

Greater Manchester Joint Health Scrutiny Committee

Date: 16 July 2024

Subject: NHS Greater Manchester – In Vitro Fertilisation (IVF) Service Redesign

Report of: Harry Golby, Associate Director of Delivery & Transformation and
Claire Connor, Associate Director of Communications and
Engagement, NHS Greater Manchester

Purpose of Report:

To update the Joint Health Scrutiny Committee on the plans for standardising access to IVF services across Greater Manchester and public involvement in this work.

Recommendations:

Greater Manchester Joint Health Scrutiny Committee is asked to:

1. Acknowledge the contents of this report
2. Confirm that the review and proposals to standardise IVF cycles across Greater Manchester constitute substantial variation, and
3. Make any recommendations as to how consultation should be carried out.

Contact Officers:

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Equalities Impact, Carbon and Sustainability Assessment:

Not applicable.

Risk Management

The programme of work is to reduce the risk of challenge due to unequal access to IVF services across Greater Manchester.

Legal Considerations

NHS Greater Manchester and providers will meet the statutory duties relating to involvement on service redesigns.

Financial Consequences – Revenue

Not applicable

Financial Consequences – Capital

Not applicable

Number of attachments to the report: None

Comments/recommendations from Overview & Scrutiny Committee

To be gained from this report.

Background Papers

Not applicable

Tracking/ Process

Does this report relate to a major strategic decision, as set out in the GMCA Constitution

No

Exemption from call in

Are there any aspects in this report which means it should be considered to be exempt from call in by the relevant Scrutiny Committee on the grounds of urgency?

No

GM Transport Committee

Not applicable

Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Not applicable

1. Introduction/Background

In vitro fertilisation (IVF) can help people with fertility problems who may find it harder to get pregnant. It is the final treatment on an often difficult and emotional pathway for patients with fertility problems. Each try of IVF is known as an IVF cycle. NHS Greater Manchester is reviewing the number of IVF cycles made available to patients across Greater Manchester.

There is currently one Greater Manchester Policy for Assisted Conception (including IVF). However, the number of IVF cycles that the NHS will pay for is different across Greater Manchester, depending on where the patient's GP practice is based. There is no standardisation. This is because, under the former Clinical Commissioning Groups (NHS Greater Manchester's predecessor organisations), access to IVF services for eligible people was locally determined. Currently, the number of cycles funded varies from one to three.

This position is not sustainable within one organisation – it is inequitable and open to challenge. Therefore, the situation is under review. The specific remit of the review is to standardise the number of cycles available to eligible patients across the city region.

A project group has been established to progress the review. The group comprises members of different teams from NHS Greater Manchester (e.g. commissioning, engagement, finance, GP clinical leads, etc.) and external stakeholders (e.g. local

secondary care consultants, national patient organisations, etc.) The project group will report into NHS Greater Manchester governance via the Clinical Effectiveness Group.

To support this, a Lived Experience Advisory Group has been established to ensure the perspectives of those people who have or may access IVF can input into the process.

This paper will provide the Greater Manchester Joint Health Scrutiny Committee with an overview of the review so far, the public involvement, and the planned next steps.

2. The current service

Currently, for eligible people aged 39 and under, with a GP in these areas, the NHS will pay for:

Locality	Number of cycles
Bolton	1
Bury	1
Heywood, Middleton and Rochdale	1
Manchester	1
Oldham	1
Salford	2
Stockport	2
Tameside	3
Trafford	1
Wigan	2

In localities that only offer one cycle, a second cycle is offered for those who have a cycle that is cancelled or abandoned due to medical reasons.

To find out more about IVF in Greater Manchester and the criteria for eligibility view the [NHS Greater Manchester Assisted Conception Policy](#).

Access to NHS paid-for IVF cycles also varies nationally (neighbouring Integrated Care Boards in brackets):

- 24 ICBs provide 1 IVF cycle (including Lancashire and South Cumbria, and West Yorkshire).
- 7 ICBs provide 2 IVF cycles.
- 4 ICBs provide 3 IVF cycles.
- 7 ICBs have this under review (including Cheshire and Merseyside).

