


# Female Genital Mutilation

Ashiana Sheffield  
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# Ashiana Sheffield Ltd.

- ▶ Ashiana Sheffield is a specialist BME women's service that has been based in Sheffield since 1981.
- ▶ Ashiana Sheffield supports Black, Asian, Minority Ethnic and Refugee (BAMER) women and children from all over the country and recently arrived from all the world, fleeing domestic and sexual abuse within a range of multiple perpetrator systems such as Forced Marriage, Female Genital Mutilation, Human Trafficking, Gang Violence and 'Honour'–based Violence

# Key Facts

- ▶ FGM is illegal in the UK
  - ▶ It is a practice that takes place worldwide in at least 28 African countries and in parts of the Middle and Far East
  - ▶ It also takes place within parts of Western Europe and other developed countries, primarily among immigrant and refugee communities
  - ▶ Many women and men from practising communities consider it to be normal to protect their cultural identity.
  - ▶ FGM is used as a way of ensuring virginity and chastity
  - ▶ FGM is not supported by any religious doctrine.
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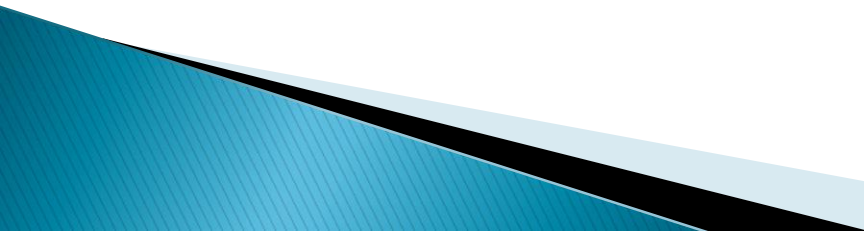
# Definition

- ▶ Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) is a collective term for a range of procedures which involve partial or total removal of the external female genitalia for non-medical reasons. It is sometimes referred to as female circumcision, or female genital cutting. The practice is medically unnecessary, is extremely painful and has serious health consequences, both at the time when the mutilation is carried out, and in later life.

# Cultural and Social Factors

- ▶ Where FGM is a social convention (social norm), the social pressure to conform to what others do and have been doing, as well as the need to be accepted socially and the fear of being rejected by the community, are strong motivations to perpetuate the practice. In some communities, FGM is almost universally performed and unquestioned.
- ▶ FGM is often considered a necessary part of raising a girl, and a way to prepare her for adulthood and marriage.
- ▶ FGM is often motivated by beliefs about what is considered acceptable sexual behaviour.
- ▶ Where it is believed that being cut increases marriageability, FGM is more likely to be carried out.
- ▶ FGM is associated with cultural ideals of femininity and modesty, which include the notion that girls are clean and beautiful after removal of body parts that are considered unclean, unfeminine or male.
- ▶ Though no religious scripts prescribe the practice, practitioners often believe the practice has religious support.
- ▶ Religious leaders take varying positions with regard to FGM: some promote it, some consider it irrelevant to religion, and others contribute to its elimination.
- ▶ Local structures of power and authority, such as community leaders, religious leaders, circumcisers, and even some medical personnel can contribute to upholding the practice.
- ▶ In most societies, where FGM is practised, it is considered a cultural tradition, which is often used as an argument for its continuation.
- ▶ In some societies, recent adoption of the practice is linked to copying the traditions of neighbouring groups. Sometimes it has started as part of a wider religious or traditional revival movement.

