



Released: 11 January 2023

Fertility Network UK warns on proposed Welsh fertility policy changes seeking to reduce access to NHS fertility treatment for heterosexual and same-sex couples, single people, and individuals self-funding fertility preservation

Commenting on the proposed changes from the Welsh Health Specialised Services Committee to policies CP37 (Pre-Implantation Genetic Testing – Monogenic Disorders) and CP38 (Specialist Fertility Services: Assisted Reproductive Medicine), Emma Rees, Fertility Network UK's Wales coordinator, said: 'Fertility Network is appalled and angered at the proposed cuts to NHS-funded fertility treatment in Wales and deeply concerned about the effect they could have on already distressed fertility patients.'

'The proposed cuts are shockingly wide-ranging: they seek to ration access to NHS fertility treatment for heterosexual couples, will make it harder for same-sex couples to access NHS treatment, will bar single women and men from accessing NHS fertility help and will also exclude women and men who self-fund fertility preservation from future NHS fertility treatment.'

'These proposed policies are still at the consultation stage, so we urge fertility patients to make your voices heard and let the Welsh Health Specialised Services Committee know how you feel about these suggested dramatic cuts to NHS fertility treatment in Wales.'

Under the proposed policies, which go against national guidelines from the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence:

- Women under 40 will only be eligible for 2 partial IVF cycles rather than 2 full IVF cycles, and women aged 40-42 will NOT be eligible for any NHS treatment at all (previously they could access 1 full IVF cycle). A partial IVF cycle will include a fresh embryo transfer and a maximum of 5 frozen embryo transfers (previously all viable embryos were transferred as part of the treatment cycle).
- Same-sex couples will now have to prove their infertility by having 12 rather than 6 rounds of IUI, and the proposed policy is unclear on whether these 12 IUI cycles will be NHS-funded (IUI is not covered by this policy). Previously the 6 rounds of IUI to prove infertility were NHS-funded.
- Single women and men are NOT included in the proposed policy. Previously, they were eligible for NHS treatment after 6 NHS-funded IUI cycles.
- Women or men who choose to self-fund fertility preservation (egg or sperm freezing) will now NOT be able to access NHS-funded fertility treatment at a later date.
- Couples hoping to have NHS-funded pre-implantation genetic testing for monogenic disorders (PGT-M) will now only be able to access 2 partial IVF cycles (if the woman is under 40), rather than 2 full IVF cycles. Women aged between 40-42 will now be barred from accessing NHS PGT-M fertility treatment (previously they could have 1 funded IVF cycle).
- The only positive changes in the proposed policies are that the BMI range for women has been widened from 19-30 to 18-35, and the lower age range for women in a relationship seeking fertility treatment has been lowered to 20 from 18.

The consultation is open until 20 January 2023. Responses can be sent to CTT_WHSSC_Consultation@wales.nhs.uk or you can email emma.rees@fertilitynetworkuk.org

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Notes to editors:

Contact: Catherine Hill Fertility Network UK communications manager on 07469-660845 media@fertilitynetworkuk.org for interviews and case studies.

1. 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.
www.fertilitynetworkuk.org

2. Fertility Network UK provides a free and impartial Support Line open from 10am to 4pm. Mon, Wed and Fri: 0121 323 5025, support@fertilitynetworkuk.org Tues and Thurs: 07816 086694, janet@fertilitynetworkuk.org
3. Fertility Network UK supports people. We rely on voluntary donations to continue our vital work. You can donate now via text; text FNUK plus the donation amount to 70085. Or you can donate by visiting www.justgiving.com/fertilitynetwork