

Freedom of Information Request: Our Reference FOI20-09-001 COVID-19 and patient eligibility for NHS-funded assisted conception services

Thank you for your request for information received on **23 September 2020**. Please find the response **in red** from Welsh Health Specialised Services Committee (WHSSC) set out below in a question and answer format.

1. Under normal circumstances, there exists an upper age limit for access to assisted conception services

The WHSSC All Wales Specialist Fertility Service Policy (CP38) notes the following for age:

3.2.1 Age

Criteria – Due to the associated risks with teenage pregnancies patients will need to be at least 20 years old to access IVF treatment. Women who are aged less than 40 years and who meet the access criteria are entitled to two cycles of IVF with or without ICSI. However if the woman reaches the age of 40 during the first cycle of treatment they will not be entitled to a second cycle of IVF.

Women aged between 40 and 42 years (up to their 43rd birthday) who meet the access criteria are entitled to one cycle of IVF with or without ICSI provided the following 3 criteria are also fulfilled:

They have never previously had IVF treatment

There is no evidence of low ovarian reserve

There has been a discussion of the additional implications of IVF and pregnancy at this age.

AND

2. Delays related to the COVID-19 pandemic have resulted in (or may result in) patients exceeding that limit.

A letter was issued from the Managing Director of WHSSC in April 2020 notifying all providers for Welsh patients that in light of COVID there would be a temporary amendment to the age criteria due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The letter noted that women on the waiting list for IVF would still be entitled to the treatment they would have been entitled to on the 13th of March 2020 regardless of their age when services resume. This date was chosen as this was the date Welsh Government confirmed that all non-urgent outpatient and surgical procedures should be suspended.

I trust that this response provides the information that you require. Under the terms of the organisation's Freedom of Information policy, individuals seeking access to recorded information held by the Welsh Health Specialised Services Committee are entitled to request an internal review of the handling of their requests. If you would like to complain about the handling of your request, please contact me by email at: WHSSC.GeneralEnquiries@wales.nhs.uk, or via the host organisation, Cwm Taf Morgannwg University Health Board (CTMUHB). If, after Internal Review, you remain dissatisfied, you may wish to refer the matter to the Information Commissioner's Office (ICO) who can be contacted at:

Information Commissioner's Office - Wales
2nd Floor, Churchill House,
Churchill Way,
Cardiff,
CF10 2HH

Telephone: 0330 414 6421
Fax: 029 2067 8399
Email: wales@ico.gsi.gov.uk

You should note, however, that the Information Commissioner would normally expect you to have exhausted our internal complaints procedures before dealing with such an application. Further guidance may be found on the ICO website:
<http://www.informationcommissioner.gov.uk>.

The Information Commissioner recommends that all public authorities should publish a disclosure log. Such logs allow the public and other interested parties to see questions which have already been asked and answered and to quickly identify information of interest. Please note that responses are routinely published and made available via the website.