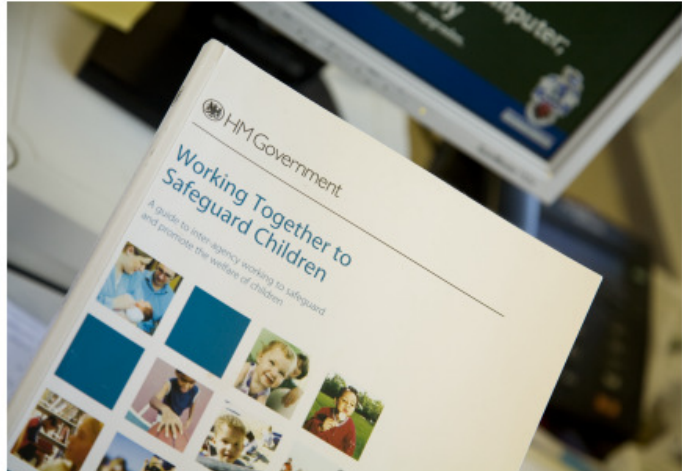


**CHILD ABUSE
INVESTIGATION
60 SECOND
UPDATE
May - June 2010**



This 60 second summary provides current updates for Police and partners from the Public Protection Unit at Headquarters. This summary is about Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) and how the holiday season is a peak time of year for FGM offences.

FGM is not regular occurrence in Devon and Cornwall, but this does not mean that incidents will not occur in our area. Female genital mutilation comprises all procedures involving the partial or total removal of the female external genitalia or other injury to the female genital organs for non-medical reasons.

There are four types of FGM, ranging from a symbolic prick to the vagina to the fairly extensive removal and narrowing of the vagina opening. In the UK all forms of FGM are prevalent. FGM is also sometimes known as 'female genital cutting' or 'female circumcision'. However, circumcision is not an appropriate term. Communities tend to use local names for referring to this practice including "sunna."

FGM is considered child abuse in the UK and a grave violation of the human rights of girls and women. In all circumstances where FGM is practised on a child it is a violation of the child's right to life, their right to their bodily integrity, as well as their right to health. The UK Government has signed a number of international human rights laws against FGM, including the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

FGM is practised mainly in 28 African countries and in a few countries in the Middle East, including Yemen and Northern Iraq, Asia and within certain ethnic groups in Central and South America. With increased immigration, the practice has spread to Europe, North America, and Australia.

- Between 100 and 140 million girls and women worldwide are estimated to have undergone FGM.
- 3 million girls in Africa are estimated to be at risk of FGM each year.
- It has been estimated that up to 24,000 girls under the age of 15 are at risk of FGM in the UK.

Girls are at particular risk of FGM during school summer holidays. This is the time when families may take their children abroad for the procedure. Many girls may not be aware that they may be at risk of undergoing FGM.

Communities that are most at risk of FGM include Kenyans, Somalis, Sudanese, Sierra Leoneans, Egyptians, Nigerians and Eritreans. However women from non-african communities that are at risk of FGM include Yemeni, Kurdish, Indonesian and Pakistani women. Those who are affected by FGM may also be British citizens born to parents from FGM practising communities or women resident in the UK who were born in countries that practice FGM. These may include immigrants, refugees, asylum seekers, overseas students or the wives of overseas students.

Police and partners should be mindful of the signs of FGM. Suspicions may arise in a number of ways that a child is being prepared for FGM to take place abroad. These include knowing that the family belongs to a community in which FGM is practised and is making preparations for the child to take a holiday, arranging vaccinations or planning absence from school. The child may also talk about a 'special procedure/ceremony' that is going to take place.

Indicators that FGM may already have occurred include prolonged absence from school, with noticeable behaviour change on return and long periods away from classes or other normal activities, possibly with bladder or menstrual problems. Some teachers have described how children find it difficult to sit still and look uncomfortable or may complain of pain between their legs or talk of something somebody did to them that they are not allowed to talk about.

If you suspect an FGM case, please consult with your local Child Abuse or Domestic Violence Team for further advice and assistance."

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