

Citizen Participation and Public Petitions Committee
Wednesday 21 May 2025
9th Meeting, 2025 (Session 6)

PE2020: Provide fertility treatment to single women

Introduction

Petitioner Anne-Marie Morrison

Petition summary Calling on the Scottish Parliament to urge the Scottish Government to provide the same fertility treatment to single women, as is offered to couples on the NHS for the chance to have a family.

Webpage <https://petitions.parliament.scot/petitions/PE2020>

1. [The Committee last considered this petition at its meeting on 1 May 2024](#). At that meeting, the Committee agreed to write to Public Health Scotland and the National Fertility Group.
2. The petition summary is included in **Annexe A** and the Official Report of the Committee's last consideration of this petition is at **Annexe B**.
3. The Committee has received new written submissions from National Fertility Group and Public Health Scotland which are set out in **Annexe C**.
4. [Written submissions received prior to the Committee's last consideration can be found on the petition's webpage](#).
5. [Further background information about this petition can be found in the SPICe briefing](#) for this petition.
6. [The Scottish Government gave its initial response to the petition on 18 May 2023](#).
7. Every petition collects signatures while it remains under consideration. At the time of writing, 193 signatures have been received on this petition.

Action

8. The Committee is invited to consider what action it wishes to take.

Clerks to the Committee
May 2025

Annexe A: Summary of petition

PE2020: Provide fertility treatment to single women

Petitioner

Anne-Marie Morrison

Date Lodged

23 March 2023

Petition summary

Calling on the Scottish Parliament to urge the Scottish Government to provide the same fertility treatment to single women, as is offered to couples on the NHS for the chance to have a family.

Previous action

I have contacted MSPs; MPs; the NHS; private doctors; private sperm banks; newspapers; radio stations; and local authorities.

Background information

I am a single 36 year old woman. I have been trying to fight this cause for a number of years at the detriment of my own age and fertility abilities. I'm hopeful to be a mother and know thousands in my position who cannot safely find a donor. This needs to be actioned for safe and kinder support to women seeking to become mothers.

There is an appearance of absolute discrimination here against single people wanting a family, creating a huge risk to women, men and babies' health and safety if they are left to find street sperm donors from among the general public.

At the time of publishing, 574 signatures have been gathered through a separate petition on Change.org.

Annexe B: Extract from Official Report of last consideration of PE2020 on 1 May 2024

The Convener: PE2020, which was lodged by Anne-Marie Morrison, calls on the Scottish Parliament to urge the Scottish Government to provide the same fertility treatment to single women as is offered to couples on the national health service for the chance to have a family. We last considered the petition at our meeting on 28 June 2023—several petitions have come back from that date—when we agreed to write to the Fertility Network Scotland, the British Fertility Society, Fertility Scotland and the national fertility group.

The national fertility group responded to the committee in October, informing us that, at its most recent meeting, which took place in late August 2023, it received an update from Public Health Scotland on the modelling work that it is carrying out to help the group better understand the capacity implications of any future expansion of NHS in vitro fertilisation treatment for single people. At the time of the group's submission, specific timetables could not be given for the completion of that modelling work or subsequent consideration.

The petitioner has provided a written submission, in which she highlights the support for petitions like hers across the UK. She describes the inability of a single person to access fertility treatment on the NHS in Scotland as biased and discriminatory.

Do members have any comments or suggestions for action?

David Torrance: In light of the evidence that we have received, I wonder whether the committee would consider writing to the national fertility group to seek a further update on its consideration of the capacity implications of any future expansion of access to NHS IVF for single women, and to ask how it might consider expanding the criteria for in vitro insemination to single people.

The Convener: I agree. We could also write to Public Health Scotland to seek an update on its modelling work on the timescales that it anticipates for completion.

We should keep the petition open and seek further explanation of what progress is being made in that regard. It all looks a bit piecemeal and of secondary consideration, but women in Scotland should not feel that they are subjected to bias or discriminated against compared with those elsewhere in the United Kingdom. Are colleagues content to proceed on that basis?

Members *indicated agreement.*

Annexe C: Written submissions

National Fertility Group submission, 4 July 2024

PE2020/D: Provide fertility treatment to single women

Thank you for your letter of 17 May 2024 in relation to public petition [PE2020: Provide fertility treatment to single women](#) calling on the Scottish Parliament to urge the Scottish Government to provide the same fertility treatment to single women, as is offered to couples through the NHS for the chance to have a family. I note from your letter that you are asking for a further update on the National Fertility Group's work to understand the implications of any future expansion of access to NHS IVF for single women and whether the Group has considered expanding the criteria for intrauterine insemination (IUI) to single people.

