



PRESS STATEMENT

Source: Progress Educational Trust

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Long overdue fertility treatment commissioning guidance welcomed by Progress Educational Trust

Sarah Norcross, director of fertility campaign charity PET, said: 'PET welcomes the publication by the Human Fertilisation and Embryology Authority of the first commissioning guidance for fertility treatment; it is long overdue and much needed. Given the substantial disinvestment in NHS fertility services in recent years in England, PET hopes this guidance will help clinical commissioning groups (CCGs) both reduce the costs of commissioning fertility treatment and improve the service they provide. NHS England's recent issuing of benchmark prices for IVF, which are intended to enable CCGs to procure fertility services at more competitive prices, are another positive step forwards.'

Ms Norcross added: 'PET is aware that Cambridgeshire and Peterborough clinical commissioning group (CCG) has recently delayed its decision on whether to reinstate NHS IVF or decommission the service. We hope this fertility commissioning guidance will show the way to Cambridgeshire and Peterborough CCG reinstating this vital service and provide hope for patients who have been left in limbo since funding for fertility treatment was suspended in September 2017.'

Health minister Jackie Doyle-Price said: 'No one should be denied the right to have a child by IVF based solely on where they live. Today's guidance will take us one step closer to levelling the playing field by encouraging CCGs to offer fair and equal access to fertility services. I am determined to put an end to this postcode lottery many hopeful parents face, which can often have a lasting and damaging effect on their mental health.'

Ms Norcross continued: 'We commend the health minister's support for this important issue; Jackie Doyle-Price is Minister for Mental Health, Inequalities and Suicide Prevention and, as such, she will appreciate the harrowing impact of infertility on mental health. Research shows 90% of people experiencing fertility problems feel depressed and 42% feel suicidal.'

ENDS

Notes for editors

For media interviews and case studies, contact head of communications Catherine Hill at chill@progress.org.uk 020-7278-7870

1. NHS England recommends that clinical commissioning groups (CCGs) pay on average £3,300 for a package of treatment which includes ovarian stimulation, one fresh embryo transfer and one frozen embryo transfer. The benchmark prices, published in 2019, are on the NHS Improvement website.

National Institute of Health and Care Excellence (NICE) guideline recommends three full cycles of IVF for women under 40 years and one full cycle for women aged 40-42. According to NICE, a full cycle of IVF treatment should include one round of ovarian stimulation, followed by the transfer of any resultant fresh and frozen embryos.

2. Scotland offers the IVF Gold Standard: three full IVF cycles for clinically eligible women under the age of 40, plus one full IVF cycle for women aged between 40-42, and provision if either you or your husband has a child from a previous relationship. Wales provides two full IVF cycles for clinically eligible women under the age of 40, plus one full IVF cycle for women aged between 40-42, and allows access to treatment if either you or your husband has a child from a previous relationship. Northern Ireland provides just one partial IVF cycle for women under 40 and allows access to treatment if either you or your husband has a child from a previous relationship.

3. There is a move towards sustained disinvestment in NHS fertility services in England. Fertility Fairness' updated 2018 audit of England's 195 CCGs shows a marked reduction in access to NHS-funded IVF, with potential further cuts ahead. The vast majority of

England's CCGs – 87.7 per cent – do not follow national guidance and do not offer 3 NHS-funded IVF cycles.

Since 2017, 39 CCGs (20.0 per cent) have slashed services (either cut the number of cycles they offer or introduced stricter access criteria) and 10 CCGs (5.1 per cent) are currently consulting on cutting or removing NHS fertility treatment.

4. Progress Educational Trust (PET) is a UK charity working to advance public understanding of, and engagement with, science, law and ethics in the fields of human genetics, human reproduction, embryology and stem cell research. Funded by grants and public donations, PET aims to improve the choices for people affected by infertility or genetic conditions. <https://www.progress.org.uk/>

5. PET organises free-to-attend events debating the responsible application of reproductive and genetic science and publishes BioNews, a free comment and news service. Subscribe to BioNews at <https://www.bionews.org.uk/subscribe>