



North East London

NHS help to try to have a baby - proposed changes for people living in north east London

July 2022

Presentation to North East London Joint Health Scrutiny and Overview Committees

Introduction

- We are proposing a new single, updated policy on what NHS treatment we fund for those with fertility problems in north east London.
- The aim of the new policy is not to reduce the treatments that we fund or who is eligible to have them.
- Depending on where you live, what we are proposing is likely to increase the amount of treatment you can have, and improve access to some treatments. We want to make it so that wherever you live in north east London, you are able to have the same fertility treatment if you need help getting pregnant
- We need to make best use of NHS money given the increasing needs of our population and competing demands for resources. The proposals will require increased investment, but we believe the policy addresses inequities across north east London and is fairer.

Introduction continued

- Given we do not have an unlimited budget, our priority for NHS treatment is for those who have a medical problem.
- We have used the latest national [clinical guidelines](#) from National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE), research and best practice to develop the proposed policy.
- Clinicians including GPs and fertility experts have also helped to shape it.
- We used feedback from stakeholders and residents to shape the engagement communications and approach. Including ensuring the information was inclusive and accessible, that the changes between the current policies and the proposed policy were clear, and that information about mental health support was included.

Areas covered in the proposed policy:

1. **Eligibility criteria for assisted conception** – this is who can get NHS funded help to get pregnant
2. **Number of IVF cycles and embryo transfers** - How many IVF cycles you can have at what age
3. **Age limit for fertility treatment**
4. **Funding of intrauterine insemination (IUI)** – a type of artificial insemination for certain patient groups
5. **Funding of donor eggs/sperm based on certain criteria**
6. **Fertility preservation** – how long eggs/sperm/embryos are stored and age criteria
7. **Ovarian reserve criteria** – the number and quality of eggs remaining in the ovaries which is measured by tests to predict how many eggs might be produced during IVF.

1. Who can get NHS funded help to get pregnant

- For assisted conception treatments, unless otherwise stated, you need to meet eligibility criteria.
- This includes how long you have been trying to get pregnant, and things like not being too over or under weight, if you or your partner have a child already, your age, and if you smoke.
- Most of these criteria in our proposed policy are the same as the existing fertility policies, however **we want to increase the upper age limit for treatment** to 43 years old – this means more people will be eligible for NHS help.
- In the existing policies this was aged 39 or 41 depending on where you lived in north east London.

2. How many IVF cycles you can have at what age

Proposed policy:

- **Increase to three 'full' IVF cycles** for eligible people trying to get pregnant aged 39 and under.
- **Increase to one 'full' cycle** for eligible people trying to get pregnant who are aged 40, 41 and 42.
- **Reduce** the number of unsuccessful cycles of IUI needed for people are trying to get pregnant through artificial insemination (IUI) before IVF will be offered to six cycles if the woman or person trying to get pregnant is aged 36 or over. Twelve cycles of IUI are required if aged under 36. Six of these could be funded by the local NHS if you are eligible.

The proposed policy **increases** the amount of treatment available to give people more chances to get pregnant, as well as making treatment the same across all areas of north east London.

The proposed policy is the same as NICE guidelines.

3. Funding of intrauterine insemination (IUI)

Proposed policy:

Increase to fund up to six cycles of IUI for the following, where eligible:

- a. individuals and couples trying to get pregnant using donor insemination who have fertility problems.
- b. some people with social, cultural or religious objections to IVF.
- c. people with physical disability or psychosexual problems who have fertility problems.
- d. people with a condition that means you need IUI as part of your fertility treatment.

The proposed policy **increases** who is eligible for NHS funded IUI in north east London.

The proposed policy is consistent with NICE guidelines.

4. Funding of assisted conception treatments using donor eggs/sperm

Proposed policy:

- **Increase** funding to cover the costs of the donor eggs and IVF for eligible people with conditions recommended by NICE.
- **Increase** funding to cover the costs of the donor sperm and IUI/IVF for the following, where eligible:
 - a. people with conditions recommended by NICE.
 - b. individuals and couples trying to get pregnant using donor insemination who have fertility problems.

This means we would pay for the donor eggs or sperm that are used in some NHS funded assisted conception treatments for people with fertility problems or certain conditions. The existing policies do not provide this funding.

Our proposed policy is the same as the NICE guidelines.

We are asking for views, suggestions and feedback on how we could approach funding of donor eggs and sperm. We will then use this as a basis for local NHS guidelines on this.

5. Fertility preservation

Proposed policy:

- **Increase** storage of eggs, sperm and embryos for people with conditions or who need a treatment that can cause infertility to:
 - Up to 10 years storage for people aged 32 and over. For people aged under 32 years, storage is funded up until their 43rd birthday.

The storage time in our proposed policy is longer than NICE recommends in some cases.

Those eligible for fertility preservation in our proposed policy is the same as NICE guidance.

6. Ovarian reserve criteria

Proposed policy:

To be eligible for assisted conception treatment, regardless of your age, there should not be evidence of low ovarian reserve measured by two or more of the three NICE recommended tests.

Our proposed policy is not the same as NICE guidelines which recommend that for women or people trying to get pregnant aged 40-42 only, there should be no evidence of a low ovarian reserve. Our proposed policy, and current policies, include ovarian reserve criteria for people of all ages.

With limited NHS budgets we have to make sure we're funding treatment where it is also likely to result in a person becoming pregnant, which is why we are using ovarian reserve criteria but increasing funding for IVF cycles in our proposed policy.

How to have your say - survey closes on 22 August

- We have sent the engagement information directly to around 230 stakeholders and community groups, and had articles in local media.
- We are hosting public events in July and August for people to ask questions and have their say. We will publish a recording of this on our website.
- Please encourage residents in your areas to read the information about the policy or join an event – and submit their views via our survey.
- The feedback will then be analysed and reviewed by the clinical review group, alongside other information, to create the final policy.
- The policy will be taken to NHS North East London's board for decision in the autumn.
- We will ensure the new policy is promoted to stakeholders, GP and clinicians, and the public.