# FGM and Genital Piercing

- ▶ There is no legal age restriction on most body piercings
  - ▶ Performing genital or female nipple piercing on someone under the age of 18 could be considered an offence.
  - ▶ Some local authorities and piercing businesses may have their own regulations concerning age limits and consent for body piercings.
  - ▶ You may be required to sign consent to confirm you want to go ahead with the piercing.
  - ▶ Children under 16 may need to have a parent or guardian with them.
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# Case Study: FGM

I was born in Sierra Leone and lived with my mother and sister. I was cut when I was 8 years old. I was told that there will be a grand ceremony and they bought me a very pretty dress. They invited a lot of other women and there was music and dance. Then the women took me into an empty room and one came behind me and pinned me to the floor by pressing my shoulders hard. Another held my left leg and a third held my right leg. At that point I started panicking and asked them to release me. They did not listen. My mother has disappeared and the only familiar face was that of my auntie who kept on telling me to lie down and be quiet. A very old lady came in sat in front of my opened legs and opened a piece of cloth. She took out a blade and started cutting me. The pain was excruciating. I started screaming. I tried with all my strength to free my legs but the two women holding me, held harder and harder and I kept screaming. The woman kept on cutting. I think I fainted at that point.

I felt betrayed by my mother and did not want to talk to her. She told me that when I grow up I will be able to have children safely and my husband will love me.

Since that day I had a lot of pain when I passed water and when I started having a period. I would scream from the pain sometimes.

I never felt anything when my husband came to my bed at night. I cleaned his house, cooked for him and he forced me to sleep with him all the time. It hurt a lot. It hurt more when I gave birth to my children.

I am happy I am in the UK now and no one is going to force my daughter to endure what I endured.

# Case Study: FGM

I was six years old when it happened to me. I knew what was going to happen, I knew they were going to cut me because a lot of my friends had had it done and I'd had a look - it was quite normal for girls to have a look at each other. My friends had told me that it was really painful, that it was horrible, so I was terrified. It happened when my mother was away and relatives were looking after me and my sister.

In the morning, when I was at school, they told me it was 'my time'. My uncle and aunt came to take me from the school. It was my sister's time too - she was eight years old. The woman who cut us was my grandmother's sister - and she was going to cut us in a tent near a huge tree. They used ropes to tie our legs apart and there were lots and lots of girls there. I could hear screaming, lots of horrible screaming and there was so much blood. Girls were crying.

My sister went first, they cut her then they took her somewhere. I heard she fainted. My grandmother's sister was cutting so many girls and when my sister had been done, she told her to stand just outside, and the blood was running down her legs, then she fainted. My grandmother was screaming at her sister - asking her how she could do this to her grandchildren. She was terrified that my sister would die. But my great aunt insisted, and they said it was my turn. I ran away - I ran as fast as I could but they sent boys after me and they caught me. They took me legs and my arms and carried me back. One of them was my older brother - he helped carry me back to the cutter.

They tied me down, I was fighting as hard as I could, but they were stronger. I was screaming. The old woman, my great aunt, used a razor blade - it was clean and new, but there was no anaesthetic when she cut me. I have no memory at all of her cutting me - it's blank. But then another woman came, she was from a different city, and she gave me an injection before they stitched me up. They tied my legs together the whole way down so I couldn't open my legs, I was like that for three or four weeks.

I remember my grandmother taking me home and telling me I had to pee, I was terrified. Because my legs were tied I couldn't sit to pee, so I leaned over on one side and the pain was unbearable. I jumped, and some of the stitches opened. My neighbour, she was in her 30s, said I would have to be sewn up again but my grandmother refused.

When I came to England and I started having periods, the problems started. I had to go to the doctor and they opened me, so everything is much better, but there are still some problems. Lots of people from my community believe that if you are 'open' [haven't undergone FGM], no man will want to marry you, and they keep telling me that. But I don't believe that - and in any case, if a man doesn't want me because I am open, the way Allah made me, then he can go away!

This may sound strange, but I'm not angry about what happened to me. There's no point, I don't want to spend my life feeling anger and hate. I want to be at peace.



# Prevalence of FGM in the UK

Estimated there are 137,000 women and girls in UK with FGM

Approximately 60,000 girls aged 0 to 14 were born in England and Wales to mothers who had undergone FGM

Approximately 10,000 girls aged under 15 who have migrated to England and Wales are likely to have undergone FGM

Approximately 103,000 women aged 15 - 19 migrated to England and Wales are living with the consequences of FGM.