I am responding to the Committee's request in my capacity as Chair of the National Fertility Group.

I would like to begin by explaining that access to NHS IVF treatment in Scotland is the most generous in the UK with all new couples referred, subject to [access criteria](#), eligible for up to three full cycles of In vitro fertilization/ Intracytoplasmic sperm injection (IVF/ICSI) treatment. This pathway also includes any NHS funded IUI that couples, including same sex couples, need before moving to NHS IVF/ICSI treatment.

The National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE) recommend that up to 3 cycles of IVF should be offered on the NHS. However, the provision of NHS IVF treatment varies across England and depends on local Integrated Care Board (ICB) policies. Most ICBs only offer 1 cycle, or only offer NHS-funded IVF in exceptional circumstances (most ICBs require same sex couples to self-fund IUI prior to IVF treatment and this can be up to 12 rounds). Further information on this can be found here [Find out how many cycles of IVF are funded by the NHS in each area of England on GOV.UK](#).

Additionally, whilst single people in some parts of England may be able to access treatment, which parts of the treatment pathway are funded differ geographically, according to ICB policies. Patients may be asked, for example, to fund their own IUI before they can progress to IVF treatment.

The latest report from the UK fertility regulator, the Human Fertilisation and Embryology Authority: [Fertility treatment 2021: preliminary trends and figures | HFEA](#) includes that "NHS funding for IVF cycles varies considerably across the UK. In 2021, Scotland had the highest rate of NHS-funded IVF cycles at 58% compared to 30% in Wales and 24% in England".

During a debate held in Westminster, [IVF Provision - Hansard - UK Parliament](#), it was noted that the Progress Educational Trust (independent charity that advocates for people affected by fertility issues) held Scotland as 'providing the gold standard for NHS IVF Treatment'.

As the Committee will be aware, any proposed changes to national access criteria for NHS Fertility Treatment (including IUI, as this is part of the whole pathway) in Scotland are formulated within the National Fertility Group. The group brings together experts in their field, to consider clinical research, evidence and data and

make recommendations to Scottish Ministers who make the final decisions in relation to access criteria.

Since my last letter dated 2 October 2023, the National Fertility Group has met twice, with the most recent meeting taking place on 29 April 2024. Public Health Scotland (PHS) colleagues presented the modelling in relation to the work they have been carrying out to better understand the eligibility, demand and cost implications of any future expansion of NHS IVF treatment, including IUI for single people. There is still further work to be done to better understand the capacity implications for the four NHS Assisted Conception Units (ACU), which will involve reconciling demand against capacity, and I am unable to provide a specific timescale for the completion of this work at this time. Once this work is complete, the National Fertility Group will need to schedule time to properly discuss the modelling implications and consider whether a criteria change recommendation could be supported in the medium to long term as an aspiration for when health budgets could support the increase in funding and capacity that this would require.

I hope the Committee finds this information helpful and reassuring that Scotland has better access to NHS fertility treatment than the rest of the UK and is the only part of the UK to follow [NICE Clinical Guideline CG156 : Fertility problems: assessment and treatment](#) and that whilst we are still looking at the impact of expanding treatment to single people using scenarios and assumptions presented within PHS models, this is not a quick process and will have to take account of the views of the National Fertility Group, Scottish budget and available funding, and ACU capacity in future.

Public Health Scotland written submission, 8 May 2025

PE2020/E: Provide fertility treatment to single women

On 29th April 2024 PHS presented the completed modelling to better understand the eligibility, demand and cost implications of any future expansion of NHS IVF treatment for single people, to the National Fertility Group. It was agreed at the meeting that there was further work to be done to better understand the capacity implications for the four assisted conception units and that this would require reconciling demand against capacity. We did not set a specific timescale at the meeting. It was agreed though that once this work was completed the National Fertility Group would then need to schedule time to properly discuss the modelling implications and consider whether they would support a criteria change recommendation in the medium to longer term as an aspiration when health budgets could support the increase in funding this would require.

Since then, on 17th September 2024, PHS provided a recap on the demand modelling that had been completed earlier in the year and also presented some further information on capacity and cost modelling. The outcome of the meeting was that the National Fertility Group would schedule time to consider next steps and if further work on capacity modelling was required of PHS then a further request would be made of PHS.