



## Appendix 4: Graham James Primary Academy



### **SAFEGUARDING** – Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) & Breast Ironing

#### Definition:

*“All procedures which involve the partial or total removal of the external genitalia or injury to the female genital organs whether for cultural or any other non-therapeutic reasons”*

The World Health Organisation

### **FGM is Child Abuse**

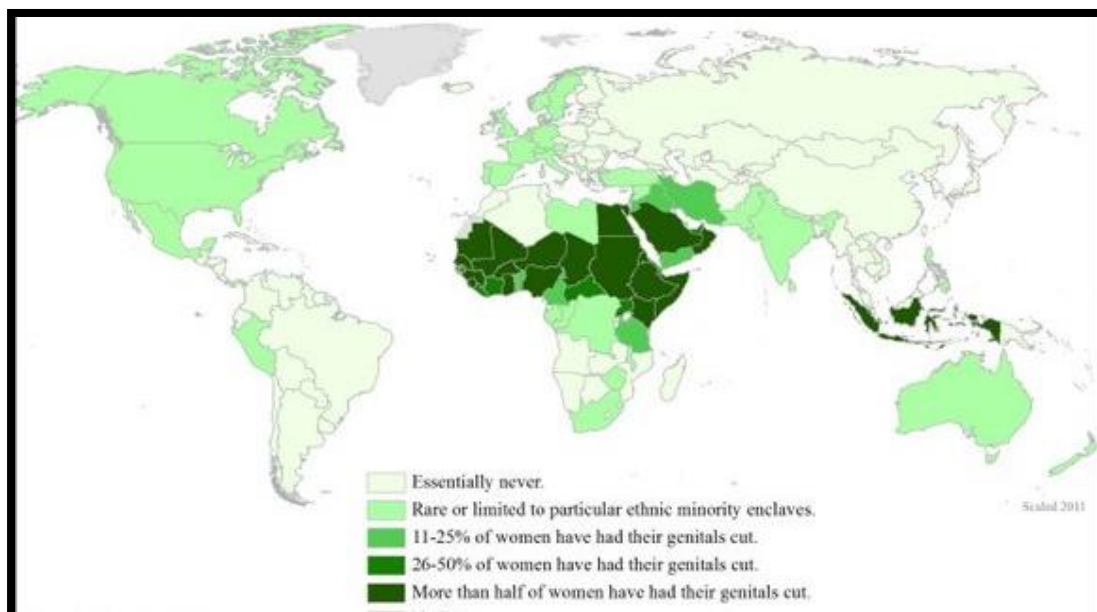
FGM is usually carried out on young girls at some time between infancy and the age of 15 –  
Commonly under the age of 10 – most probably 6 to 8 years old.

### **FGM in the UK is ILLEGAL**

#### **Practising countries:**

FGM can happen and does happen everywhere – the myth that it is only associated with African countries is a common misconception. Below is a list of countries that are classed as ‘practising’:

Senegal	Gambia	Guinea-Bissau	Iran	Sierra Leone
Liberia	Mali	Mauritania	Burkina	Malaysia
Iraq	Ethiopia	Sudan	Pakistan	Chad
Egypt	Tanzania	Benin	Niger	Indonesia
Togo	Ghana	Sudan	Somalia	Sri Lanka
Kenya	Cote D’Ivoire	Nigeria	Djibouti	UAE
Eritrea	Uganda	India	Central African Republic	



In a recent UNICEF document (UNICEF, 2013; EIGE) 125 million girls and women in 29 countries in Africa and the Middle East had undergone a form of FGM. It is also predicted that worldwide 30 million girls are at risk in the next decade. 500,000 women and girls living in Europe have undergone FGM and a further 180,000 girls are at risk of FGM.