London has the highest prevalence rate in England and Wales with an estimated 2.1% of women affected by FGM

No local authority area is likely to be free from FGM entirely

# Legislation

Previous

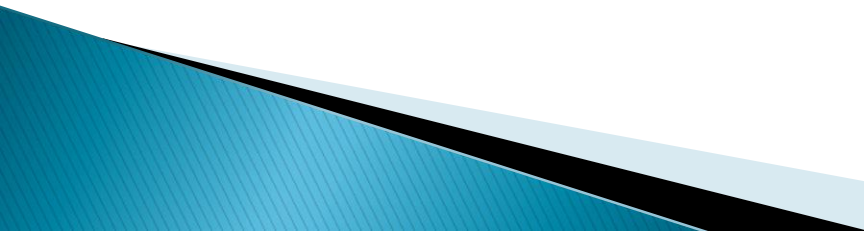
Prohibition of Female  
Circumcision Act 1985

Current

Female Genital Mutilation  
Act 2003


Serious Crime Act 2015,  
s70-75

# Offences of FGM

- ▶ Perform FGM in England and Wales (s1)
  - ▶ Assist a girl to carry out FGM on herself in England and Wales (s2)
  - ▶ Aid, abet, counsel or procure a person to commit an FGM offence
  - ▶ Encourage or assist a person to commit an FGM offence
  - ▶ Attempt to commit an FGM offence
  - ▶ Conspire to commit an FGM offence
  - ▶ A person who is responsible for a girl under the age of 16 at the time the FGM occurred could be guilty of an offence (s3A)
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# FGM Taking Place Outside the UK

It is an offence for a UK national or resident to:

- ▶ Perform FGM abroad
  - ▶ Assist a girl to carry out FGM on herself outside the UK
  - ▶ Assist (from outside the UK) a non-UK person to carry out FGM outside the UK on a UK national or UK resident (s3)
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# Criminal Convictions

Sections 1, 2 and 3 of The 2003 Act:

- ▶ up to 14 years' imprisonment
- ▶ a fine
- ▶ or both.

Section 3A of the 2003 Act:

- ▶ up to 7 years' imprisonment
  - ▶ a fine
  - ▶ or both.
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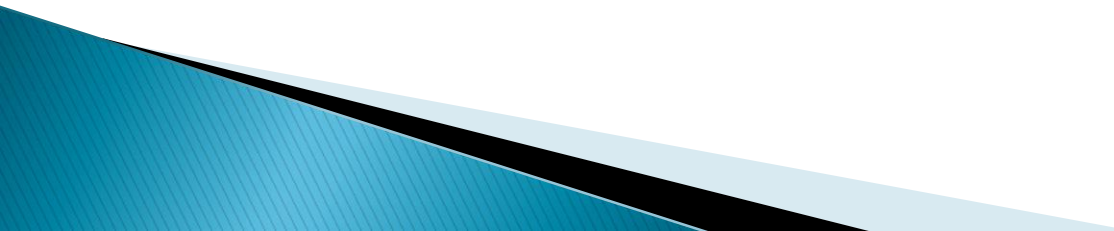
# Prosecutions

- ▶ Successful prosecutions in the UK?

# NONE

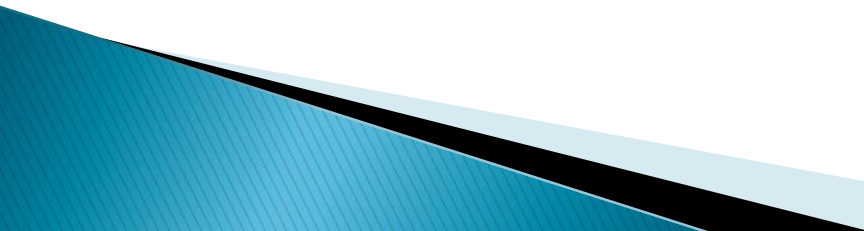
- ▶ Since 2010, only 29 cases of FGM offences have been referred to the CPS and a number of those cases are still live (source: Letter from Sarah Newton to the Chair of the Committee, 21 July 2016)

