



## **FSRH statement on release of the Department of Health's Abortion Statistics, England and Wales, 2016**

15<sup>th</sup> June 2017

Statistics published annually by the Department of Health indicate that, overall, the abortion rates in England and Wales remain stable. The age-standardised abortion rate was 16.0 per 1,000 resident women aged 15-44. The total number of abortions was 185,596 in 2016, slightly lower than in 2015, when it was 185,824. As many abortions result from difficulties in accessing and/or using contraception, these figures continue to be indicative of a likely unmet need for contraception. Abortion remains one of the most common gynaecological procedures among women in the UK; therefore, safety and access are paramount.

Whilst a focus on young people's access to contraception is vital, FSRH is concerned by the continuing trend for an increase in abortion rates in women over 25. Rates amongst women aged 30-34 have risen steadily from 15.0 per 1,000 women in 2006 to 17.4 in 2016; over-35 rates have increased from 6.9 per 1,000 in 2006 to 8.1 in 2016. FSRH therefore reiterates its call to health and social care leaders to ensure consistent and clear messaging for women of all ages regarding their right to contraception.

FSRH also notes the continuing high number of second or subsequent abortions, making up 38% of total abortions in 2016. This suggests an opportunity to provide women with post-abortion contraception that is currently being missed. Better access to contraception after any pregnancy, whether planned or unplanned, is the key to guaranteeing that women have control over their reproductive health.

In light of this, FSRH calls upon the Department of Health to ensure that the provision of information and genuine choice on all contraceptive methods along with immediate provision of a chosen method becomes standardised practice for all abortion services.

Jane Hatfield, FSRH Chief Executive, said:

*"The release of the abortion statistics by the Department of Health comes at a time when women's rights to access safe, high-quality abortion services could be jeopardised by the Conservative Party's proposed alliance with Northern Ireland's Democratic Unionist Party (DUP), known for its regressive anti-abortion stance.*

*FSRH is concerned that the trends seen in these annual abortion statistics in recent years reflect an increasing, unmet need for contraceptive care in women beyond teenage years. This Government has an opportunity to demonstrate its commitment to equality of care for all by making progressive changes to abortion law, including in Northern Ireland. We would welcome a commitment from the Government to work with our members to support them to improve access to all forms of contraception, including long-acting reversible contraceptives, strengthening post-pregnancy contraceptive services and ensuring that women receive the contraceptive and abortion care they need."*

**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)
- Department of Health Report on abortion statistics in England and Wales for 2016 available [here](#)
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