NHS England advises that the success rate of IVF depends on the age of the woman having treatment, as well as the cause of the infertility, if it's known.

Younger women are more likely to have a successful pregnancy. IVF isn't usually recommended for women over the age of 42 because the chances of a successful pregnancy are thought to be low.

In 2019, the percentage of IVF treatments that resulted in a live birth was:

- 32% for women under 35
- 25% for women aged 35 to 37
- 19% for women aged 38 to 39
- 11% for women aged 40 to 42
- 5% for women aged 43 to 44

These figures are for women using their own eggs and their partner's sperm, using the per embryo transferred measure. The [Human Fertilisation and Embryo Authority \(HFEA\)](#) has more information about IVF, including the latest success rates.

The current [National Institute for Health and Care Excellence \(NICE\) fertility guidelines](#) make recommendations about who should have access to IVF treatment on the NHS in England. According to NICE guidance, women aged under 40 should be offered 3 cycles of IVF treatment on the NHS if they meet certain criteria. But, as commissioners of local healthcare, individual NHS Integrated Care Boards (ICBs) make the final decision about

eligibility criteria, and cycles to be funded. NICE are currently reviewing their guidance, with no definite published timeline for publication.

NHS Greater Manchester would like to make access to IVF treatment equitable across Greater Manchester, so that wherever people live, they can access the same number of cycles. With this in mind, public engagement was started to explore this.

3. Public involvement and the process

NHS Greater Manchester is following a good practice consultation model for ensuring that the public and patients are able to be involved in the redesign of this service.

This includes:

- February to March 2024: Considerable engagement has already been undertaken throughout Greater Manchester regarding IVF and cycles, so we are not starting from scratch. Some of the insight held is several years old and we do not hold insight from certain localities. A desktop review was undertaken to understand the type and level of this engagement.
- From this, further, targeted engagement was agreed to address the fact that not all localities have previously engaged with their population over the last five to six years relating to IVF cycles and address the gaps in insight relating to certain groups of people who may be disproportionately affected.
- May to June 2024: A focused period of engagement to address the gaps and specifically to seek feedback on current services, gain an understanding of people's experiences, and to explore the support for standardisation across Greater Manchester. The report from this exercise is attached as appendix 1.
- An IVF Lived Experience Advisory Group ('LEAG') was formed to help bring in the views and perspectives of those with experience of IVF to the work and act as a 'critical friend' to the Project Group.

4. Next steps

Work on the review is ongoing. The next steps are:

- July 2024: During this period, the project group will create a 'long list' of all potential options' for evaluation. LEAG will then make recommendations as to the criteria that the options should be considered against. These will likely be both hurdle criteria (must haves) and also criteria which can be scored to assess their attractiveness.
- An Options Appraisal will then take place with members of the Project Group and LEAG to apply the criteria to the long list of options to agree the shortlist of options which will be considered during the consultation. The feedback from the engagement will be used to support this process throughout.
- Subject to a formal decision to proceed by the Integrated Care Board, and completion of the NHS England assurance process, NHS Greater Manchester would then look to undertake a further eight-week period of engagement (consultation) to seek feedback on the shortlisted options.

Preparation for the next phase of engagement is ongoing. This includes the following required process:

- Publication of the engagement report.
- Completion of the options appraisal process, including public involvement.
- Notifying Greater Manchester Joint Health Scrutiny Committee (this report) of the intention to standardise access to this service.
- Notifying the Secretary of State for Health and Care.
- Proceeding through the NHS England Service Reconfiguration Gateway process.
- Completing the NHS Greater Manchester governance to agree the options that will proceed to the next phase of engagement (consultation).

5. Recommendations

Greater Manchester Joint Health Scrutiny Committee is asked to:

- Acknowledge the contents of this report
- Confirm that the review and proposals to standardise IVF cycles across Greater Manchester constitute substantial variation, and
- Make any recommendations as to how consultation should be carried out.