

ATL ADVICE



Mandatory reporting of FGM

Since October 2015 there has been a requirement on doctors, nurses, teachers and other professionals to report known cases of female genital mutilation (FGM) to the police. This factsheet outlines the reporting process for FGM in education settings.

What is FGM?

FGM involves cutting or injuring the female genital organs for non-medical reasons. It is a practice that is not condoned by any religion and can leave physical and mental scars on the girl involved.

It has been illegal in the UK since 2003, but many young girls are sent abroad to have the procedure carried out on them. The police estimate that around 144,000 girls living in the UK were born of women from FGM-practising countries. It is a widespread issue involving countries in Africa and Asia. It is also a very complex issue. While parents may not wish their daughter to undergo a procedure, they may face pressure from their families and their communities.

ATL has always welcomed the Government's commitment to addressing the issue and believes all types of gender-based violence can and should be tackled through partnership with health professionals, social care and the police. ATL knows the safeguarding of children is of paramount importance to our members.

What is mandatory reporting?

Under the mandatory reporting legislation, teachers are required to report known cases of FGM in under-18s to the police. A known case is where there has been visual identification (which, usually, applies to healthcare professionals) or direct verbal disclosure.

If you are a teacher, and a pupil who is under 18 informs you they have undergone FGM, you must ring the non-emergency 101 number within 48 hours. You should make a note of your actions and record the police reference number as evidence that you have complied with the duty.

What information will I need to give to the 101 operator?

When you make the call you will need to provide the following information - make sure you have it to hand.

1. Explain you are making a report under the FGM mandatory reporting duty and provide your details:
 - a. your contact details (work telephone number and email address) and the times when you will be available to be called back
 - b. your role
 - c. your place of work.
2. Provide the details of your organisation's designated safeguarding lead:
 - a. their name
 - b. their contact details (work telephone number and email address)
 - c. their place of work.
3. The girl's details:
 - a. her name
 - b. her age/date of birth
 - c. her address.
4. If applicable, confirm that you have undertaken, or will undertake, safeguarding actions.

The police recommend you explain to the girl that you are making the report, and why. You should make the report within 48 hours. It is unlikely a uniformed response is necessary; instead a detective from child protection is likely to make a follow-up telephone call.

What should I do if the matter falls outside of the above scenario?

Teaching assistants and other support staff are not covered by the mandatory reporting duty. Instead, they should follow the normal safeguarding route.

A suspicion that FGM has been performed on a pupil should be dealt with through the usual safeguarding procedures. The mandatory reporting duty only applies to a direct disclosure/visual identification.

If it is an emergency, you should telephone 999 - ie, a pupil discloses that they or a sibling are in imminent danger of being subjected to FGM, or a pupil is suffering severe medical complications of FGM.

What happens if there is a failure to report a direct disclosure?

Failure to comply with the mandatory reporting duty (within 30 days) will not lead to criminal sanctions, but you may face disciplinary sanctions.

What is ATL's policy on this?

ATL fully supports the work being undertaken by the police to tackle what is essentially the subjugation of females.

If you are in any doubt you should speak to your designated safeguarding lead, but remember, the duty is individual not organisational. Once you have made your report via the 101 number, you have met the duty.



Need advice?

Your first point of contact is the ATL rep in your school/college. Your local ATL branch/district is also available to help, or you can contact ATL's member advisers on 020 7930 6441, email info@atl.org.uk. Don't forget there's lots more advice on ATL's website at www.atl.org.uk.

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