



Women  
of  
GRACE  
UK



# FGM Information & Resources



## Mission Statement

Women of Grace is a UK-based charity working towards ending the harmful practices of Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) and Honour Based Violence (HBV). We are a grassroots organisation, led and supported by survivors, activists, and health and social professionals. This means we have an intimate understanding of the harm caused by FGM and other gender based violence (GBV), as well as its physical and psychological impacts.

We engage with the community through workshops, talks, and activities. Our services include raising awareness of the harmful practices, providing advice and guidance, resilience building and support, wellness services, and direction to further organisations that can assist with particular situations.

We have no restrictions when it comes to supporting women and girls who may be dealing with trauma from FGM– as long as they are in our region and within our reach, we support women regardless of their background, religion or race. We are determined as an organisation to continue to empower women and girls to recognise the signs of such abuses, and where to get help so that they can be protected from all types of harm.



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Breaking the Silence

## Our Values

**Respect** – Acknowledging the lived experiences of the women and girls we work with.

**Compassion** – Creating a safe space free of preconceptions and judgment where women and girls can seek support.

**Empowerment** – To provide women and girls with the tools they need to overcome any of the harms they have been subjected to, and to build their confidence.

## Our Founder

Valerie Lolomari is a survivor of FGM who founded Women of Grace UK to support other women with shared experiences. She is also an award-winning motivational speaker, who actively speaks out against the practices of FGM, and on Monday mornings runs "TalksWithValerie" which consist of motivational videos to encourage and uplift women from all walks of life. This has allowed her to share her passion for helping people and seeing them succeed. Valerie is also a resilience coach, a mental health first aider and author of three books.



### TRIGGER WARNING

The following pages contains images and descriptions that may be disturbing to some readers.



# Our Team & Supporters



# What is Female Genital Mutilation?

Female genital mutilation (FGM) comprises all procedures that involve the removal, cutting or mutilation of the whole or any part of the external female genitalia for non-medical reasons.

It is a practice which takes place worldwide. Religious, social and cultural reasons are given to justify FGM, however it's a dangerous practice and can cause long-lasting health problems.

FGM is classified into four types depending on the area of the female genitalia that was cut, removed and in some cases stitched.

The procedure may be carried out shortly after birth, during childhood, adolescence, just before marriage or during a woman's first pregnancy.

Globally an estimated 200 million women and girls have undergone FGM. Due to the hidden nature of it the exact number in the UK who are impacted is unknown, but it is estimated that around 137,000 women and girls in England and Wales are living with the consequences of FGM. It is a hidden crime, linked to domestic abuse and forced marriage.

## Immediate complications

- Bleeding / haemorrhage
- Shock
- Organ damage
- Wound healing problems
- Vaginal and urinary tract infection
- Fractures as a result of restraint
- Death from blood loss or infection

## Long-term consequences

- Severe and/or constant pain
- Repeated infections, such as tetanus, HIV and hepatitis B and C, which can lead to infertility
- Pain and difficulty during sex
- Bleeding, cysts and abscesses
- Problems peeing or holding pee in (incontinence)
- Depression, post-traumatic stress, anxiety, and other mood disorders
- Problems during labour and childbirth, which can be life threatening for mother and baby



**Type 1 or Clitoridectomy**

Clitoris or clitoral hood is cut off.



**Type 2 or Intermediate**

Clitoris and inner lips are removed.



**Type 3 or Infibulation**

Clitoris, inner and outer lips are removed and the remaining skin is stitched or sealed leaving a small opening.



**Type 4 or other harmful procedures**

including piercing, pricking, stretching, scraping, burning, cutting and introducing corrosives/herbs.



