Difficult Decisions

Help us to develop our clinical policies for the future

Monday 6 January 2020 to Sunday 1 March 2020

EASY READ VERSION
Clinical Commissioning Groups (CCGs) are NHS organisations that are led by health professionals. There are 6 CCGs in Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent. Together, we use public money to plan and buy most of the health services for the people who live here.

We would like patients and the public to tell us how they use our services.

**We want to know what you think about these NHS services:**

1. **Treatments to help people get pregnant**

2. **Services for adults with hearing loss**
Your feedback can help us develop our options for how we might provide these services across Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent.

We will then hold a formal consultation to get everyone’s feedback on these options.
The challenges we face

The amount of money we receive to pay for different treatments or services does not change very much. But every year, more people need these treatments or services.

This means we are spending more money than we are given. This cannot continue. We need to find ways to spend less money.

It is important that we spend our money on the treatments that are needed most, and which work best. We look at evidence and reports to see which treatments work best.

We always focus on helping people with life-threatening illnesses like cancer.

We also want to help people earlier, before their illness gets more serious. We agree that mental ill-health is just as important as physical ill-health.
Over the last few years, the 6 Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent CCGs have been working more closely together. Some of our policies about what treatments are excluded or restricted are different. Some policies had not been reviewed for a long time. We don’t think this is fair or equal, so we want to make our policies the same.

Focusing on some treatments will mean that other treatments will have to be restricted (only available to people who meet certain criteria), and some will be excluded (not routinely available to all patients). We are now asking for feedback on some of the treatments that are restricted or excluded across Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent.

There will be some difficult decisions to make, because there are a lot of different services and treatments.
It is not easy to decide how we should spend the money we are given. We have to make sure we do not spend more money than we have. We need to focus on the treatments that we know work well.

To help us make these decisions, health professionals use a checklist to see:
- which treatments work well
- which treatments help patients
- which treatments are value for money.
They will only suggest that we fund treatments that reach a minimum score against this checklist.

We discuss their suggestions with patient representatives, GPs and managers before we make any decisions.

We want your help as we review some of these policies and we make sure we do not spend more money than we have.
There are a few different treatments that can help women if they have been having problems getting pregnant. **IVF** is the best-known of these treatments.

Last year, we spent **just over £875,000** on **216 IVF treatments** in Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent.

At the moment, people have different access to this treatment depending on where they live:

- The numbers of treatment cycles offered is not the same.
- The age limits are not the same.
- The length of time that we store eggs, sperm and embryos is not the same.
- Some treatments are not provided at all in some areas.
The National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE) gives guidelines and suggestions for how to provide different treatments. We do not have enough money to follow their suggestions in full for these treatments.

Our review of these treatments did not reach the minimum score for funding.

Although only a small number of people had this treatment last year, we know this is a very sensitive subject.

We would like you to tell us:

• How can we make sure our policy is fair for everyone?
• Do you think the NHS should pay for these treatments?
• Should we store eggs, sperm or embryos for patients who are having other treatment that may make them unable to get pregnant (like chemotherapy for cancer)?
• How can we decide how many cycles of treatment we pay for?

Pages 19 and 20 tell you how you can share your feedback.
Where hearing loss cannot be treated by medication or surgery, **hearing aids** are the usual treatment.

Last year, we spent **nearly £3 million** fitting hearing aids for **12,000 people** in Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent.

At the moment, people have different access to this treatment depending on where they live:

- North Staffordshire CCG only funds hearing aids for **moderate** hearing loss (41-55 decibels) and not usually for **mild** hearing loss (below 41 decibels), unless they are aged under 18 or have had hearing loss since childhood. They are also funded for people with dementia, tinnitus, a learning disability or another sensory disability (such as ‘deafblind’).
- The other 5 CCGs fund hearing aids for all patients with any level of hearing loss if this is suggested by their **audiologist** (hearing specialist).
If you would like to read more about how North Staffordshire CCG decide which patients they will provide hearing aids for, see [www.bit.ly/HearingAidsPolicy](http://www.bit.ly/HearingAidsPolicy).

We have reviewed this service several times. Our last review found that hearing aids would help people with moderate hearing loss more than people with mild hearing loss.

We know people have different communication needs and that their hearing loss may affect them in different ways.

About 1 in 6 adults in England have some form of hearing loss. As the number of older people is rising, we expect more people to have hearing loss in the future.
We have not made a decision yet about which policy might be used in the future. We are asking people for their feedback on the different policies we have now.

