

## points of view

With the NHS now offering IVF for women aged up to 42, *Bella* asks...

# Do the OVER-40s really deserve FREE IVF?

## Yes

Amanda Revell  
Walton, 44, journalist



I only met the man I wanted to have a family with when I was 36 and we started trying for a child pretty much immediately. I was well aware of my biological clock ticking away – or rather, slowing down.

After nearly two years of trying we were given the green light to start our first IVF cycle. We knew we'd have to

**'Infertility is not a life choice'**

pay for our treatment as Paul had children from a previous marriage and I'd passed the age limit of 38 set by my primary care trust at the time.

Then our world was turned upside down when Paul was diagnosed with head and neck cancer. A year later, after he recovered from a secondary

cancerous tumour, we started IVF. I had my first round at 40 and my second at 41. Sadly, both were unsuccessful and now I'm going through an early menopause.

My experiences, like those of many women embarking on IVF in their early 40s, illustrate that there are often complicated and unavoidable reasons why you're walking through the fertility clinic's doors later on in life. So I'm all for the age limit for free IVF to be raised to 42.

Infertility is not a life choice. We're not asking for a breast enlargement or even a gastric band.

People say infertility is not life threatening but for many women the inability to have their own children can destroy them and ruin their hopes and their marriages.

It might not be the end of their lives, but it can be the end of their world.

## No

Cristina Odone, 52,  
writer and broadcaster



When we held my friend Polly's baby shower, there were tears as well as smiles. It was only natural – she'd been through three cycles of IVF and a great deal of anguish to get pregnant.

I was glad that my taxes had contributed in a small way to Polly's new family, as she had her IVF on the NHS.

But my friend Sophie wasn't so lucky with the NHS. When she was diagnosed with aggressive breast cancer she wanted to try the drug Herceptin, which trials have shown to be successful in treating it – but her doctor told her it was too expensive.

I understand that the NHS has a limited pot of funds to draw on and I accept that this makes for happy winners and tragic losers. But I resent my taxes funding skewed priorities.

The National Institute for Health and Clinical Excellence – the same group of experts who ruled that the NHS can't afford

life-saving Herceptin for some women with breast cancer – now recommends that more IVF treatments be offered free on the NHS and that women should be eligible until they're 42 – and not, as now, until they're 39.

I don't wish to rob Polly or the one in seven couples currently struggling to conceive of their chance for a baby, but how can the NHS rationalise

**'The NHS has skewed priorities'**

offering IVF when they also deny life-saving procedures?

I don't think IVF for the over-40s should be free. I don't want my taxes to contribute to one friend's baby shower, but pave the way for another's funeral.