

## **Lewisham's VAWG COVID-19 response**

Domestic violence and abuse is likely to increase during this period based on evidence from countries a few weeks ahead of us in this pandemic. In turn we want our VAWG partners to know that support is available for victims during this time.

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

#### **What is Female Genital Mutilation?**

Female Genital Mutilation involves the complete or partial removal or alteration of external genitalia for non-medical reasons. It is mostly carried out on young girls at some time between infancy and the age of 15. Unlike male circumcision, which is legal in many countries, it is now illegal across much of the globe, and its extensive harmful health consequences are widely recognised. <sup>[1]</sup>

FGM is often performed by traditional circumcisers or cutters who do not have any medical training. But in some countries it may be done by a medical professional.

Anaesthetics and antiseptics are not generally used, and FGM is often carried out using knives, scissors, and scalpels, pieces of glass or razor blades. <sup>[2]</sup>

FGM often happens against a girl's will without her consent, and girls may have to be forcibly restrained.

It's also known as female circumcision or cutting, and by other terms, such as Sunna, Gudniin, Halalays, Tahur, Megrez and Khitan, among others.

- It's illegal in the UK and is child abuse.
- It's very painful and can seriously harm the health of women and girls.
- It can also cause long-term problems with sex, childbirth and mental health. <sup>[1]</sup>

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**FGM can happen at different times in a girl or woman's life, including:**

- when a baby is new-born
- during childhood or as a teenager
- just before marriage
- during pregnancy.<sup>[2]</sup>

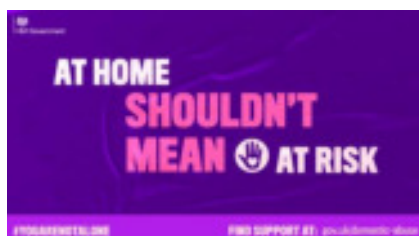
### FGM Terms, what they mean

- 'Cutter'  
A 'cutter' is somebody who carries out FGM. They might use things like knives, scalpels, scissors, glass or razor blades to carry out the procedure.
- 'Cutting season'  
This refers to the summer months – often July, August and September – when many girls are on break from school. This is often the period when girls have time to undergo FGM. Girls might be flown abroad during this time, so it's important to be aware of this risk. <sup>[2]</sup>

### Types of FGM

There are 4 main types of FGM: <sup>[1]</sup>

<b>Type 1 – clitoridectomy</b>	removing part or all of the clitoris
<b>Type 2 – excision</b>	removing part or all of the clitoris and the inner labia (the lips that surround the vagina), with or without removal of the labia majora (the larger outer lips)
<b>Type 3 – infibulation</b>	narrowing the vaginal opening by creating a seal, formed by cutting and repositioning the labia
<b>Type 4 - Other harmful procedures to the female genitals</b>	pricking, piercing, cutting, scraping or burning the area



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### Effects of FGM

There are no health benefits to FGM. It can cause serious harm, including:

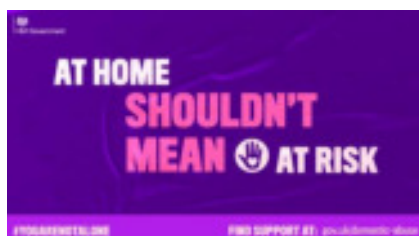
- severe and/or constant pain
- infections, such as tetanus, HIV and hepatitis B and C
- pain or difficulty having sex
- infertility
- bleeding, cysts and abscesses
- difficulties urinating or incontinence
- organ damage
- problems during pregnancy and childbirth, which can be life-threatening for the mother and baby
- mental health problems, such as depression, flashbacks and self-harm
- death from blood loss or infections.

### Signs FGM might happen

- A relative or someone known as a 'cutter' visiting from abroad.
- A special occasion or ceremony takes place where a girl 'becomes a woman' or is 'prepared for marriage'.
- A female relative, like a mother, sister or aunt has undergone FGM.
- A family arranges a long holiday overseas or visits a family abroad during the summer holidays.
- A girl has an unexpected or long absence from school.
- A girl struggles to keep up in school.
- A girl runs away – or plans to run away - from home.

### Signs FGM might have taken place

- Having difficulty walking, standing or sitting.
- Spending longer in the bathroom or toilet.
- Appearing quiet, anxious or depressed.
- Acting differently after an absence from school or college.
- Reluctance to go to the doctors or have routine medical examinations.
- Asking for help – though they might not be explicit about the problem because they're scared or embarrassed.



