

PE2146/B: Allow the use of privately sourced donor eggs in NHS funded IVF treatment

Surrogacy Concern written submission, 23 April 2025

Our concerns about what is proposed in the petition on use of privately-purchased eggs in IVF (including for surrogacy) are as follows:

- Egg retrieval is dangerous and carries huge risks for the very young women who "donate" their eggs. Demand for women's eggs in Scotland is soaring thanks to the Scottish Government's disastrous decision to expand access to NHS IVF treatment, including for male couples, in 2016. If people purchase eggs from private fertility clinics they should be rightly expected to bear the entire cost of fertility treatment themselves, not seek a discount on embryo creation and implantation at the expense of the Scottish taxpayer. I have been contacted by women who have developed sepsis, perforated bowels and nearly died from ovarian hyperstimulation syndrome following egg retrieval - several of these women live in Glasgow and Edinburgh.
- While many claim egg "donation" in the UK is "altruistic", this is not the case. In the rest of the UK women get paid a flat fee of £985, broken down into two payments, after egg retrieval: directly incentivising low paid women, working class women and students to effectively sell their eggs because they need the money. *If eggs were able to be privately purchased from fertility clinics in the rest of the UK for use in Scottish IVF treatment then the Scottish Government would be complicit in this harmful trade.*
- Adverts which run anywhere in the UK seeking egg "donors" do not have to state health risks. In 2023 the HFEA confirmed 53 cases of severe or critical ovarian hyperstimulation syndrome (OHSS) in women who were undergoing egg retrieval in the UK: complications from OHSS killed two British women in 2005/6. OHSS occurs in 1/3 of all women undergoing egg retrieval under the age of 30.
- It is bad enough that the Scottish Government targeted their own young people, aged just 18+, for gamete donation from 2021-2023 and that four Scottish NHS boards continue to do so (and apparently will do again this autumn). Government should not make this situation worse by subsidising and endorsing an industry which preys on young women, risking their own health and fertility, all so older people can buy eggs and get IVF and surrogacy on the Scottish taxpayer courtesy of the NHS.

We urge the Committee, and the Scottish Government to put women and young people first; to drop the adverts run by the NHS seeking egg "donors" and to deny this petition.