



PRESS RELEASE

Source: Fertility Fairness

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'A disgrace for the country that pioneered IVF'; Cambridgeshire and Peterborough suspends NHS IVF

Commenting on the news that Cambridgeshire and Peterborough clinical commissioning group has suspended access to NHS IVF for at least 18 months effective immediately, despite overwhelming public support for NHS fertility services to be continued, Sarah Norcross, co-chair of Fertility Fairness said: 'This is terrible news for patients and for NHS fertility services in England, and is an absolute disgrace for the country that pioneered IVF nearly 40 years ago; prompt access to IVF is crucial for patients to have the best chance of success.'

'Denying access to NHS-funded IVF is associated with health risks and economic consequences. Patients who are forced to self-fund treatment often travel overseas for treatment choosing multiple embryo transfer rather than single embryo transfer. Multiple embryo transfers are more likely to result in multiple births which pose greater health risks for both the mother and the twins/multiples with associated high healthcare costs.'

Co-chair of Fertility Fairness and chief executive of national charity Fertility Network UK, Susan Seenan, said: 'We are extremely concerned about the effect this lengthy 18-month suspension of NHS fertility services will have on patients. Couples with fertility problems are already waiting unnecessarily long times: in order to be referred by a GP for fertility tests couples have had to have been trying and failing to conceive for 3 years; to now be told there is an additional wait of at least 18 months will be devastating and for some will make the difference between success and failure. It is harsh in the extreme and completely against current national guidelines set by NICE.'

'Infertility has a serious and lasting impact on all those affected and to suspend medical help is unethical and a short-sighted and false economy. Fertility problems do not just affect people physically, but mentally too: 90% of people experience depression; 42% suicidal thoughts and relationships are affected (70%). England pioneered IVF approaching 40 years ago but that achievement literally means nothing if only those who can pay for IVF benefit

from it. We urge anyone affected by NHS IVF funding cuts to join our #IVFGoldStandard patient campaign at <https://www.thunderclap.it/projects/57902-ivfgoldstandard-across-the-uk?locale=en>

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Notes for editors

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Fertility Network UK media volunteers are available on request.

1. NICE guidance recommends three cycles of IVF for women under 40 years and one cycle for some women aged 40-42. According to NICE, a full cycle of IVF treatment should include 1 round of ovarian stimulation, followed by the transfer of any resultant fresh and frozen embryos.

In Scotland, women under 40, including couples with children from previous relationships, can access three IVF cycles; in Wales, women under 40 are entitled to two cycles and in Northern Ireland women under 40 are offered one partial cycle.

2. There is a move towards sustained disinvestment in NHS fertility services in England.

3. Key findings of The Impact of Fertility Problems 2016 from Fertility Network UK with Middlesex University London^[1] highlighted: 90 per cent of respondents reported feeling depressed; 42% suicidal; nearly 50% of respondents reported on average feeling sad, out of control, frustrated, helpless, fearful and worried nearly all of the time. For further information, see <http://fertilitynetworkuk.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/10/SURVEY-RESULTS-Impact-of-Fertility-Problems.pdf>

4. Fertility Fairness is a multidisciplinary umbrella organisation representing the major patient and professional bodies working in the field of fertility. Fertility Fairness campaigns for fair and equitable access to NHS-funded fertility services in accordance with national recommendations issued by NICE. This includes the right of eligible couples to receive up to three full cycles of IVF treatment regardless of where they happen to live.

^[1] <http://fertilitynetworkuk.org/survey-on-the-impact-of-fertility-problems/>