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## November 2017: 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary of IVF success

National Fertility Awareness Week 30 Oct -5 Nov 2017

On 10 November 1977, IVF worked and nine months later Louise Joy Brown - the world's first IVF baby - was born. Since then more than a quarter of a million UK babies have been born via IVF.

As part of this year's National Fertility Awareness Week 30 Oct - 5 Nov, Fertility Network UK is commemorating 40 years of IVF by revealing what IVF means to the 1 in 6 couples whose lives have been affected by it - for better and for worse.

'IVF gave me my world.'

*'IVF ruined my life, my marriage, I'm over the fact I'll never have children but I'm still angry, resentful and bitter... every day I wonder what if... why me???'*

'Wish I could afford IVF, nearly 40 and TTC for nearly 15 years; feels like my dream will never come true.'

*'So glad we kept going: 3 rounds and we were only given a 10% chance. Due in February.'*

'IVF was the worst thing I have ever put my family through for absolutely nothing but heartbreak.'



During the week we'll also be revealing the best and worst places to live in the UK if you're hoping to access NHS IVF (30 Oct); the first ever qualitative survey of men's experiences of infertility (1 Nov); plus advice on fertility etiquette: what to say, what not to say and how best to support anyone experiencing fertility issues (2 Nov).

Susan Seenan, chief executive of Fertility Network UK said: 'The focus of National Fertility Awareness Week is threefold: to get the message out regarding fertility issues; both the prevalence and how people are affected. We aim to challenge perceptions of infertility too and, very importantly, provide support for anyone struggling with fertility problems; you are not alone, we are here to help.

'This year is a deeply significant one as we commemorate 40 years of IVF - celebrating the babies born as a result of this life-changing technology, and remembering everyone whom IVF could not help. We are focusing on men and their experience of infertility because all too often they are left out of the fertility equation, despite being very much half of it. We are also highlighting how inequitable access to NHS fertility treatment is in the UK. Sadly, for many, it is your postcode and your pay packet, and not your medical need, which are now the key determinants of whether you will be able to try IVF.'

Award-winning all-female trio The Beatrix Players are working with Fertility Network during National Fertility Awareness Week and are available for interviews and to perform. The group's recently released single *All That Thinking* is a song about the difficulty of having a child and the blame that goes on between partners.

Commenting on her experience of fertility difficulties, Beatrix Players' vocalist and songwriter Amy Birks said: 'I hope that *All That Thinking* helps in some way to lift the lid on a subject that is so often hushed into embarrassment, a subject that causes conflict and so much pain, where you feel totally alone, but as I say each time before I sing this song; *All That Thinking* is for anyone that has suffered. It is for the 1 in 6.'

View the video for *All That Thinking*, produced in association with Fertility Network UK, at <https://drive.google.com/file/d/0B6K-j3couHZYZHg0Ukc0bUhzaDg/view>

**National Fertility Awareness Week: providing support, improving awareness, raising funds and changing perceptions**

[www.nfaw.org.uk](http://www.nfaw.org.uk)

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- National Fertility Awareness Week 30 Oct- 5 Nov seeks to change perceptions, improve awareness, raise funds and provide support for everyone struggling with fertility issues. [www.nfaw.org.uk](http://www.nfaw.org.uk)
- National Fertility Awareness Week culminates in The Fertility Show 4-5 November 2017 at Olympia, London - the biggest and best-attended fertility show in the world. <https://www.fertilityshow.co.uk/>

- Fertility Network UK provides practical and emotional support, 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. [www.fertilitynetworkuk.org](http://www.fertilitynetworkuk.org)
- Fertility Network UK provides a free and impartial Support Line 0121 323 5025
- 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)

### Do you know the top 5 fertility myths?

1. Myth: don't worry about female fertility until after 35  
Reality: female fertility is falling from age 28 or earlier

2. Myth: IVF is for women who have left it too late  
Reality: most women having IVF started trying for a baby in their early 30s or sooner

3. Myth: IVF will work for me  
Reality: IVF fails 75 per cent of the time.

4. Myth: fertility issues are a female problem  
Reality: male fertility problems are as common as female ones

5. Myth: if you need medical help to conceive, NHS services are available  
Reality: 6 out of 10 people with fertility problems pay for their own treatment

***We asked: 'What does IVF mean to you?' Here is a selection of the responses, see more at [www.nfaw.org.uk](http://www.nfaw.org.uk)***

*IVF changed my life. It didn't work for us; in fact it left me with a myriad of health problems. But it confirmed what we thought in the first place: adoption was right for us and we were right for 2 wonderful (challenging!) children. Adoption is far from the easy route and it's not right for all but so far despite the very difficult times it has been right for us.*

Without IVF I wouldn't have my family that I longed for, for 11 years.

*I tried it 3 times, suffered 2 miscarriages, it is the hardest thing to do, and even harder to decide to stop. I still wonder if we should have tried more times, but know I couldn't have done it.*

IVF has been both the worst and best thing that has ever happened to me! 5 years TTC. No NHS funding. Various drug combinations, add ons, and then 5th lucky !!! We prayed for a miracle....and got two!!!

*Stress, heartbreak, hope*

Our little miracles arrived after 5 early miscarriages, an 18week loss, a 20w loss and 10yrs of hell; three unsuccessful IVF cycles. After being told there was no point continuing with my own eggs, my best friend stepped up to be our donor

*Put myself through IVF four times, last try with donor eggs but all failed. Only now just over a year of hell since hearing those words 'it's never going to happen for you' am I starting to turn the corner.*

It's the reason my purse is empty, my weekends a blur of early mornings, dance classes and chauffeuring and most importantly the reason my heart is complete. IVF was the most stressful, heart wrenching and exhausting experience but one I would do again in an instant.

*Our little miracles arrived on Christmas morning 2005 and made our lives complete. We are thankful every day for the wonderful science that is IVF.*

IVF gave me hope that one day I'll be a Mummy. What I've always wanted. IVF with karotype and genetic testing took away that hope but gave me closure and broke our hearts with scientific fact - you can't fix rare genetic disorders. IVF meant I have only just been able to buy a home of our own as we spent every penny we had on trying to make a baby. IVF meant pregnancy but it also meant miscarriage. IVF meant loneliness but also solidarity. I'm glad I went on my IVF journey, I don't know if it's over yet but this door has closed for sure.