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### Who's at risk?

Girls living in communities that practise FGM are most at risk. It can happen in the UK or abroad. In the UK, the Home Office has identified girls and women from certain communities as being more at risk:

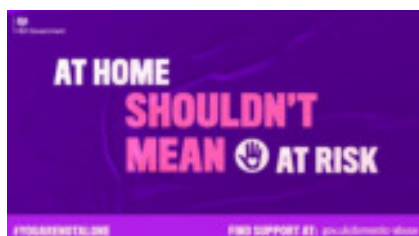
- Somali
- Kenyan
- Ethiopian
- Sierra Leonean
- Sudanese
- Egyptian
- Nigerian
- Eritrean
- Yemeni
- Kurdish
- Indonesian.

### If a child reveals abuse?

A child who has faced, or is worried about FGM, might not realise what's happening is wrong and they might even blame themselves. If a child talks to you about FGM it's important to:

- listen carefully to what they're saying
- let them know they've done the right thing by telling you
- tell them it's not their fault
- say you'll take them seriously
- don't confront the alleged abuser
- explain what you'll do next
- report what the child has told you as soon as possible.

Children are at a higher risk of FGM if it's already happened to their mother, sister or another member of their family. <sup>[2]</sup>



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### Seeking Help

All women and girls have the right to control what happens to their bodies and the right to say no to FGM.

Help is available if you have had FGM or you're worried that you or someone you know is at risk. If someone is in immediate danger, contact the police immediately by dialling 999.

If you're concerned that someone may be at risk, contact the NSPCC helpline on 0800 028 3550 or [fgmhelp@nspcc.org.uk](mailto:fgmhelp@nspcc.org.uk).

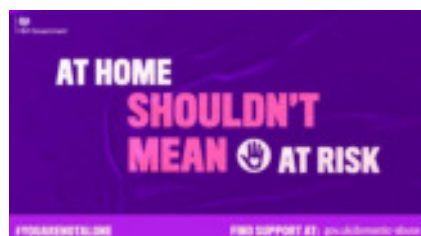
If you're under pressure to have FGM performed on your daughter, ask a GP, your health visitor or another healthcare professional for help, or contact the NSPCC helpline.

If you have had FGM, you can get help from a specialist NHS gynaecologist or FGM service – ask a GP, your midwife or any other healthcare professional about services in your area.

Read about National FGM Support Clinics and where to find them.

If you're a health professional caring for a patient under 18 who's had FGM, you have professional responsibilities to safeguard and protect her.

Guidance and resources about FGM for healthcare staff are available on the GOV.UK website. [\[1\]](#)



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### National resources for guidance

#### Coronavirus (COVID-19): support for victims of domestic abuse

[www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-and-domestic-abuse/coronavirus-covid-19-support-for-victims-of-domestic-abuse](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-and-domestic-abuse/coronavirus-covid-19-support-for-victims-of-domestic-abuse)

#### Apps to support those experiencing domestic abuse

[www.hestia.org/brightsky](https://www.hestia.org/brightsky)

#### COVID-19/Coronavirus: Safety Advice for Survivors

[www.womensaid.org.uk/covid-19-coronavirus-safety-advice-for-survivors](https://www.womensaid.org.uk/covid-19-coronavirus-safety-advice-for-survivors)

#### Domestic abuse and COVID-19

[www.safelives.org.uk/news-views/domestic-abuse-and-covid-19](https://www.safelives.org.uk/news-views/domestic-abuse-and-covid-19)

#### National campaign to raise awareness of the Silent Solution system

[www.policeconduct.gov.uk/news/national-campaign-raise-awareness-silent-solution-system](https://www.policeconduct.gov.uk/news/national-campaign-raise-awareness-silent-solution-system)

### Useful numbers and websites

#### Athena

Freephone 24-Hour National Domestic Abuse

Helpline: 0808 2000 247

To contact the Athena directly: 08001124052

[www.refuge.org.uk/our-work/our-services/one-stop-shop-services/athena](https://www.refuge.org.uk/our-work/our-services/one-stop-shop-services/athena)

[www.refuge.org.uk](https://www.refuge.org.uk)

