

IVF Without Delays: How Smart Reminders Saved Time, Costs, and Fertility Hopes

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Background

- Infertility affects **1 in 6 couples globally**. Fertility treatments can be a lifeline for many couples and individuals struggling to conceive, but access to these services is increasingly restricted due to financial constraints within the NHS.
- NICE guidelines recommend offering **3 full cycles of IVF to women under 40**, as this significantly improves the chances of a successful pregnancy. Despite this, funding for NHS fertility treatment remains inconsistent across the UK, with access dictated by geographical location rather than clinical need.
- Many Integrated Care Boards (ICBs) fail to provide 3 cycles, with some offering **only a single cycle**, or none at all.
- At the Wolfson Fertility Centre, we noted that patients frequently attended follow-up appointments with incomplete investigations, leading to additional follow-up visits at a cost of **£101.21**
- Due to waiting times, repeat follow-up appointments often occurred after 3–4 months, which is especially important considering the **time-sensitive** nature of fertility treatment within the NHS.

Aim

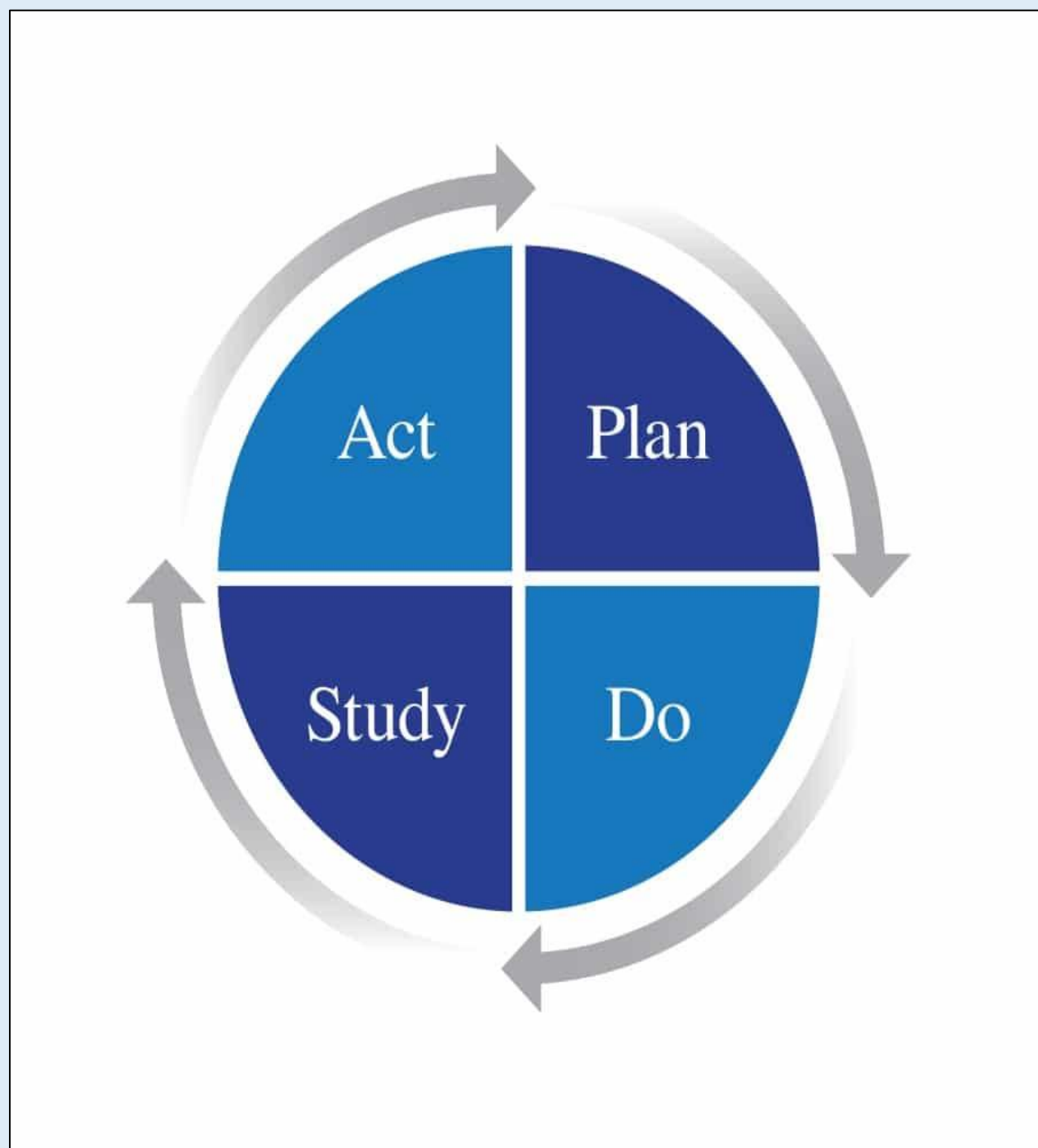
- . Amid increasing financial pressures on the NHS, this project aimed to optimise patient flow within out clinic, reducing the likelihood of repeated appointments and wasted funding

Objective

- To quantify the issue of incomplete investigations, explore reasons behind gaps and implement an effective solution.

