

7 October 2021

FERTILITY TREATMENT AND SAME SEX COUPLES

- 1. The number of same sex couples who have applied for fertility treatment and have subsequently been declined treatment on the NHS from 2014 until present day.**
- 2. How Many same sex couples have applied for fertility treatment from policy changes in 2019?**
- 3. How many same sex couples applying for fertility treatment from 2019 have been approved and how many disapproved.**

Belfast Trust are unable to respond accurately to Questions 1, 2 and 3, as it would take over 18 hours to locate, retrieve and extract the information. To do so would require retrieving data on all attendances to the Regional Fertility Centre, individual charts to be pulled and checked to see if the woman identified as same sex or heterosexual and we would then need to check if the woman went on to be added to waiting lists for fertility treatment.

The Trust considers that the cost of retrieving the information would be above the 'Appropriate Limit', as defined by the FOI Act under Section 12. Section 12 of the Freedom of Information Act makes provision for public authorities to refuse requests for information where the cost of dealing with them would exceed the appropriate limit. The limit has been specified as £450 for public authorities such as Belfast Trust. This represents the cost of one or more persons spending 18 hours in determining whether we hold the information, locating, retrieving and extracting this information.

We treat a woman (whether heterosexual, same sex, married or single etc.) in line with the Department of Health/Health and Social Care Board eligibility criteria.

4. How are the decisions surrounding individual cases made?

All decisions surrounding individual cases are applied in line with Department of Health eligibility criteria for NHS funded fertility treatment, whether this is from pre-June 2019 when the Department of Health revised the criteria or after this.

Following the introduction of amended eligibility criteria for NHS funded fertility treatment in 2019, if there were ever any confusion surrounding individual cases, the Regional Fertility Management Team would, as they would always have done, discuss with and/or request clarity from colleagues in the Health and Social Care Board. Board colleagues may be able to provide the clarity themselves or they would seek this from colleagues in Department of Health.

Please see link below to Department of Health eligibility criteria, which is on the Regional Fertility Centre website and I have attached as a separate PDF document:

<https://belfasttrust.hscni.net/services/rfc/first-steps/nhs-funded-treatment/>