# Civil Remedies

- ▶ Under section 5A and schedule 2 of the 2003 Act provision is made for FGM protection orders.
  - ▶ An FGM protection order is a civil law measure which provides a means of protecting actual or potential victims from FGM.
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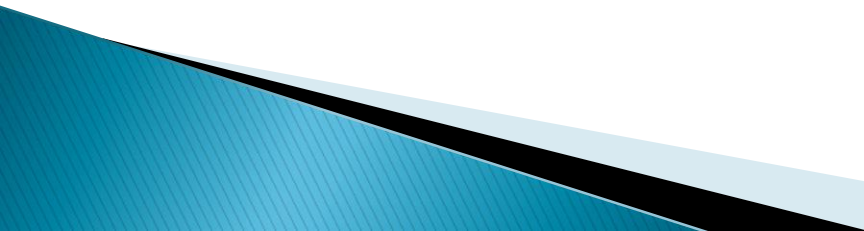
# The Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) Enhanced Dataset

It supports the Department of Health's FGM Prevention Programme by presenting a national picture of the prevalence of FGM in England.

- ▶ Between October and December 2016 there were 2,332 attendances reported at NHS trusts and GP practices where FGM was identified or a procedure for FGM was undertaken.
  - ▶ There were 1,268 women and girls who had their FGM information collected in the Enhanced Dataset for the first time.
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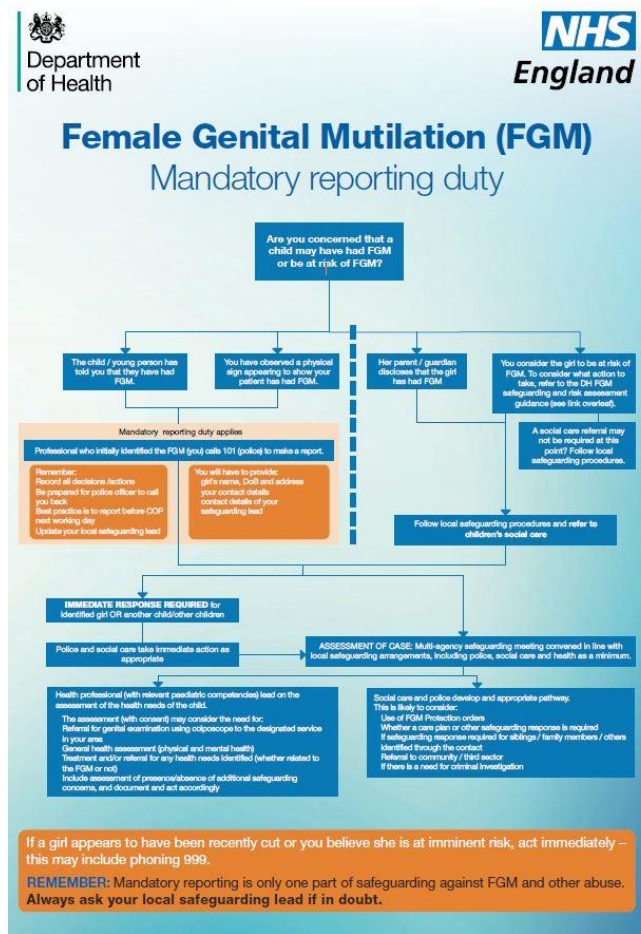
# Other Legislative Aspects

- ▶ Victims of FGM are guaranteed lifelong anonymity
  - ▶ Mandatory duty placed on health and social care professionals and teachers to notify police when during the course of their work they discover FGM has been carried out on a girl under 18 years
  - ▶ Provides for statutory guidance on FGM
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# Mandatory Duty to Report FGM

