yemeni)

“Boys in the community don’t discuss the issue of FGM so I did not know what it meant. Now that I know what it means, I say NO to FGM!”



NHS Specialist FGM Services

If you have had FGM - You can seek medical advice and help from specialist health services. There are currently specialist clinics around the UK and in some of these you can have a reversal procedure. Contact details of hospitals and clinics in the UK offering Specialist FGM health services are listed below:

BIRMINGHAM

Birmingham Heartlands Hospital
Princess of Wales Women's Unit, Bordesley Green East Birmingham, B9 5SS

0121 424 3909

BRISTOL

Bristol Community Rose Clinic
Lawrence Hill Health Centre, Hassell Drive, Lawrence Hill, Bristol, BS2 0AN

07813 016 911

Minority Ethnic Women's & Girl's Clinic
Bristol Charlotte Keel Centre, Seymour Road, Easton, Bristol, BS5 0UA

0117 902 7111 (direct) or 0117 902 7100

LIVERPOOL

Liverpool Women's Hospital
Link Clinic, Crown St, Liverpool, L8 7SS

0151 702 4180 or 0151 702 4178

LONDON

African Women's Clinic
University College London Hospital, Elizabeth Garrett Anderson Wing,
25 Grafton Way London, WC1E 6DB

07944 241992 / 0203 4475241 (Dr Hodes)

Acton African Well Woman Clinic
Acton Health Centre, 35 – 61 Church Road. London, W3 8QE

07956 001 065 or 0208 383 8761 or 07730 970738

African Well Woman Clinic
Queen Charlotte's & Chelsea Hospital, Du Cane Road, London, W12 0HS

07956 001 065 or 0208 383 8761 or 07730 970738

West London African Women's Service Chelsea and Westminster Hospital, 369 Fulham Road, London, SW10 9NH and West London Centre for Sexual Health Charing Cross Hospital, South Wing, Fulham Palace Road, London, W6 8RF
0203 315 3344
Well Women Clinic St Marys Hospital, Gynaecology & Midwifery Department, Praed Street, London, W2 1NY
0207 886 6691 or 0207 886 1443
0203 312 6135 (helpline)
African Well Women's Clinic Whittington Hospital, Kenwood Wing, Antenatal Clinic, Level , Highgate Hill, London, N19 5NF
0207 2883482/3 or 07956 257992
African Well Women's Clinic Guys & St Thomas' Hospital, 8th Floor c/o Antenatal Clinic Lambeth Palace Rd, London, SE1 7EH
0207 188 6872
Women's and Young People's Services Mile End Hospital, Sylvia Pankhurst Health Centre, 3rd Floor, Bancroft Road, London E1 4DG
0207 377 7898 or 0207 377 7870 or 0208 223 8322
African Well Women's Clinic Northwick Park Hospital & Central Middlesex Hospital, Antenatal Clinic, Watford Road. Harrow, HA1 3UJ
020 8453 2108 - Central Middlesex Hospital Royal
020 8869 2880 - Northwick Park Hospital Harrow
NOTTINGHAM
Nottingham University Hospital City Hospital Campus, Antenatal Clinic, Hucknall Road, Nottingham, NG5 1PB
0115 969 1169

Department of Health (Updated 2014). You can check for the most up to date list here: www.nhs.uk/NHSEngland/AboutNHSservices/sexual-health-services/Pages/fgm-health-services-for-women.aspx

Where to get Help

The following organisations can provide help, support and advice for anyone that is at risk or has been subjected to female genital mutilation.

■ Police

T: 999 (emergency)
T: 101

■ Your Local Authority Children's Services

■ Crime Stoppers

T: 0800 555 111 (anonymously)

■ Metropolitan Police Service

(Project Azure) - Dedicated service for girls at risk of FGM
T: 0207 161 2888

■ Foreign and Commonwealth Office

T: 0207 008 1500
E: fgm@fco.gov.uk

■ NSPCC FGM Helpline

(24 hours)
T: 0800 028 3550
E: fgmhelp@nspcc.org.uk.

■ Dahlia Project

(Partnership between Maya Centre and Manor Gardens, Islington)- Support group and counselling for women who have undergone FGM
T: 0207 281 7694
E: leyla@manorgardenscentre.org

■ Forward

For information on services and support available
T: 0208 960 4000, extension 1
E: support@forwarduk.org.uk
www.forwarduk.org.uk

■ Daughters of Eve

Working to protect girls from FGM
T: 07983 030 488

■ Nestac

Supporting the African community in Rochdale and Greater Manchester
www.nestac.org

■ Integrate Bristol

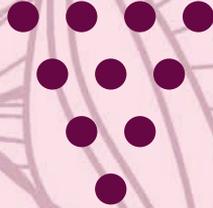
Helping with the integration of young people and children who have arrived from other countries and cultures
www.integratebristol.org.uk



www.mwnhelpline.co.uk



*“I had it when I was about
10 years old and still have
nightmares. Some nights I wake
up with these dreams. I remember
it like it was just yesterday.”*



*Don't suffer in silence
Please tell someone*



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Muslim Women's Network UK
The Warehouse / 54-57 Allison Street
Digbeth / Birmingham / B5 5TH
www.mwnuk.co.uk

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