



## FSRH Statement on release of Office for National Statistics (ONS) Quarterly Conception Rates for Women under 18 data: January - March 2016 'TEENAGE CONCEPTION RATES'

25<sup>th</sup> May 2017

FSRH welcomes the publication of the ONS' quarterly statistics on conceptions for women aged under 18 in England and Wales (January to March 2016). Overall, the data shows a continuous decline in under-18 conceptions, including a decrease in rates from 21.8 to 19.9 per 1.000 in comparison to the same quarter last year (January to March 2015). Wales alone shows a slightly bigger decline, from 24.1 to 21.5 per 1.000 for the same period.

Establishing the cause for the decline is complex, but it is likely we are still seeing the impact of the Teenage Pregnancy Strategy which provided a concerted focus on this issue for 10 years. While a continuing decline is welcome, it is important to note that in some areas, such as parts of the North West of England, teenage pregnancies are rising, showing that gains are still vulnerable to reversals.

Much remains to be done if rates are to continue to fall to levels experienced in other comparable European countries. Cuts to Local Authorities' budgets are putting contraceptive care at risk in some areas<sup>1</sup>. It is crucial for young people to be able to access the full range of contraceptive methods and make informed and confident choices about their reproductive health, but there is increasing evidence that services for young people are being cut.

Evidence shows that age-appropriate sex and relationships education (SRE) plays a key role in enabling young people to feel confident about their choices in sexual relationships, including understanding what method of contraceptive care may best suit their needs. The FSRH, [in our recent election manifesto](#), with the Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists (RCOG), called on political leaders to make SRE compulsory in all schools and colleges, including academies and free schools, by September 2019.

Jane Hatfield, FSRH Chief Executive, said:

*"FSRH welcomes the manifesto pledges of all mainstream political parties committing to making sex and relationships education compulsory - this is something our medical membership has been calling for a long time. However, for SRE to provide young people with the knowledge and skills to lead healthy sexual lives, it must include a strong focus on contraceptive methods, addressing barriers to use as well as effectiveness. The current funding situation in the NHS and Local Authorities has been described by our members as a 'crisis' in contraception care. We are concerned that over time this will result in an increase in unwanted pregnancies among all age groups".*

**Ends**

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Notes to editors:

- The Faculty of Sexual and Reproductive Healthcare (FSRH) is the largest UK professional membership organisation working at the heart of sexual and reproductive health (SRH), supporting healthcare professionals to deliver high quality care. It works with its 15,000

members, to shape sexual reproductive health for all. It produces evidence-based clinical guidance, standards, training, qualifications and research into SRH. It also delivers conferences and publishes The Journal of Family Planning and Reproductive Health Care. For more information please visit: [www.fsrh.org](http://www.fsrh.org)

- Office for National Statistics Quarterly Conceptions to Women Aged Under 18, England and Wales January - March 2016 data available [here](#)
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<sup>i</sup> An audit conducted by the Advisory Group on Contraception (AGC) in the end of 2016 has revealed that local authorities decreased spending on contraceptive services in 2015-16 due to cuts to the public health budget and that community services are being closed-down.