In England and Wales, 60,000 girls aged 0-14 have been born to mothers who have undergone FGM. 103,000 women aged 15-49 and approximately 24,000 women aged 50+ are living in England and Wales with the consequences of FGM. 10,000 girls aged under 15 are likely to have undergone FGM

(City University & Equality Now, 2007 revised 2014)

### **Why is FGM carried out?**

FGM is carried out for many different reasons, below are just some beliefs:

- FGM brings status/ respect to the girl – social acceptance for marriage
- Preserves a girls virginity
- Part of being a woman/ rite of passage
- Upholds family honour
- Cleanses and purifies the girl
- Gives a sense of belonging within a community
- Fulfils a religious requirement
- Perpetuates a custom/ tradition
- Helps girls to be clean/ hygienic
- Is cosmetically desirable
- Mistakenly believed to make childbirth easier

### **FGM Risk factors:**

The list below are of circumstances and occurrences that may point to FGM potentially happening:

- Child talking about a special ceremony/ special presents
- Child being taken on holiday/ prolonged period (especially around school holidays)
- Frequent trips to country of origin
- Child talks about being 'cut'
- Family being from one of the 'at risk' communities for FGM
- Knowledge that the child's siblings/ mother have undergone FGM

### **Signs that may indicate a child has undergone FGM:**

- Prolonged absence from school
- Behaviour change on return from a holiday (withdrawn/ subdued)
- Bladder issues (e.g. taking a long time to go to the toilet)
- Difficulty in sitting still and looking uncomfortable/ in pain
- Secretive behaviour – including isolating themselves from others
- Reluctance to take part/ get changed for PE
- Repeated urinal tract infection

## **FGM & the UK Law**

FGM has been illegal in the UK since 1985 under the Prohibition of Female Circumcision Act (5 years imprisonment). In 2003, The Female Genital Mutilation Act was published. In summary, the FGM Act 2003 stated:

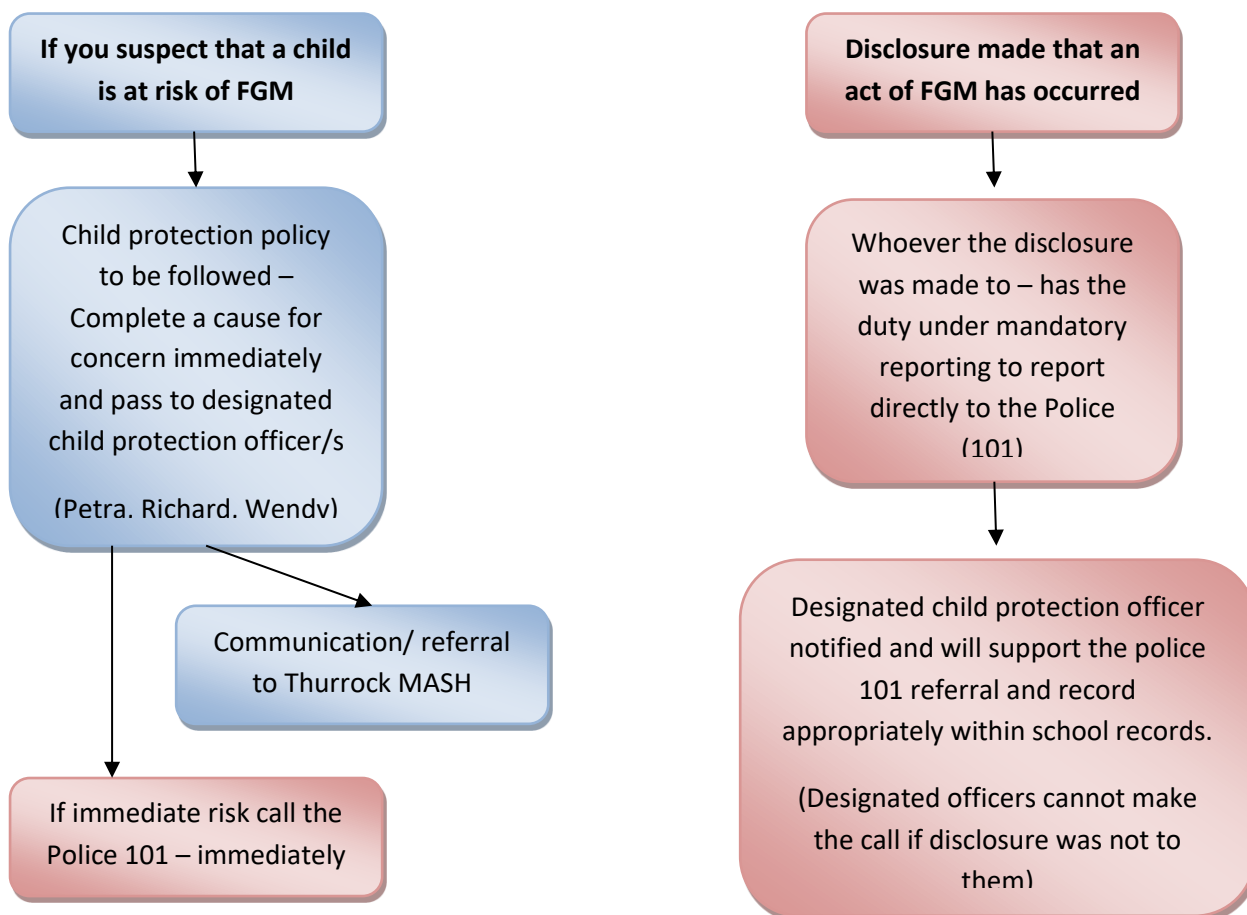
- It is an offence to commit FGM in or outside the UK on a UK national or resident
- It is an offence to assist the carrying out of FGM in the UK or abroad
- It is an offence to assist a girl to commit FGM on herself in the UK or abroad

