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## Patient action to promote fertility treatment fairness

### Fertility Network UK patient day of action: Saturday 25 March 2017

On Saturday 25 March, fertility patients affected by unfair rationing of NHS fertility services will be taking action to promote fairness for fertility treatment - contacting their MP, creating a fertility funding Thunderclap and tweeting their support #therighttotry #IVFx3 #tellyourMP

Fertility problems are a recognised medical condition and the recommended clinical treatment is 3 full IVF cycles, yet in England 98 per cent of local clinical commissioning groups (CCGs) ration NHS fertility services unfairly based on GP postcode and non-medical criteria such as whether one partner has a child from a previous relationship.

The only areas in England that do provide 3 full cycles of IVF, including all frozen embryo transfers, and enable access if your partner has a child from a previous relationship are Bury, Heywood, Middleton and Rochdale, Tameside and Glossop, and Oldham CCGs. Living anywhere else means experiencing unfair rationing of NHS fertility services.

Susan Seenan, chief executive of Fertility Network UK said: 'Fertility patients have had enough. It is harsh and unethical to ration clinical treatment for fertility problems based on non-medical factors such as postcode or whether your partner has a child from a previous relationship. The sustained disinvestment in NHS fertility services in England has to stop; we hope this day of action will trigger change for all those with fertility problems who are being denied the medical treatment that could help them become parents.'

Patient Richard Clothier, 39, who was denied access to 3 full IVF cycles because of where he lives, said: 'This patient day of action is critical to highlight the growing wave of health inequality sweeping across England and to help people continue to access the fertility services they so desperately need. The right to try and start a family should never be brought into question, yet this is exactly what is happening right now. To decide a person's right based on their postcode is wholly inappropriate.'

The 3 things people can do to promote fairness for fertility treatment are:

1. tell your MP: inform them of your situation and what is happening in your area; a template letter is on our website at <http://fertilitynetworkuk.org/action/> and MP's contacts details are available at <https://www.theyworkforyou.com/>
2. tweet your support and a pic using the hashtags #IVFx3 #tellyourMP #therighttotry
3. help create a fertility funding Thunderclap – a social media message sent collectively – on Facebook, Twitter and tumblr on Saturday 25 March at 3pm. Register your support for the Thunderclap at <https://www.thunderclap.it/projects/52716-the-right-to-try-campaign>

Contact: Catherine Hill Fertility Network UK media relations officer 07469-660845  
[media@fertilitynetworkuk.org](mailto:media@fertilitynetworkuk.org) Media volunteers are available on request

Notes to editors:

1. National Institute for Health and Care Excellence guidance recommends three cycles of IVF for women under 40 years and one cycle for some women aged 40-42. The latest data from campaign group Fertility Fairness shows that in England less than one in five (16 per cent) of CCGs offer three full cycles of NHS-funded IVF to eligible couples, as recommended by the NICE 2004 guideline (this represents a drop of 8 per cent since 2013). More than one in ten CCGs are consulting on reducing or decommissioning NHS fertility treatment.

	<b>0 Cycle Providers</b>	<b>1 Cycle Providers</b>	<b>2 Cycle Providers</b>	<b>3 Cycle Providers</b>
<b>2016</b>	2%	60%	22%	16%
<b>2015</b>	1%	57%	24%	18%
<b>2014</b>	1%	52%	29%	18%
<b>2013</b>	3%	49%	24%	24%

In Scotland, new legislation is being introduced enabling all health boards to fund three cycles for women under 40 and couples with children from previous relationships; in Wales, women under 40 are entitled to two cycles and in Northern Ireland women under 40 are offered one partial cycle.

2. As well as cutting the number of IVF cycles they offer, approaching half of all CCGs use their own definition of what constitutes a full, fresh IVF cycle - which typically means substantially reduced treatment is offered. Creating additional eligibility criteria are a further hurdle CCGs use to ration treatment unfairly. Only ten per cent of CCGs enable access to couples with children from a previous relationship; nine per cent of CCGs deny treatment to women over the age of 35 in contravention of national guidelines; 16 per cent of CCGs stipulate couples should have been trying to conceive for three years before treatment can be offered (and if a women suffers a miscarriage during this period, the 'waiting time' clock is set back to zero months. Other eligibility criteria include smoking status, body mass index, and length of relationship.

3. Fertility Network UK provides practical and emotional support, authoritative information and advice for anyone experiencing fertility issues. The charity works to raise the profile and

understanding of fertility issues and to push for timely and equitable provision of fertility treatment throughout the UK.

4. Fertility Network UK provides a free and impartial Support Line 0121 323 5025

5. Fertility Network UK supports people. We rely on voluntary donations to continue our vital work. You can donate now by visiting [www.justgiving.com/infertilitynetwork](http://www.justgiving.com/infertilitynetwork)