- ▶ Health and social care professionals regulated by a body which is overseen by the Professional Standards Authority for Health and Social Care (with the exception of the Pharmaceutical Society of Northern Ireland). This includes those regulated by the:
  1. General Chiropractic Council
  2. General Dental Council
  3. General Medical Council
  4. General Optical Council
  5. General Osteopathic Council
  6. General Pharmaceutical Council
- ▶ Health and Care Professions Council (whose role includes the regulation of social workers in England)
- ▶ Nursing and Midwifery Council
- ▶ Teachers: this includes qualified teachers or persons who are employed or engaged to carry out teaching work in schools and other institutions, and, in Wales, education practitioners regulated by the Education Workforce Council;
- ▶ Social care workers in Wales

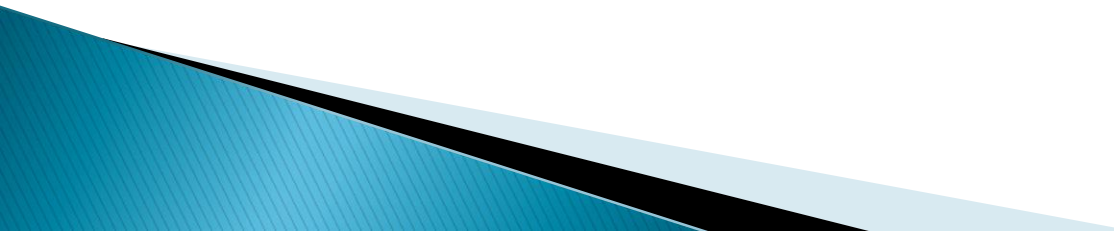
# Mandatory Reporting Pathway



If a girl appears to have been recently cut or you believe she is at imminent risk, act immediately – this may include phoning 999.

**REMEMBER:** Mandatory reporting is only one part of safeguarding against FGM and other abuse. Always ask your local safeguarding lead if in doubt.

# The Sheffield FGM Strategy

- ▶ The purpose of this strategy is to outline the objectives required to tackle issues around FGM in Sheffield.
  - ▶ The strategy is supported by the FGM pathway that has been developed by the SSCB Multi-Agency Task and Finish group to support Communities and Practitioners in Sheffield
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# 3 Key Objectives of the Strategy

## 1. Protection

- ▶ To safeguard the physical and emotional health of girls and women who have undergone FGM by ensuring professionals in all agencies are able to identify and assess their needs.
- ▶ To investigate individual cases of abuse and protect girls suspected to be at high risk of FGM

## 2. Provision

- ▶ To ensure women and girls who have undergone FGM can access specialist services for information, advice, support and any necessary mental or physical health interventions.
- ▶ To ensure all agencies have access to resources that identify services available

## 3. Prevention

- ▶ To improve education, awareness of FGM with agencies, professionals, community groups, education, youth services etc. to inform and help address attitudes and myths about FGM, to eradicate acceptance of FGM in Sheffield.
- ▶ To support professionals and community groups to share their knowledge of 'what works' in reducing the risk of FGM to girls.
- ▶ To support and educate pregnant women and new mothers to improve their understanding of FGM (including legal position), children's safeguarding issues and access to help and advice.

