

FACT SHEET 2: ABOUT THE HFEA

What is our role?

The Human Fertilisation & Embryology Authority (HFEA) was created by the Human Fertilisation and Embryology Act of 1990 and is an executive non departmental public body. We have statutory responsibility for the regulation of assisted reproductive technology (ART) and human embryo research within the UK.

The HFEA's principal tasks are to license and monitor centres that carry out *in vitro* fertilisation (IVF), donor insemination (DI) and storage of gametes (sperm and eggs) and embryos. The HFEA also regulates human embryo research.

The HFEA's other statutory functions include

- Producing a *Code of Practice* which gives guidelines to centres about the proper conduct of licensed activities
- Keeping a formal Register of information about donors, treatments and children born from those treatments
- Providing relevant advice and information to patients, donors and centres
- Keeping under review information about human embryos and any subsequent development of such embryos, and the provision of treatment services and activities governed by the Human Fertilisation and Embryology Act, and – where appropriate – advising the Secretary of State on relevant developments

Underlying all its activities is the HFEA's determination to safeguard the interests of patients, children, service providers, scientists, the wider public and future generations.

How we make decisions

- The Authority's policies and decisions are made by a board of 18 members, chaired by Suzi Leather, including: embryologists, doctors, nurses, counsellors, scientists, theologians, ethicists, medical-legal researchers and also contains other lay members. Members are nominated by the Secretary of State for Health and serve an initial term of three years. The Authority meets nine times a year.
- The Authority works through a number of sub-committees: Scientific and Clinical Advances Group; Ethics and Law; Audit; Regulation; Information Management and Policy; Organisation and Finance Committee.
- The board is advised by, and works closely with, Angela McNab the Chief Executive, the team of senior management and staff. Agreed policies and decisions are implemented operationally on a day to day basis by the executive staff of 84.
- Both the HFEA Chair and Deputy Chair must be lay members.

As the UK's regulator, we monitor key legislation on assisted reproduction and embryo research issues. We provide the Authority's views on reproductive medicine as required

by government and policymakers. For example, the HFEA was asked by government to advise on sex selection and undertook public consultation.

Advising patients

We have become a leading source of information on infertility and human embryo research. The HFEA currently publishes a range of professional and public-orientated leaflets and guides in paper and electronic format.

For the public and potential patients, the HFEA publishes Patients' Guides booklets and Patient Fact Sheets, which are designed to help patients understand assisted reproductive treatment.

Working with the media, patient groups and the public, we are always looking at ways to promote a better understanding of issues and practices in infertility treatment and human embryo research.

Funding

The HFEA is funded by the UK health departments (£1.5 million) and by fees raised from the clinics the HFEA licences – £3.7 million. The contribution from licence fees covers the costs of regulation. Currently clinics pay £103 per IVF cycle and £51 per donor insemination cycle.

