**Saint Mary’s Hospital**

**Department of Reproductive Medicine**

**Information for Patients**

**Counselling Service**

**The difficulties surrounding infertility**

Planning a family and making the decision to have children is often a very important step for many people. Some people are very fortunate in that the ‘planned for’ baby arrives when expected to do so. For others, however, conception and pregnancy may be fraught with complications and difficulties.

Approximately one in seven couples have problems conceiving. This experience can be extremely distressing for both individuals and couples alike and can evoke a range of emotional responses:

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| Sadness | Frustration | Envy | Shame |
| Anger | Hurt | Guilt | Fear |

People undergoing infertility investigations and treatment often describe feeling lonely and isolated.

It may be difficult for relatives, friends, work colleagues and sometimes even partners to fully appreciate the impact of infertility and as a consequence, relationships may suffer. Equally, unexpected and disappointing results following fertility investigations and unsuccessful fertility treatment can impact on an individual’s sense of self-worth and self-esteem. The feelings of loss, often associated with infertility, may also evoke thoughts and feelings about past losses and bereavements.

**The aim of counselling**

The purpose of counselling is to provide you with an opportunity to share your thoughts and talk about how you are feeling in a safe and confidential environment. The Counsellors are professionally qualified and have many years’ experience talking to individuals and couples about their experience of infertility.

We are here to listen, and we may be able to help you to find positive ways of managing what can be a very difficult time in your lives.

If you do not plan to have any further NHS fertility treatment, we can help you to explore the alternative options that may be best suited and available to you. We can also provide you with information about other support organisations that may be able to help.

Counselling is available to every couple and individual before, during and after treatment. Appointments last approximately 50 minutes and the frequency of contact will be agreed between the counsellor and client.

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| **Appointments**  Once you have been referred to the Department of Reproductive medicine for fertility investigations and treatment, you can access the counselling service on the unit.  If you would like to make an appointment, please contact us on the telephone number listed below or, alternatively, call into Reception and speak to a member of staff who would be happy to make an appointment on your behalf. You do not have to explain the reason why you wish to see a Counsellor.  **We have Face to Face, Telephone and Video appointments available on different days and times of the week between Monday and Friday.**  **Fertility Preservation**  If you are undergoing treatment for fertility preservation, you may be asked to see the Counsellors. The Counsellors will talk to you (and your partner) about the implications of either egg or embryo freezing. We are also available to offer you support throughout your treatment and will try to be as flexible as possible in terms of appointment availability.  **Implications Counselling**  If you are considering being a donor or using donated eggs, sperm, or embryos in treatment you will be referred to see a Counsellor for Implications Counselling. The purpose of this meeting is to provide you with information and support about this form of fertility treatment. We also aim to give you an opportunity to look at the short and long term implications of being a donor or using donated gametes for yourselves, the potential child and anyone else who may be affected by this treatment.  **Welfare of the Child Assessment**  The Counsellors also meet with patients if any issues are disclosed regarding the welfare of any existing or potential children which may need to be considered before treatment is offered.  **Appointments Contact Number: (0161) 276 6000 (option 7)**  Alternatively, you may wish to write to:  Ann Curley, Senior Counsellor or  Beverley Loftus, Counsellor  Department of Reproductive Medicine,  Old Saint Mary’s Hospital,  Whitworth Park,  Manchester M13 9WL  **The Human Fertilisation and Embryology Authority (HFEA)**  The Human Fertilisation and Embryology Authority (HFEA), the authority which licenses assisted conception centres in the United Kingdom, state that licensed fertility clinics should offer counselling services to all patients and that the offer of counselling should be made available to patients before they start fertility treatment.  For patients considering treatment with donated eggs, sperm or embryos, clinics should offer counselling about the implications of receiving donated gametes. For those considering the possibility of donating eggs, sperm or embryos, clinics should offer counselling about the implications of donation.  The HFE can provide important information about all aspects of fertility treatment. This information is available on their website.  [www.HFEA.gov.uk](http://www.HFEA.gov.uk)  **Information and Resources:**  **Department of Reproductive Medicine: telephone and website address**  **Telephone: 0161 276 6000**  <https://mft.nhs.uk/saint-marys/services/gynaecology/reproductive-medicine/>  **Select “Infertility counselling, support & information evening” from the drop-down list**  <https://mft.nhs.uk/saint-marys/services/gynaecology/reproductive-medicine/infertility-counselling/>  to access the following Patient Information Leaflets:   * Counselling service * Support Group for Women * Counselling Service Confidential Questionnaire * Do other people feel like this – a request for patient contributions * Direct to consumer DNA testing   **Fertility Network**  **Charity for Fertility Patients providing Support and information**  Support line is 0121 323 5025 email on  [support@fertilitynetworkuk.org](mailto:support@fertilitynetworkuk.org).  <https://fertilitynetworkuk.org/>  **Men Only Support Group**  https://fertilitynetworkuk.org/events/men-only-support-group-online-3/  **Donor Conception Network**  **Supporting families through donor conception**  http://www.dcnetwork.org/  **BACP - British Association of Counselling and Psychotherapy**  Professional Body and source of counselling support  <https://www.bacp.co.uk>  **British Infertility Counselling Association – BICA**  Professional Body for Fertility Counsellors with register of Members and useful links for associated organisations  <https://www.bica.net/> |