# Sheffield Multi-Agency FGM Pathway

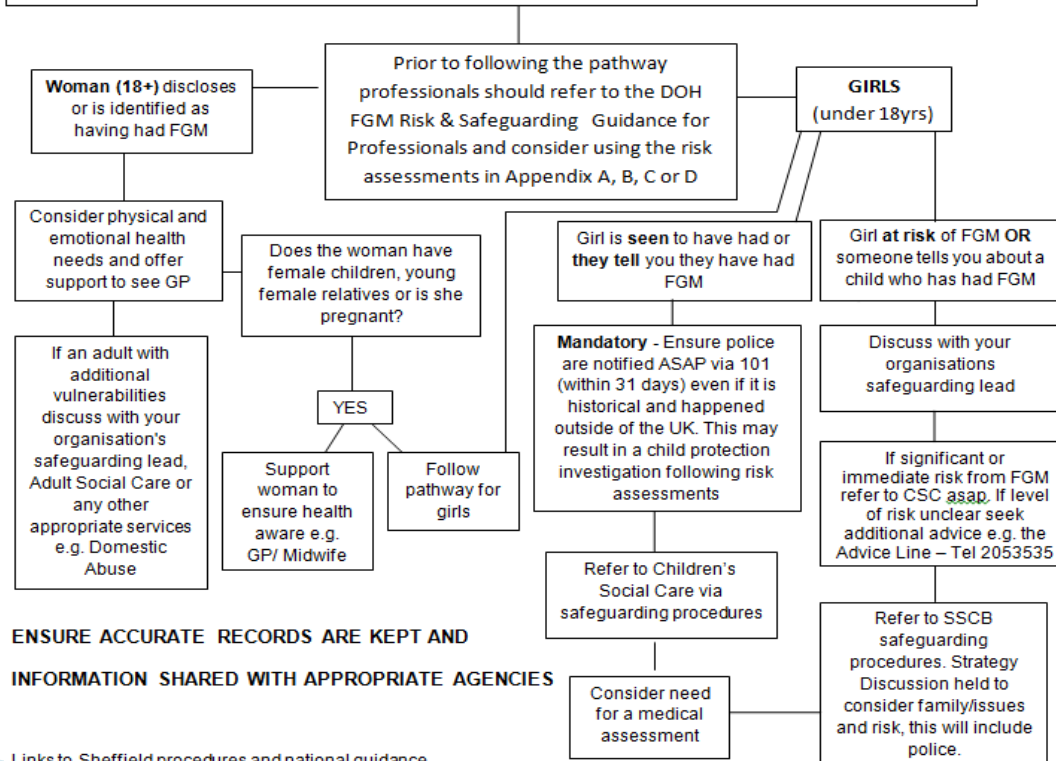
Questions to consider asking to aid identification of victims and those at risk

**Do you come from a community that practices cutting (FGM)?**

**Have you/ your wife / partner or any other family members been cut e.g. sisters, cousins etc.?**

**Do you or any member of your family want/plan to have your daughter cut (Inc. grandparents)?**

Provide information to women and girls on how to access health, support services, counselling etc.

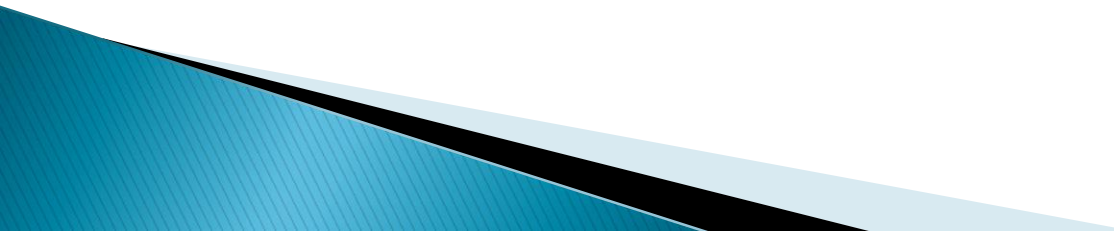


Links to Sheffield procedures and national guidance

# Barnsley Procedures and National Guidelines

- ▶ Barnsley Safeguarding Procedure:  
[http://www.proceduresonline.com/barnsley/scb/p\\_fem\\_gen\\_mutil.html](http://www.proceduresonline.com/barnsley/scb/p_fem_gen_mutil.html)
- ▶ FGM Guidance for healthcare staff:  
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/safeguarding-women-and-girls-at-risk-of-fgm>
- ▶ Multi-agency statutory guidance on FGM:  
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/multi-agency-statutory-guidance-on-female-genital-mutilation>

# Effective Practices and Resources

- ▶ FGM Statutory Multi-Agency Guidance
  - ▶ Mandatory reporting of FGM
  - ▶ Police
  - ▶ Local Authorities
  - ▶ Local Safeguarding Children Boards
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# *My Journey from Girlhood*

