

# 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 reactions:

Sadness  
Anger

Frustration  
Hurt

Envy  
Guilt

Shame  
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.

The counselling office is situated at the end of the corridor on the ground floor of the old Saint Mary's Hospital building.

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

## 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 to see a counsellor, 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.

## 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.

Appointments Contact Number: **(0161) 276 6000** (option 7).

Alternatively you may wish to write to:

Ann Curley and Beverley Loftus Counsellors  
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 HFEA 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)