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## Homerton Healthcare Fertility Unit

### Questions and answers for GPs

These will continue to be updated as more information becomes available.

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On 8 March 2024 the Human Fertilisation and Embryology Authority (HFEA) suspended [Homerton Healthcare Fertility Unit's license to practice](#) until May 2024.

The suspension is a result of concerns about three incidents in the unit, which have resulted in the tragic loss of a number of embryos – either not surviving or being undetectable. Each of the incidents occurred in 2023 and were immediately reported to the HFEA.

Homerton is continuing to work alongside the HFEA and also is investigating the incidents. During this time, the fertility unit has been put under “Special Direction”. The direction allows for all current patients who are undergoing treatment to complete it, and for all embryos, eggs and sperm to continue to be stored in the clinic. However, the clinic is unable to accept new referrals – please see below for guidance on what this means for current patients, existing referrals and new referrals.

On 2 May 2024, the HFEA confirmed that the suspension will remain in place while the investigations are still ongoing.

#### **What does the suspension mean for patients currently receiving treatment at the Homerton Healthcare Fertility Unit?**

Each of the patients affected by the incidents has been contacted by the unit's clinical team and, where appropriate, they are discussing future treatment options with these patients.

In addition, Homerton has sent [a letter](#) to all their fertility patients apologising for the concern they may have caused, even if their embryos, eggs or sperm are unaffected.

If your patients have any queries or concerns or you have queries relating to the current treatment of any of your patients, please email [huh-tr.fertility.unit@nhs.net](mailto:huh-tr.fertility.unit@nhs.net).

#### **What additional support will be available for patients who have lost an embryo(s)?**

A helpline for all patients was set up as soon as the license suspension was announced – please advise them to call 020 8510 5211, 8am-4pm, Monday to Friday. Counselling services are being offered to provide support and guidance throughout this period. If patients wish to access this service please advise them to call 020 8510 7638 or 020 8510 7486 or

email [huh-tr.fertility.unit@nhs.net](mailto:huh-tr.fertility.unit@nhs.net) to arrange an appointment, which are available Monday to Thursday daytime, and last around one hour.

### **What does the suspension mean for existing referrals?**

If you have already referred a patient to the Homerton Healthcare Fertility Unit, but they have not yet started treatment Homerton will be supporting the patients to find alternative providers for the treatment. If a patient has not yet been contacted by Homerton, you should email [huh-tr.fertility.unit@nhs.net](mailto:huh-tr.fertility.unit@nhs.net).

### **What does this mean for new referrals?**

Until further notice, please do not refer any new patients to the Homerton Healthcare Fertility Unit. Please discuss alternative treatment options with your patients. We are working with other providers to manage capacity across north east London and will endeavour to ensure all eligible patients receive treatment in a timely manner.

Below is the list of other Trusts that patients across north east London have traditionally used:

- [Barts Health NHS Trust](#) (Barts)
- [Queen's Hospital, BHRUT](#) (satellite to King's College Hospital)
- [Guys Fertility at Guy's and St Thomas' NHS Foundation Trust](#)

Referrals can also be made to any provider showing on eRS. Other London providers are shown below for ease:

- [King's Fertility at King's College Hospital NHS Foundation Trust](#)
- [The Fertility Centre at Chelsea and Westminster NHS Foundation Trust](#)
- [St Mary's Hospital at Imperial College Healthcare NHS Trust](#)
- [University College London Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust](#) (UCLH)

If patients would like advice about which provider to be referred to, the [HFEA website](#) may be helpful.

### **What is the impact on eligibility criteria for fertility treatment?**

Homerton is prioritising patients for transfer to alternative providers who are nearing the upper age limit for eligibility (42 years) and those affected directly by the serious incidents at the unit. Cancer patients are being transferred to Barts Health NHS Trust for fertility preservation treatment.

In addition, NHS North East London is relaxing the eligibility criteria on a case-by-case basis for existing patients who have reached or are close to reaching the upper age limit of 42 years – this will ensure these patients can complete their treatment. This will not apply to new referrals.

### **Is Homerton still doing semen analysis?**

The Homerton Healthcare Fertility Unit is not doing semen analysis as the license suspension includes this service.

Referrals can be made via eRS to the below alternative Trusts:

- [Barts](#) – semen analysis
  - Please refer patients to this [instruction leaflet](#), which includes actions they must take in advance to prepare for their appointment.
- [UCLH](#) – routine semen analysis
- [Whittington Health NHS Trust](#) – andrology semen testing service.