



HOUSE OF COMMONS

LONDON SW1A 0AA

The Rt Hon. Steve Barclay MP
Department of Health and Social Care
39 Victoria Street
London
SW1H 0EU
United Kingdom

05/06/2023

RE: Equal access to IVF for LGBTQ+ people

In March last year, I wrote to the former Secretary of State, Sajid Javid, following concerns raised by constituents about unequal access to IVF treatment for same-sex couples in Islington South and Finsbury and across England. Unfortunately, however, it appears that since then there has been no progress on ensuring equal access to IVF treatment for same-sex couples.

All ICBs should provide equal access to NHS treatment across England and no LGBTQ+ person should face additional financial barriers to growing their family. Yet, as I said in my last letter, our constituency is served by two integrated care boards (ICBs), NHS North Central London and NHS North West London whose policies on IVF differ. NHS North Central London states that people in same-sex couples have to prove infertility by self-funding 6 cycles of artificial insemination before they can access NHS-funded IVF treatment. Meanwhile, NHS North West London states that same sex couples have to prove infertility by self-funding 12 cycles of artificial insemination.

This means that LGBTQ+ couples, depending on their local area, may have to pay up to £25,000 before they can access NHS services, while those in opposite sex couples do not have to pay anything. Both ICB policies create significant practical and financial barriers for prospective LGBTQ+ parents. For many, this cost prevents them from starting a family.

The 2022 Women's Health Strategy commitment to remove the need for self-funded artificial insemination has not yet been fully implemented by ICBs and policies varies dramatically around the country. Analysis carried out by Stonewall shows that 93% of ICBs are still falling short of the Women's Health Strategy's target. 19% of that are not even in line with the 2013 NICE Guidelines and require up to 12 self-funded cycles of artificial insemination.

Accessing IVF is therefore still a 'postcode lottery' – meaning that couples living in neighbouring streets could face vastly different challenges when trying to conceive, something that is clear to see in Islington South and Finsbury.

Since my last letter to your Department, constituents have been waiting over a year for equality when it comes to access to IVF. I'd appreciate your written commitment to the full implementation of the Women's Health Strategy and ending this unfair postcode lottery, and confirmation of the timescale for doing so. After the turbulence of the past year across government, I think that is the least they deserve.

I look forward to receiving your response.

Best wishes,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'ET', written in a cursive style.

The Rt Hon. Emily Thornberry MP
Islington South and Finsbury | Shadow Attorney General