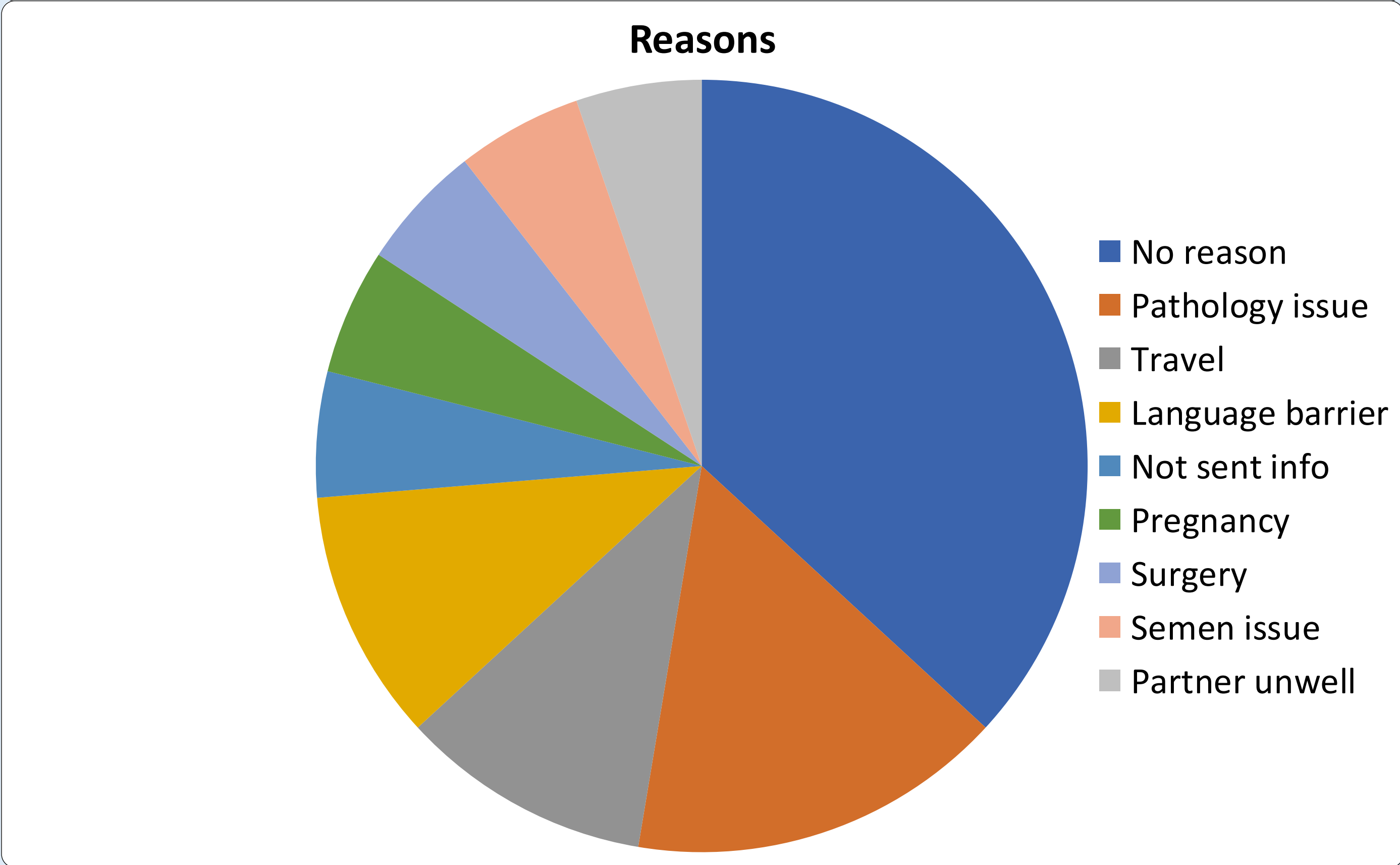
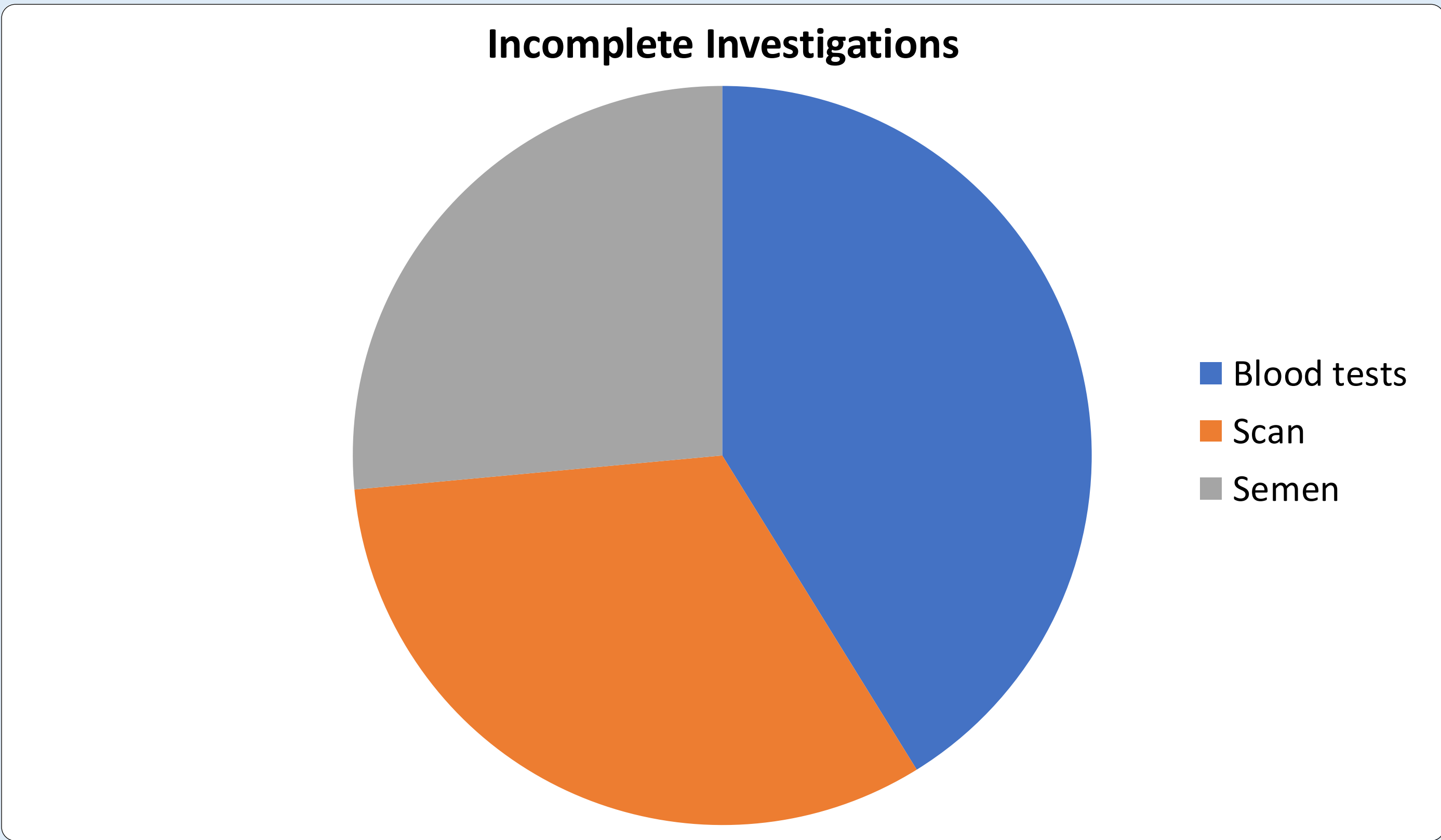
Method

- Retrospective audit of follow-up appointments in May 2024.
- Standard: 100% of patients should have complete investigations
- 17.3% (22/127)** had incomplete investigations:
 - Blood tests (14 patients)
 - Investigation scan (11 patients)
 - Semen analyses (9 patients)
- Reasons included: no reason (7), pathology order issue (3), language barriers (2), travel (2), others (6).



Intervention

- Reminder text before follow-up appointments highlighting importance of investigation completion to formulate comprehensive management plan.
- New patient letters updated with completion instructions and contact email address for the admin team, in case needing to postpone follow-up.



Review

- Incomplete investigation rate reduced from 17% to 6% after 3 months.
- Monthly savings: **£1455**
- Annual projected savings: **£17,464** for local ICB.

Conclusion

- Smart reminders and clear instructions significantly reduced incomplete investigations and extra follow-ups.
- Simple digital interventions can therefore reduce unnecessary costs and streamline efficiency, by **increasing the flow of new patients into the clinic**.
- We recommend adopting this approach in other clinics facing similar challenges, with potential for huge nationwide cost savings, thus supporting the sustainability of fertility services within the NHS.