

By email

10 January 2020

Dear Katherine

I am writing to update you following our letter sent on 30 October 2019 in which we confirmed that south east London CCGs had agreed to undertake a rapid review of their Treatment Access Policy for IVF for single women.

The review was undertaken by public health colleagues on behalf of all six CCGs and considered by the Treatment Access Policy steering group and the south east London Clinical Programme Board.

The following outputs of the review are of particular note:

1. NICE guideline CG156 makes recommendations for access to IVF for people in same sex relationships that are also applicable to single women.
2. Centres that provide fertility treatments are required by law, and as a condition of their HFEA licence, to take account of the welfare of any child who may be born as a result of treatment and of any other child who may be affected by the birth. This is detailed in the HFEA Code of Practice Edition 9.0. There are no stipulations as to the relationship status of the person planning to have treatment.
3. A review of current London policies for all 32 CCGs showed that:
 - 22 explicitly include single women (also referred to as women not in a partnership)
 - These 22 also apply the same access criteria and treatment pathway for single women as for same sex couples where both partners are female.
4. None of the policies reviewed mention either the ethics of restricting funding for NHS funded fertility treatments or issues pertaining to the welfare of the child. In the latter case, this is presumably because an assessment should be done by the centres that give treatment, in line with HFEA licence requirements.

All six CCGs considered the outputs of the review at their respective governing body meetings, held in public. The following recommendations were agreed:

- We will rapidly amend the SE London Treatment Access Policy for IVF for single women, to enable them to have access to IVF on the same basis as same sex

female couples. This is in the process of being done and amended policies should be on CCG websites in January 2020.

- As for same sex couples, eligible single women should have confirmed infertility, evidenced by unsuccessful cycles of artificial insemination (AI) within the 12 past months. This would be an indication for further assessment to take place, following which, IVF may be offered if the woman is eligible.
- We will review and update the whole of Section 2.26 Fertility treatments in the SEL Treatment Access Policy 2019/20 by the end of the financial year, in time for the next iteration of the Policy.

If you have any further questions, please do not hesitate to contact me or Dr Angela Bhan on angela.bhan@nhs.net

Kind regards

Andrew Bland



CCG Accountable Officer (Bexley, Bromley, Greenwich, Lambeth, Lewisham, Southwark)