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NHS Stockport is to suspend funding for IVF treatment as part of its drive to deliver £21 million worth of savings.

The trust will provide funds so that patients on its current IVF waiting list may receive treatment but no new patients will be added to the list.

Patients, on the waiting list, who've yet to start treatment will have one cycle paid for whilst those who have already had one cycle will receive funding for one further cycle to a maximum of two.

NHS Stockport provides funds for an average of 68 patients a year to receive IVF at St Marys Hospital in Manchester at an annual cost of around a third of a million pounds.

But during consultations with community groups in the borough, IVF funding has consistently been seen as a low priority by people in Stockport.

Richard Popplewell, the trust's Chief Executive said "We fully appreciate that infertility is a highly emotive issue and our decision will be an unpopular one with some people.

"However, as with all public sector organisations, we are facing a serious financial challenge so we have to make difficult decisions to protect core front line services for the majority.

"We have to make these decisions now as our funding position for future years looks equally challenging."

The decision to suspend the service will be reviewed in twelve months time.

The trust needs to deliver millions of pounds of efficiencies because demand on local NHS services is increasingly outstripping funding.

Health chiefs want to protect established front line services as much as possible so they have cut management costs, brought in a recruitment freeze and made other HQ efficiencies as part of a cost cutting exercise.

However, because of the level of savings needed, more needs to be done to ensure the trust balances its books at the end of the financial year.

A full review is underway to ensure that NHS resources are being used as efficiently as possible and that funding is available for high priority health needs.

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