



Dear Mr Andrew Bland, Chief Officer, NHS South East London Commissioning Alliance,

We are writing to you regarding NHS South East London Commissioning Alliance's policy to deny funded IVF services to single women "because of the known disadvantage that providing assisted conception to a single woman would cause both the child and the mother." We represent a coalition of charities and advocates that work to improve women's access to NHS-funded IVF care in line with NICE guidelines, advocate for women's reproductive choice and champion women's human rights in pregnancy and childbirth.

As we are sure you will be aware, there is absolutely no evidence to support the justification for the current policy. Moreover, these statements will have undoubtedly caused many single parent families and individuals hoping to become solo parents, significant distress. It is incredibly disappointing that an NHS Trust would not only restrict access to medical care in countenance of NICE guidelines, but would also add to the stigma already experienced by many single parent families.

We are also deeply concerned about the equality and human rights implications of this policy, under the Equality Act 2010 and the Human Rights Act 1998. This policy is very likely to breach Articles 8 and 14 of the European Convention in Human Rights, which prohibits discrimination by the state in policies affecting family life. Moreover, infertility is defined as 'a disease of the reproductive system' by the World Health Organisation. Therefore it follows that ill-founded social judgements and discriminatory rationing should play no part in the allocation of treatment on the NHS.

We appreciate that you have since issued an apology for the distress caused by the wording of the policy and announced your intention to "conduct a rapid review of the policy in relation to access criteria for funding IVF." However, we are seeking further clarification as to the nature of this review. Specifically, we would welcome the Trust addressing the following:

- If, since your statement announcing the rapid review on 20<sup>th</sup> August, this has now commenced, and details of the expected timeframe for the review.
- If the review will include a public consultation to enable members of the public, medical bodies, and organisations representing women who may be affected by this policy, both directly and indirectly, the opportunity to submit evidence.
- If, until the review is complete, healthcare providers within the NHS South East Trust will continue to deny single women IVF services based on the inaccurate and offensive judgment that solo parents "do not give the best outcome for the child."

Thank you in advance for your response to our concerns. We look forward to hearing from you at your earliest convenience and hope that we are able to engage with the review in the near future.

Yours sincerely,

Birthrights  
British Pregnancy Advisory Service, bpas  
Kelly Da Silva, The Dovecote Childless Support Organisation  
IVFBabble  
IVFfairness  
Caroline Lucas MP  
Rt Hon Lord Hunt of Kings Heath PC OBE  
Layla Moran MP  
Kate Green MP  
Steve McCabe MP