



**PRESS RELEASE**

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**This Mother's Day Help Others To Be Mothers**

**#ExtendTheLimit on social egg freezing**

Sign and share the petition at <https://www.change.org/extendthelimit>

With Mother's Day days away, fertility and genetics charity the Progress Educational Trust (PET) today launches its online petition to extend the 10-year storage limit for eggs frozen for social (non-medical) reasons.

PET's director Sarah Norcross said: 'Women face so many hurdles and pressures in becoming a mum. Social egg freezing should be empowering women to choose the best time to start a family, not imposing new limits on them. Women deserve reproductive choice yet today increasing numbers of women in the UK are facing the stark choice of having to destroy their frozen eggs or become a mother before they are ready to do so because of the arbitrary 10-year storage limit.'

'PET welcomes the government's recent public consultation on this issue which is a step in the right direction. This Mother's Day, though, we are asking the public to show their support and help others to be mothers by signing and sharing PET's online petition at <https://www.change.org/extendthelimit>

Under current UK law, women who freeze their eggs for non-medical reasons (social egg freezing) are only allowed to keep them stored for 10 years. If women don't use them during this time they have to destroy their frozen eggs or face the pressure of becoming a mother before they are ready to do so, either with a partner or, if single, as a solo mum via sperm donation.

Ms Norcross added: 'The 10-year social egg freezing storage limit needs to change because it damages women's chances of becoming biological mothers, is outdated and unscientific because new egg freezing technology means eggs can be stored for longer

than 10 years, and it discriminates against women because female fertility begins to fall in a woman's late twenties, before dropping steeply after 35.'

'Egg freezing is the fastest growing fertility treatment in the UK: PET is calling on the government to show compassion, extend the 10-year social egg freezing limit and give women who have frozen their eggs the choice about when to use them.'

GP and TV presenter Dr Zoe Williams froze her eggs two years ago when she was 38; she supports PET's #ExtendTheLimit campaign and online petition. She says: 'There is no scientific reason for eggs to be destroyed at 10 years and there are numerous reasons why this arbitrary rule is harmful to women and couples. For women who are reaching the 10 year threshold I cannot imagine the unnecessary heartache of their investment in future parenthood being literally flushed down the toilet. Please sign and share PET's #ExtendTheLimit petition at <https://www.change.org/extendthelimit> and help others to be mothers.'

The British Fertility Society and the Royal College of Obstetricians back PET's #ExtendTheLimit campaign.

Sign and share the petition at <https://www.change.org/extendthelimit>

ENDS

**Case studies:** PET is working with a growing number of women affected by the unfair 10-year social egg freezing storage limit.

Sharon, 35, froze her eggs two year ago in the hope of preserving her fertility for the future. She had considered freezing her eggs in her 20s but was put off from doing so because of the 10-year storage limit for social egg freezing. She says: 'I definitely want to be a mum, in fact I'd love a big family. I first considered freezing my eggs when I was 28, when my eggs were at their best, but I was put off because of the 10-year storage limit. I froze my eggs in an attempt to escape the stress of a ticking biological clock, but the arbitrary 10-year storage limit has only added a new pressure. What if I don't have the opportunity to use my eggs before they are destroyed? It is outrageous that the government will destroy my eggs. My eggs are my genetic material; surely this is my reproductive choice.'

Elizabeth Hamilton (a pseudonym), 46, froze her eggs approaching 10 years ago and is now fighting to avoid having her eggs destroyed against her wishes in 7 months' time. She says: 'I feel like a ticking time bomb every day. The options available keep racing through my mind. Do I have a child with my current partner even though we are not ready; do I just pick a random donor and go ahead with it on my own? I don't want to make the wrong decision for my future. But one thing is sure, I really do want to have my own children.'

TV presenter and scientist Dr Emily Grossman, 41, went through 4 cycles of egg freezing at age 38 in a bid to preserve her fertility. She says: 'There is no medical reason for eggs to be destroyed after 10 years. The 10-year storage limit is completely arbitrary. It is ludicrous that women who had the courage to break taboos and freeze their eggs 10 years ago are now facing the destruction of potentially their best chance of becoming a biological mother. I would be devastated if my eggs were destroyed at 48, if I wasn't in a position to be able to use them by then.'

Carolyn froze her eggs 10 years ago when she was 37. She is now a mother after becoming pregnant naturally but was forced to move her frozen eggs abroad earlier this year to avoid them being destroyed because of the 10-year storage limit. She says: 'The current situation doesn't make any sense: it's better for women to freeze their eggs when they are younger but then you are being forced to use them before you're ready or to destroy them. The 10-year storage limit for social egg freezing is deeply unfair and needs to change.'

Jane (a pseudonym), 45, froze over 20 eggs in 2009, and earlier in 2019 faced the destruction of her frozen eggs. She says: 'Being told my eggs would be destroyed was heart-breaking, heartless and massively upsetting. This was my only chance left of having a biological family. Then I got the stay of execution [ she was diagnosed with premature infertility, so her eggs can now remain frozen beyond ten years]; I wept and wept. I really feel for other women in this situation facing these terrible decisions – being forced to look at sperm donation or their eggs being destroyed; it's brutal.'

### **Notes for editors**

For media interviews and case studies, contact PET head of communications Catherine Hill at [chill@progress.org.uk](mailto:chill@progress.org.uk) 07305-091466. #ExtendTheLimit campaign images can be downloaded from 20 March from <https://www.progress.org.uk/extendthelimit>

1. If a woman wants to try to preserve her fertility, the best time to freeze her eggs is in her 20s but, under current UK law (the Human Fertilisation and Embryology Act 1990), women who freeze their eggs for non-medical reasons can only store them for 10 years. This means if a woman freezes her eggs when she is 28 she has to be ready to use them before she is 38; if she isn't she faces a limited number of distressing and potentially financially-crippling options: to have her eggs destroyed, and with them perhaps her best or only chance of becoming a biological mother; to become a parent before she is ready to do so, either with a partner or as a solo mum via sperm donation, or to try to fund the transfer of her eggs to a fertility clinic overseas and have fertility treatment abroad at a later date.

2. The proportion of women affected by the egg freezing legislation is increasing rapidly: according to data from the Human Fertilisation and Embryology Authority, in

the UK, the number of women freezing their eggs more than tripled in the last five years. In 2017, 1,463 women froze their eggs; in 2012 the number was just 410.

However, the current 10-year storage limit acts as a perverse incentive for women to delay freezing their eggs until their mid-to-late 30s when egg quality is declining and a woman's chance of becoming a biological mother has reduced. Latest UK figures show two-thirds of women freezing their eggs are over 35. In this way, the 10-year storage limit promotes poor clinical practice – women seeking fertility preservation treatment in their late 30s or 40s typically need more ovarian stimulation and fertility treatment cycles to have a chance at success.

3. [Research](#) suggests the younger a woman is when she freezes her eggs, the less eggs she needs and the more efficient the process is. To have a 75% chance of one live birth, a 34-year-old would need to freeze 10 eggs, a 37-year-old would need to freeze 20 eggs and a woman of 42 would need to freeze 61 eggs.

4. The 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>

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