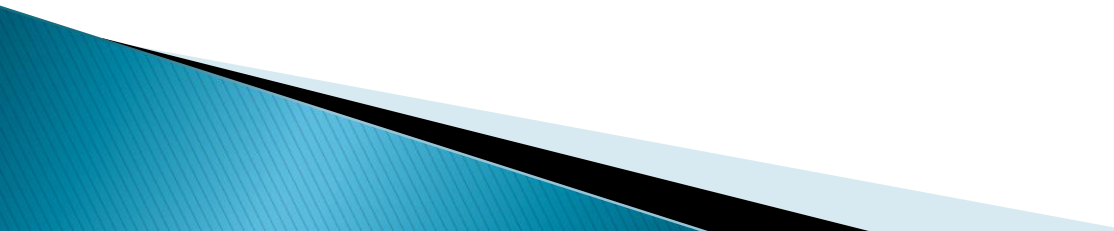
By Najma

*Perhaps the only thing we'll ever know  
The feeling of sand choked between clenched fists  
Or maybe the only thing we'll ever hold are our bodies reflected in pieces of broken mirrors  
Shards of glasses fighting their way out to freedom into nothingness.*

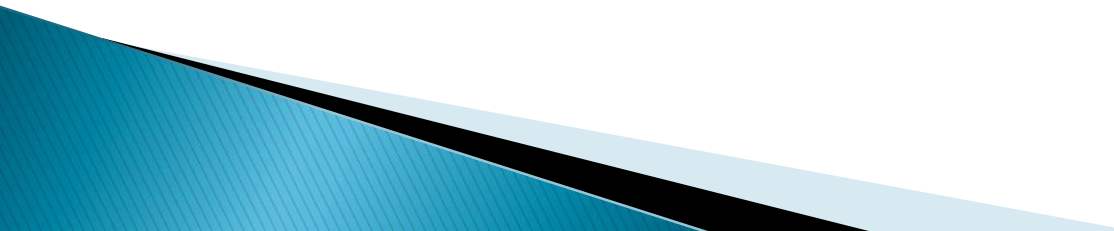
*All I know is existence  
The feel of the blade against warm skin  
Scraping, cutting, equalizing  
Bent legs hanging loosely  
Like lynched bodies on a noose  
Fighting a war they were never meant to win  
Broken barriers and faded stamps  
Skeleton of skin stretched between cold fingers  
Like the cursed fugitive it's always been.*

*The day I was born  
The world stretched tall  
Deciding what it should  
Inherit from me  
Thorny twigs and  
Tear filled clouds  
This is my journey from girlhood*

# Ashiana: Tackling FGM

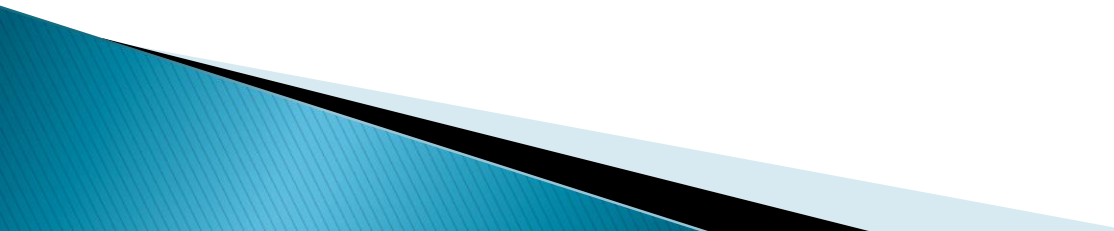
- ▶ Training programme
  - ▶ Raise Awareness
  - ▶ Target hard to reach communities
  - ▶ FGM Community Champions
  - ▶ FGM Support Group
  - ▶ Therapeutic Support
  - ▶ Drop-in support service
  - ▶ Advocacy support
- 

# FGM Support Group

- ▶ Within the local community
  - ▶ Safe Space
  - ▶ Holistic and Therapeutic approach
  - ▶ Peer support
  - ▶ Access to external support
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# Future Plans

- ▶ Continue with the good work Ashiana and partners are currently doing in the area
  - ▶ Development of FGM clinic
  - ▶ FGM specific support
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