If a girl is in immediate danger, contact the police by calling 999

## Indicators a girl is at risk

- One or both parents come from an ethnic group that traditionally practices FGM
- A female relative has undergone FGM
- Parents express views which show that they value FGM
- A special occasion is planned where a girl 'becomes a woman' or is 'prepared for marriage'
- Plans for a long holiday abroad
- A girl has an unexpected or long absence from school
- Appearing quiet, anxious or depressed.
- Decreased engagement at school

You might have heard FGM be called by different names. Some common names for FGM include:

- female circumcision
- cutting
- sunna
- gudniin
- halalays
- tahur
- megrez
- khitan

## Signs FGM may have taken place

- Difficulty or discomfort walking, standing or sitting
- Complaints of pain between legs
- Spending longer than usual in the bathroom (due to difficulties urinating)
- Acting differently after an absence from school
- Avoiding physical activities at school such as P.E
- Reluctance to visit the doctors or have routine medical examinations.
- Mentioning that someone did something to them that they're not allowed to talk about
- Asking for help— although they might not be explicit about the problem because they're scared or embarrassed

## Barriers to speaking up

- Young girls are unlikely to report on their loved ones
- Many survivors are from caring families where FGM/C is a long-held cultural practice
- Taboo to talk about genitals
- They may be fearful of disclosing full extent of abuse
- Fear of losing family support

A child who has been a victim of, or is worried about FGM, might not realise it 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.



## UK Legislation

Under section 1 of the Female Genital Mutilation Act 2003 it is illegal to carry out FGM in the UK, regardless of nationality or residence status. It is also a criminal offence for UK nationals or residents to perform or assist FGM to be carried out on UK national or resident overseas. The Serious Crime Act 2015 extended FGM Act 2003 protection to include UK habitual residents, mandatory reporting, introduction of FGM Protection Orders and lifelong anonymity for survivors. The maximum penalty for FGM is 14 years imprisonment.

The mandatory duty of care for health and social care professionals and teachers requires them report to the police (by phoning 101) if they discover that FGM has been carried out on a girl under 18 years of age during the course of their work.

An FGM Protection Order is a civil law measure which provides a means of protecting and safeguarding victims and potential victims of FGM, such as surrendering a passport to prevent the person at risk being taken abroad to undergo FGM.



## FGM Support Services:

### Foreign and Commonwealth Office

Contact the Foreign and Commonwealth Office if a girl or woman at risk has already been taken abroad.

☎ 020 7008 1500

✉ [fcocorrespondence@fco.gov.uk](mailto:fcocorrespondence@fco.gov.uk)

### Home Office FGM Unit

The Home Office co-ordinates efforts across government and offers outreach support to local areas.

➤ [gov.uk/government/collections/female-genital-mutilation](https://gov.uk/government/collections/female-genital-mutilation)

✉ [fgmenquiries@homeoffice.gov.uk](mailto:fgmenquiries@homeoffice.gov.uk)

Other charities working to end domestic abuse and violence against women and children. Contact the police on 999 if you think that a girl or woman is in immediate danger of FGM.

### Forward

Tackling FGM/C, child marriage, domestic and sexual violence, and discrimination.

➤ [forwarduk.org.uk](https://forwarduk.org.uk)

☎ 07834 168 141

Open Mon to Fri 9:30am - 5:30pm

✉ [support@forwarduk.org.uk](mailto:support@forwarduk.org.uk)

### FGM Helpline (NSPCC)

☎ 0800 028 3550

✉ [fgm.help@nspcc.org.uk](mailto:fgm.help@nspcc.org.uk)

### Solace

➤ [solacewomensaid.org](https://solacewomensaid.org)

☎ 0808 802 5565

Open Mon - Fri 10am - 4pm

Tues 6pm - 8pm

✉ [advice@solacewomensaid.org](mailto:advice@solacewomensaid.org)

### Refugee & Women's Aid

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

➤ [womensaid.org.uk](https://womensaid.org.uk)

☎ 0808 2000 247

24hr helpline

✉ [helpline@womensaid.org.uk](mailto:helpline@womensaid.org.uk)

### Women and Girls Network

➤ [wgn.org.uk](https://wgn.org.uk)

☎ 0808 801 0660

Open Mon - Fri 10am - 4pm

+ Wed eve 6pm - 9pm

✉ [info@respectphoneline.org.uk](mailto:info@respectphoneline.org.uk)

### The Vavengers

➤ [thevavengers.co.uk](https://thevavengers.co.uk)

✉ [info@thevavengers.co.uk](mailto:info@thevavengers.co.uk)





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## Get in touch

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Instagram: [@womenofgraceuk](https://www.instagram.com/womenofgraceuk)

Facebook: Women of Grace UK

LinkedIn: Women of Grace UK