



## PRESS RELEASE

**Source: Fertility Fairness**

**Released: 24 November 2016**

### **NHS IVF victory in Bedfordshire welcomed**

Sarah Norcross, co-chair of Fertility Fairness said: 'It is heartening to hear that health bosses in Bedfordshire have listened to the views of patients and the public and have committed to continuing to fund NHS fertility services. The news will be an enormous relief to the 1 in 6 couples who need medical help in order to become parents.'

Susan Seenan, co-chair of Fertility Fairness, added: 'We are reassured to see that Bedfordshire clinical commissioning group has recognised the benefits of providing a fertility service and has sensibly chosen to avoid the potential health risks and economic consequences of decommissioning NHS IVF.'

Bedfordshire clinical commissioning group's consultation report stated: 'One of the risks highlighted during the consultation is the potential unintended consequence of potentially increasing the number of patients that choose double embryo transfer or multiple embryo transfers while self-funding fertility treatment, especially if receiving treatment abroad... There is strong evidence to say that double embryo transfer would result in more multiple births and greater health complications for mother and twins/multiples with associated healthcare costs.'

ENDS

### **Notes for editors**

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Fertility Network UK media volunteers are available on request.

1. Bedfordshire clinical commissioning group currently funds just one IVF cycle and was considering removing this. There is a move towards sustained disinvestment in NHS fertility services in England. In September 2014, Mid-Essex CCG decommissioned its NHS fertility service, except in isolated, complex medical cases; North East Essex CCG followed suit in September 2015. South Norfolk CCG announced its decision to cut NHS fertility services completely on 24 November 2015. Basildon & Brentwood CCG, Ipswich and East Suffolk, and West Suffolk CCG are consulting on decommissioning NHS IVF.

North East Lincolnshire CCG, Somerset CCG, Wiltshire CCG, Herts Valley CCG and Cambridgeshire and Peterborough CCG all recently slashed NHS fertility services and now offer just one funded IVF cycle.

The following CCGs are considering cutting the number of NHS-funded IVF cycles they offer: Croydon CCG, St Helens CCG, all of Lancashire & CCGs (Blackpool, Fylde & Wyre, Lancashire North, Chorley and South Ribble, Greater Preston, Blackburn with Darwen; East Lancashire, West Lancashire), Cheshire CCGs and Worcestershire CCG.

2. NICE guidance recommends three cycles of IVF for women under 40 years and one cycle for some women aged 40-42. The latest data from Fertility Fairness shows that in England less than one in five (17 per cent) of CCGs offer three full cycles of NHS-funded IVF to eligible couples, as recommended by the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence 2004 guideline (this represents a drop of 7 per cent since 2013).

England	0 Cycle Providers	1 Cycle Providers	2 Cycle Providers	3 Cycle Providers
<b>2015</b>	1%	58%	24%	17%
<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 cycle.

3. There is now a striking North-South divide between the levels of provision of NHS fertility treatment. The National Institute for Health and Clinical Excellence (NICE) recommends that it is both clinically and cost effective that all eligible couples should receive up to three full NHS-funded cycles of IVF or ICSI where women are aged under 40. However, just 17.2 per cent of England's 209 CCGs follow this national guidance and provide access to three NHS-funded IVF cycles.

Of the 36 clinical commissioning groups offering three NHS-funded IVF cycles, the vast majority - 78 per cent - are in the North; just eight regions in the South (22 per cent) follow NICE's recommendation regarding NHS fertility treatment. All the areas that have decommissioned NHS fertility services, or are consulting on doing so, are in the South of England.

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. The figures quoted above are from the third annual audit by Fertility Fairness of the provision of fertility services across England by CCGs using Freedom of Information requests. This is the most comprehensive data about fertility services to date.