This booklet presents the infertility views and experiences of Black and Minority Ethnic women using their own words and artwork.
Would you like more information?

Your fertility
Your fertility
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Would you like more information?
Who created these drawings and spoke these words?

All of the women who took part describe painful and difficult experiences around infertility. Yet each woman is much more than this experience alone.

Who is she?
She knows the words of a poet by heart. She rides her bicycle beside the river. She volunteers. She reads history, novels, poetry, theology. She collects big earrings. She knows how to coax an eggplant to grow in a cool climate. She has travelled widely. She loves to dance, even in the water. She draws beautiful flowers. She feels at home in Wales. She survives on tea. She helps solve problems in the community. She does calculus the way other people do the washing up. She is a member of a church. She finds sanctuary and peace in the Quran. She has a university degree. She studied anatomy and physiology. She knows the ins and outs of computers. She knows four languages. She can write perfect Urdu. She is learning English. She knows some Welsh. She teaches others. She is devoted to her family. She is a beloved friend. She prefers solitude. She is grateful for blessings. She is political. She tells great jokes. She asks the hard questions. She laughs with her hand over her mouth. She hits the table with her hand to show she’s serious. She is unique. Infertility, though thorny, forms only one part of her life.

What is this booklet about?

The content
Infertility views and experiences of Black and Minority Ethnic women using their own words and artwork.

The women involved
A group of nine Black and Minority Ethnic women living in Wales. All women had previous or current experiences of fertility problems.

The workshop activities
First we used artwork by artist Paula Knight to prompt discussions and elicit the women’s views about infertility. Then we conducted a series of drawing exercises, designed to prompt the women to share their views about infertility: If infertility was a creature or an animal, what would it be? If it was a place, what would it be? If it was weather, what would it be? We finished by asking the women to create a larger-scale and more detailed drawing that brought together their most relevant views and feelings about infertility.

The main conclusions
The women talked about
- the negative emotional impact of not being able to conceive,
- how pressured they feel to have children and the stigma they experience when they are not able to conceive,
- their concerns about what they should do to conceive,
- the support they need from their community, health professionals and policy makers,
- how they manage to remain hopeful.
Infertility is always there, wherever you go, like a shadow. If we educate people, the shadow will be smaller. We can be bigger than our fears.

The moment you’re told you’re infertile you become so scared. The fear can cause you to have poor mental health.

Infertility is cruel and heartless. It devours everything around it.

I’m confused. Things going on at the same time and I’m octopus, because there are many things going on at the same time and...

What is infertility like?

I think women can shine through other things. I just have Sunday for my own house. If you’re not pregnant, is that your fate? Is that what is written for you? And maybe that your fate is what you want. But if you’re not pregnant, is...
How can I live with infertility?

“Your life is a very special gift from God. You should enjoy life whether you have kids or not!”

“The sun rises every day, so don’t lose your hope!”

“How can I live with infertility?”

“Nothing grows in the desert.”

“If you think positively the sun will give you brightness and the power to grow some plants. Even in the desert there can be life.”

“In Pakistan’s Urdu literature infertility is described as the autumn of a woman’s body. She can’t have children, just like in autumn the trees can’t grow flowers and leaves.”

“It’s always a tug-of-war inside you. It’s not just about being pregnant or not. You start thinking you’re not suitable for motherhood.”
Some older ladies say that now girls don’t have children because they want to work and pursue a career. They think girls are making Allah Almighty upset because they want to do what they want. I think the pressure to have more children is cultural because they’re blocking nature’s way. "I think the pressure to have more children is cultural because they’re blocking nature’s way."

How do others react to my infertility?

"I think the pressure to have more children is cultural because they’re blocking nature’s way."

What help do I need?

"I think the pressure to have more children is cultural because they’re blocking nature’s way."

I feel I’m able to ask God for good things. I feel really alone. But with my faith I know the world is outside but I feel I’m behind a wall and signs of psychological or emotional abuse. I feel really alone. But with my faith I know the world is outside but I feel I’m behind a wall and signs of psychological or emotional abuse.

I may not get support from my mother-in-law or from society, but my husband’s role is outside. But my faith I feel I’m behind a wall and signs of psychological or emotional abuse.

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What shall I do to get pregnant?

“My friends tell me that until I’m 45 I don’t need to worry, but I’m not sure it’s true.”

“If I forget about it and stop being stressed, might it then just happen?”

“If I trust God and put my faith in Him, if I pray then I am blessed and I will get a child.”

“Almost every time I go to a party someone asks if I have children. Maybe they are curious or they don’t realize how painful it is or how private it is.”

“My hope is to find the right treatment to get pregnant.”

“I would like to do treatment, but I have a friend who spent over twenty thousand pounds to have her baby.”

“I have a problem with my fallopian tube, I am curious to know what can be done to allow fertilization to happen.”

“Infertility is like being trapped in a cage, There’s a very small door you can open if you and your husband stay hopeful.”

“People treat you as if you have a curse. They think you are the problem, so they start cornering your husband and it affects your love as a couple.”

“Change the way you bring up girls separately from boys. Attitudes can’t be changed when you are thirty if you’ve been brought up in a culture where the sole purpose of your existence is to get married.”
So much pressure!
It's hard to remain cheerful!

Where are your children? Why have you only got one?
You should be sad, you were cursed!

Try harder man!
Marry another woman!

Why are you happy?
You're barren!