**We would like you to tell us:**

- How can we make sure our policy is fair for everyone?
- Do you think the NHS should pay for these treatments?
- How does hearing loss make it harder for people to communicate?
- Are there any other ways that hearing loss can make things harder for people?

Pages 19 and 20 tell you how you can share your feedback.
If a person has been overweight for a long time and if they lose a lot of weight, their skin may not shrink back. The excess skin and fat can be removed through surgery.

Last year, we spent £20,000 on this surgery for 9 people in Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent.

At the moment, people have different access to this surgery depending on where they live:

- The amount of weight that a patient must lose before having the surgery is not the same.
- The treatments are not provided at all in some areas.
Although only a small number of people had this treatment last year, we expect more people to need this treatment in the future as the numbers of overweight and obese people are rising.

We would like you to tell us:

• How can we make sure our policy is fair for everyone?
• Do you think the NHS should pay for these treatments?

Pages 19 and 20 tell you how you can share your feedback.
• People with breast cancer may have one or both breasts removed to make sure the cancer does not spread or come back.
• People may also lose breast tissue because of burns or an accident.
• Some people can be born without breast tissue, or have uneven breasts after they have reached the end of puberty.

Surgery can rebuild or reshape the breasts to make them the same shape and size.

Last year, we spent **over £500,000** on this surgery for **273 people** in Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent.

Our review of these treatments did not reach the minimum score for funding.
At the moment, people have different access to this surgery depending on where they live:

- If cancer is only found in 1 breast and it is removed, only 2 CCGs will fund the surgery on both breasts to make them the same. The other 4 CCGs will only rebuild the breast that was removed.
- Only 2 CCGs will fund the surgery for people who have lost breast tissue because of burns.
- Only 1 CCG will fund the surgery for adults who were born without breast tissue or who have uneven breasts after they have reached the end of puberty.

Although only a small number of people had this treatment last year, we know this is a very sensitive subject.

**We would like you to tell us:**
- How can we make sure our policy is fair for everyone?
- Do you think the NHS should pay for these treatments?

**Pages 19 and 20 tell you how you can share your feedback.**
5 Surgery to stop men or women from having a baby

**Sterilisation** is considered a permanent treatment to stop men or women from having a baby. It involves surgery to stop the men’s sperm from being released or to stop the sperm from reaching the woman’s eggs.

Last year, we spent £340,000 on these treatments for nearly 14,000 people across Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent.

At the moment, there are no restrictions in place for these treatments in our area.

Our review of these treatments did not reach the minimum score for funding.
We would like you to tell us:

• How can we make sure our policy is fair for everyone?
• Do you think the NHS should pay for these treatments?

Pages 20 and 21 tell you how you can share your feedback.
What happens next

We want to hear everyone’s views. Our survey is open for 8 weeks from **Monday 6 January** to **Sunday 1 March 2020**.

All the feedback we receive will be read by an independent organisation. They will write a report which will be presented to the 6 CCGs.

We will use the report to write a long list of options. We will use a checklist to agree a shorter list of options that are all suitable and realistic.

We will then hold a formal consultation to get everyone’s feedback on these options.
It is important to be clear which service you want to tell us about. You will need to fill in a new section for every service if you want to tell us about more than 1 service.

You can answer the survey online at www.bit.ly/Difficult_Decisions.

If you would like to fill in a paper copy of the survey, please call us and ask for a paper copy to be posted to you. Call us on 01785 854482.
We will also be holding some events across Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent. These events will give people the chance to tell us what they think is important when deciding which services and treatments we should buy on behalf of patients. More information can be found online at www.bit.ly/BeACommissioner or call us on 01785 854482. The events are also listed on our websites.

Please post any paper surveys to:
FREEPOST Plus RTAA XTHA LGGC,
Midlands and Lancashire CSU,
Heron House, Communications,
120 Grove Road, Fenton,
Stoke-on-Trent, Staffordshire, ST4 4LX
You don’t need a stamp.

We want as many people as possible to be involved in this review. Please contact us if you can invite us to any groups or meetings that you go to.
This document explains how people can share their views on different health services across Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent. Your feedback can help us develop our policies for providing these services in the future. **For more information, or if you need this document in another format, please contact us:**

Visit our websites:
- www.cannockchaseccg.nhs.uk
- www.eaststaffsc cg.nhs.uk
- www.northstaffsc cg.nhs.uk
- www.sesandspccg.nhs.uk
- www.staffordsurroundsc cg.nhs.uk
- www.stokeccg.nhs.uk

Call us:
01785 854482

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www.ngts.org.uk

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