



Saint Mary's Managed Clinical Service  
Division of Gynaecology

PATIENT INFORMATION LEAFLET

# COUNSELLING SERVICE

## 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. 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. The Counsellors are professionally qualified and have many years' experience talking to individuals and couples about their experience of infertility.

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. We offer Support Counselling and Implications Counselling and Fertility Preservation Counselling.

## SUPPORT COUNSELLING: 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	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.

## IMPLICATIONS COUNSELLING

If you are considering donating your eggs, sperm or embryos or hoping to become a recipient of donated eggs, sperm, or embryos, you will be asked to have an appointment with a Counsellor for Implications Counselling. During this meeting, you will have the opportunity to explore the short- and longer-term implications of donor fertility treatment and the impact this may have for yourself, the potential donor conceived child, any existing child(ren) and anyone else who may also be affected. Sometimes it is helpful to have more than one appointment with the Counsellors and we will be happy to arrange this. The Counsellors recommend that you access the information resources associated with donor fertility treatments listed at the bottom this leaflet.

## 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.

## WELFARE OF THE CHILD ASSESSMENT

You may be asked to meet with the Counsellors for a Welfare of the Child Assessment if any issues regarding the welfare of any existing or potential children are raised, which may need to be considered before treatment is offered. Whilst this is not an appointment for counselling but rather a HFEA guided process for a welfare of the child assessment, you will have access to another counsellor on the Unit who will be able to offer you support during this time. If you are asked to attend a Welfare of the Child Assessment appointment, you will be given information about the process and what to expect when you are invited to attend the meeting.

## 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 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 reasons 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 during Monday and Friday. The counselling office is situated at the end of the corridor on the ground floor of the Old Saint Mary's Hospital building.

Please note - 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.

## CONTACT DETAILS



0161 276 6000 (Option 6)



<https://www.mft.nhs.uk/saint-marys/services/gynaecology/reproductive-medicine/>

## 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.hefa.gov.uk](http://www.hefa.gov.uk)

## INFORMATION AND RESOURCES

### **Fertility Network Charity for Fertility Patients**

Support line: 0121 323 5025

email: [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/>