## **Serious Crime Act 2015**

The Serious Crime Act extends the reach of the 2003 FGM Act to habitual as well as permanent residents in the UK.

There is new legislation on mandatory reporting for teachers, regulated health and social care professionals, whereby reporting to the police must happen for any known cases of FGM on anyone under the age of 18 (within 1 month). Failure to report will lead to internal disciplinary sanctions and/or professional organisation sanctions.

## **FGM & Graham James Primary Academy:**





## **Breast Ironing/ Breast Flattening**



### **What is Breast Flattening or Breast Ironing?**

“the process during which young pubescent girls’ breasts are ironed, massaged, flattened and/or pounded down over a period of time (sometimes years) in order for the breasts to disappear or delay the development of the breasts entirely.”

### **What is breast ironing?**

Breast Ironing is practiced in some African countries, notably Cameroon. Girls aged between 9 and 15 have hot pestles, stones or other implements rubbed on their developing breast to stop them growing further. In the vast majority of cases breast ironing is carried out by mothers or grandmothers and the men in the family are unaware. Estimates range between 25% and 50% of girls in Cameroon are affected by breast ironing, affecting up to 3.8 million women across Africa.

### **Why does breast ironing happen?**

The practice of breast ironing is seen as a protection to girls by making them seem ‘child-like’ for longer and reduce the likelihood of pregnancy. Once girls’ breasts have developed, they are at risk of sexual harassment, rape, forced marriage and kidnapping; consequently, breast ironing is more prevalent in cities. Cameroon has one of the highest rates of literacy in Africa and ensuring that girls remain in education is seen as an important outcome of breast ironing.

### **Breast ironing is physical abuse**

Breast ironing is a form of physical abuse that has been condemned by the United Nations and identified as Gender-based Violence. Although, countries where breast ironing is prevalent have ratified the African Charter on Human Rights to prevent harmful traditional practices, it is not against the law.

Breast ironing does not stop the breasts from growing, but development can be slowed down. Damage caused by the ‘ironing’ can leave women with malformed breasts, difficulty breastfeeding or producing milk, severe chest pains, infections and abscesses. In some cases, it may be related to the onset of breast cancer.

### **Breast Ironing in the UK**

Concerns have been raised that breast ironing is also to be found amongst African communities in the UK, with as many as a 1,000 girls at risk. Keeping Children Safe in Education (2016) mentions breast ironing on page 54, as part of the section on so-called ‘Honour Violence’. Staff worried about the risk of breast ironing in their school should speak to the Designated Safeguarding Lead as soon as possible. Schools need to know the risk level within their communities and tackle the risk as appropriate.