#### Early Years Alliance - Lewisham Children's and Family Centres

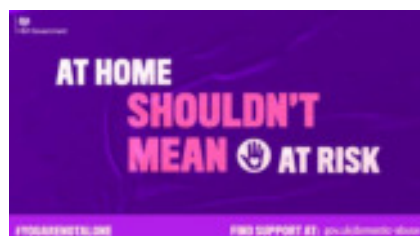
[www.lewishamcfc.org.uk](https://www.lewishamcfc.org.uk)

**The Deaf Health Charity – Sign Health** [www.signhealth.org.uk/our-projects/deafhope-projects/](https://www.signhealth.org.uk/our-projects/deafhope-projects/)

Text: 07970350366

#### **RASASC** (Rape and sexual abuse centre)

0808 802 9999



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### **African Advocacy Foundation**

www.africadvocacy.org  
020 8698 4473

### **Rights of women:**

rightsofwomen.org.uk

### **National stalking helpline – Suzy Lamplugh Trust**

www.suzylamplugh.org  
0808 802 0300

### **Respect Helpline for men**

0808 8010327  
respectphoneline.org.uk/help-for-domestic-abuse-victims

### **Women's Aid live chat**

This is an online chatting service which is ideal for victims who are self-isolating and do not want to be heard.

chat.womensaid.org.uk  
[www.womensaid.org.uk](http://www.womensaid.org.uk)  
0117 944 44 11

### **NSPCC**

Helpline - 0800 028 3550 or [fgmhelp@nspcc.org.uk](mailto:fgmhelp@nspcc.org.uk)

### **GALOP National LGBT+ Domestic Abuse Helpline**

0800 999 5428  
[www.galop.org.uk/domesticabuse](http://www.galop.org.uk/domesticabuse)

### **Women and Girls Network**

Sexual violence helpline - 08088010770

Free advice line - 08088010660

### **Future bulletins**

Please let me know if there is anything you would like to feature or promote within these bi-weekly bulletins.

[isis.pottinger@lewisham.gov.uk](mailto:isis.pottinger@lewisham.gov.uk) or  
[charlene.noel@lewisham.gov.uk](mailto:charlene.noel@lewisham.gov.uk)

For any other enquires please email  
[Vawg@lewisham.gov.uk](mailto:Vawg@lewisham.gov.uk)

For MARAC enquires please contact  
[Theresa.Stone@lewisham.gov.uk](mailto:Theresa.Stone@lewisham.gov.uk)

# Violence against women and girls (VAWG) Lewisham's VAWG COVID-19 response

## Future Training Sessions in Lewisham

### Effects of Domestic Abuse on Children

Registration is required and delegates will receive a confirmation email following sign up.

Please find link to this webinar below to secure your place!

[Effects Of Domestic Abuse on Children Webinar 08/12/20 10am -2pm](#)



**WEBINAR**  
**Effects of Domestic Abuse on Children**

ROZ DAVIDSON  
DIRECTOR - TPPC  
DOMESTIC ABUSE PROGRAMMES  
CONSULTANT (EYA/LCFC)  
CGP NATIONAL CONSULTANT AND  
TRAINER (AVA)  
CHAIR LEWISHAM VAWG FORUM  
Tuesday 8<sup>th</sup> December 2020  
10am-2pm

The Positive Parenting Company  
HOPE IS STRONGER THAN FEAR

Definition of Domestic Abuse  
Children's Beliefs  
The Impact of Trauma  
How Does Domestic Abuse Affect Children  
Traumatised Children  
Prevent-Protect-Repair  
How Do I Support A Child?  
Appropriate Planning for Children  
Professional Curiosity  
Information Sharing  
The Community Groups Programme  
Being Trauma Informed  
'Iceberging' - Activity  
Serious Case Reviews  
The Timekeeper' – Film produced for CADA  
Home Office Funding  
The Voice of the Children – Videoscribes

Followed by a Q&A Session

AIMS:

TO UNDERSTAND THE IMPACT OF DOMESTIC ABUSE ON CHILDREN

HOW TO APPROPRIATELY RESPOND TO CHILDREN EXPERIENCING DOMESTIC ABUSE

LOCAL AND NATIONAL INFORMATION REGARDING SERVICES APPROPRIATE FOR CHILDREN EXPERIENCING DA

## References

<https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/female-genital-mutilation-fgm/> <sup>[1]</sup>

<https://www.nspcc.org.uk/what-is-child-abuse/types-of-abuse/female-genital-mutilation-fgm/> <sup>[2]</sup>

