

Joint Access to Infertility Treatment Policy

‘You Said – We Did’

Recently Clinical Commissioning Groups (CCGs) in the Yorkshire and Humber area have been considering some changes to our shared approach to supporting people who are experiencing infertility to access specialist interventions to help them conceive.

A joint commissioning policy was developed in partnership with the Yorkshire and Humber Expert Fertility Panel (a panel predominantly made up of clinicians and fertility experts) and adopted in 2013. Recently CCGs across the Yorkshire and the Humber agreed to work together again to update this policy in light of new NICE guidance and other policy changes.

Between June and August 2019 North East Lincolnshire CCG published information about these proposed changes and invited patient, members of the public and stakeholders to give their views.

We explained that the new policy contains some changes. The majority of these are simple changes to wording. These will either make the policy easier to read or reflect changes to clinical terminology as infertility treatment develops. These small changes will not affect how couples may be eligible for treatment.

The four changes that might affect whether a couple may be eligible for NHS funded specialist fertility treatment are:

Eligibility of Overseas Visitors - Changes to the NHS (Charges to Overseas Visitors) Regulations 2015 were introduced into Parliament on 19 July 2017. As a result, from 21 August 2017, assisted conception services are no longer included in the scope of services. This means those people who need to pay the NHS surcharge are no longer eligible for NHS funded assisted conception, this includes initial fertility investigations.

Where one partner has a different immigration status to the other, treatment will not be funded if one partner is not eligible as the policy applies as a couple. So, if either of the couple has to pay the immigration health surcharge, they will not be eligible for NHS funded specialist infertility treatment.

Transgender Couples - The definition of Infertility has been explicitly amended to include Transgender which will broaden access to NHS funded specialist infertility treatment to transgender couples.

Same Sex Couples - The new policy will give same sex couples access to NHS funded IUI and DI (Artificial Insemination and Donor Insemination) which increases access to treatment for same sex couples.

Need to be smoke free - In order to be eligible for NHS funded specialist fertility treatment, couples must be able to demonstrate they have been smoke free for at least three months. This will be confirmed with a carbon monoxide breath test. This change is based on national guidance about how smoking has a negative effect on the chances of successful IVF treatment.

The table below contains the feedback we received from stakeholders about these changes and what we are doing about it

You Said about... Eligibility of Overseas Visitors	We Did
We are not sure about the foreign residency issues being applied to a couple	We explained that this is a 'couples' policy rather than a policy for individuals ✓
What do you mean by "initial" investigations in terms of eligibility of overseas visitors?	We amended the policy so that this was clearer ✓
You Said about... Need to be smoke free	We Did
It is not practicable to do CO2 testing in primary care	We removed the requirement to do CO2 testing in primary care ✓
You Said about... access to treatment	We Did
The position regarding self-funded cycles needs to be looked at again	We amended this section in line with NICE guidance ✓
You Said about...transgender and same sex couples	We Did

The changes in terms of eligibility for same sex and transgender couples are good

This aspect of the policy was supported

