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Media Statement: Fertility Network UK

## **Fertility Network UK urges patient action to overturn Peterborough and Cambridgeshire health bosses plans to cut NHS IVF**

Commenting on the news that Peterborough and Cambridgeshire clinical commissioning group is considering removing its NHS fertility services, Susan Seenan, chief executive of leading patient fertility charity Fertility Network UK and co-chair of campaign group Fertility Fairness said: 'Cambridgeshire and Peterborough clinical commissioning group (CCG) is failing fertility patients; the news that the CCG plans to cut NHS IVF completely - removing the 1 IVF cycle it currently offers - will be devastating for those unable to have a baby without medical help. Facing fertility problems is hard enough, without being denied medical help because of where you live. Not being able to have a child is linked with high levels of distress: 90% of people suffer depression; 42% feel suicidal; 70% experience problems in the relationship with their partner.

We encourage everyone affected by Cambridgeshire and Peterborough CCG's plans to respond to the consultation, attend the public meetings and to contact their MP. Patient power can make a difference: plans to cut NHS fertility services earlier this year in Ipswich and East Suffolk, and West Suffolk were overturned after an overwhelming public response. Please speak out against this; you can make a difference.'

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[media@fertilitynetworkuk.org](mailto:media@fertilitynetworkuk.org) Media volunteers are available on request

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 for Fertility Network UK's patient day of action on March 25 2017 and post 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>

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)