

Becky & Paul's story

In 2009 we went on the trip of a lifetime to Australia; it was at that point we decided to start trying to conceive. I was 26 years' old at the time. Nothing happened straight away, we weren't worried though; these things can take a while

After a year nothing had happened so I went to the GP only to be told to 'just wait and try for longer'. Another year went by and I visited the GP again, and again I was sent away and told to try for longer.

Yet another year went by and a third visit to the GP resulted in me leaving in tears having been told by the doctor that 'babies are a luxury not a necessity, and it is not everyone's right to have them'. At that point we lost hope and gave up for a while; we had tried to speak with GPs and been fobbed off numerous times. We were devastated and it took us three years to decide to give it another go.

In that three-year period we moved house and GPs. When we finally plucked up the courage to ask for help again, we visited our new GP. We had investigations which showed my hormone levels were not conducive to me conceiving, and my husband had a sperm analysis which showed he had a very low sperm count with very poor motility and mobility, and not conducive to conception at all.

Despite these results we were fobbed off once more and told to try for longer. We couldn't believe it, it had been six years and no one was willing to help us, at that point our clinical commissioning group (CCG) was still offering IVF on the NHS.

Finally in September 2015 we went into the GP again and pretty much demanded a referral; the lovely GP asked why we'd waited so long. I could have screamed!! We again had blood tests and semen analysis and scans, even though it was in our notes that we already had issues.

Finally though the GP was satisfied we met the criteria for referral. We were on the path to referral and over the moon about it. That was until we learned that our CCG was nearing the end of a public consultation to scrap NHS-funded IVF in our area. Other parts of Essex had already done so, and our CCG was following suit.

The feeling of devastation was back and it was all consuming, we wouldn't get to see the consultant and have our referral appointment in time. We'd missed our chance...

We went to the appointment anyway, and to our absolute shock there had been an issue with the date the CCG had set to cancel NHS-funded IVF and they'd extended the cut-off date by one month meaning we had made it by a matter of days. Our consultant was truly amazing and she took one look at all our results and signed the referral documents there and then!!! I burst into tears.

From there our journey continued at our local fertility clinic. After a seminar in December 2015 and more blood tests and scans, we finally started treatment in January 2016. We were in the best possible hands, and trusted them 100 per cent.

The first phase I found pretty tough, the drugs turned me into a grumpy cow: I felt out of control, as if my body wasn't my own. I just couldn't shake the mood, my husband was a star and said he understood, and just cuddled me through my moods.

Scans showed all was good, in the sense that my ovaries had gone to sleep and my endometrium was thin, so the next phase could begin.

That meant less of the dreaded drug Buserelin and on to injections of the drug Gonal-F. The minute I had that first Gonal-F jab my body felt different: it was like a weight was gone and my mood instantly brightened. I felt like the old me again.

Scans were very positive and follicles were growing, and before I knew it I was ready for egg collection. Hubby had already had three semen samples frozen as backup, so we had everything in place for it to work. I was given instructions to do my trigger shot at 10.30pm, and I timed it to the second.

Egg collection took place on a Friday, I was shaking with nerves, but the lovely nurses made us feel so at ease. I changed into my gorgeous surgical gown and Paul was led away to do his part: I sat and waited to be taken through for my part. I was only alone for five minutes but it felt like a lifetime, the past seven years whizzed through my brain. I started to get a bit shaky with nerves, but before I knew it I was in the room, with a doctor and a nurse, and a window behind my head where the embryologist was on the other side waiting to inspect the samples in the lab.

The nurse held my hand the whole time, I'm sure I was nearly crushing his hand at one point. I won't lie, it wasn't pleasant, but when the embryologist said there were eggs present I zoned out. When I was wheeled into the recovery area, my husband was waiting for me with a big happy face; I had missed him so much.

The embryologist came and told us she'd found eight eggs in the samples, and she'd be in touch to let us know how many were mature enough to use for intracytoplasmic sperm injection (ICSI), and how many had fertilised overnight. We went home and waited for the call.

Saturday morning came and so did the call. Of our eight eggs, only five were suitable for ICSI; of those five only four had fertilised overnight; and of those four embryos only two were viable. I instantly burst into tears: it felt like the dream was slipping away, again my husband was amazing telling me it only takes one to work.

We were told we'd have the healthiest embryo put back (if either were still healthy) on Monday. Sunday was a hideous day of nerves; we went to the seaside to try and clear our thoughts.

Monday morning came, we'd never been so nervous in our whole lives. One hour before our appointment time the phone rang, we still had two embryos, one was looking very healthy, the other had started to lag behind so we had the healthiest one put back, the other was going to be kept in culture to see if it made it to day five and could be frozen; as it turns out it didn't make it.

The whole process of embryo transfer was over in a minute or so, it felt a little anticlimactic, but what turned out to be our only healthy embryo was back on board, and I was determined to keep it there. For the two-week wait I arranged to see lots of friends and keep myself as busy as possible: no one knew what we'd been going through, so when I was visiting friends and cuddling their babies they had no idea I was trying to distract myself. As it turns out I think the happy hormones did me the world of good.

Our test day came and I had ten pregnancy tests lined up ready. One by one I dipped them into my sample. We watched like hawks and lo and behold two lines started to appear before our eyes, all ten showed positive!! We cried a lot!! It had worked. Against all the odds it had worked!!

As I write this I am 20-weeks pregnant and all seems to be going very well.

It devastates me that so many other couples will not get the chance to have IVF treatment via the NHS, the decision made by so many CCG's is heartbreaking, we were so lucky and we totally acknowledge that and will never ever take for granted how lucky we've been. If you're reading this, no matter where you are in your journey please never ever lose hope.