FSRH Statement on release of Office for National Statistics
Quarterly Conception Rates to Women Under 18 data

24th May 2016

FSRH welcomes the Office for National Statistics’ publication of its quarterly conception to women under 18 statistics, which reveal a continued decrease in teenage pregnancy rates in England and Wales.

Figures published by the ONS reveal that since March 2014, the annual teenage conception rate had decreased by 1.9% at the end of March 2015. These figures also show that the rate of under 18 conceptions for the first quarter of 2015 were 2.3% lower than the same quarter of 2014 - 21.9 per 1000 in March 2015 compared to the previous 22.4 per 1000 in March 2014.

Although FSRH sees this continued trend as a positive development, this data only reflects the first quarter of 2015 and as such, we are yet to see the potentially negative implications of cuts to the public health budget that were implemented in the latter half of 2015. With this in mind, FSRH wishes to highlight that local and national decision makers should not be complacent about the national focus on under 18 conception rates, and work must be continued on prevention to ensure that this downward trend continues.

Further, these statistics reveal a wide variation in conception rates across local authorities in the UK. For example, in Blackpool the rate is almost double that over the national average at 51.9 conceptions per 1000. While in North East Lincolnshire under 18 conceptions have actually risen. This data demonstrates regressions in some local authorities, while others continue to perform poorly against this important indicator health, well-being and economic potential of the next generation. Therefore, we call on all local authorities to continue to prioritise sexual and reproductive healthcare and ensure continued support for young people around contraception and parenthood.

Internationally, it is also important that England catches up with its European counterparts in terms of teenage pregnancy rates. Teenage birth rate data from the European Union in 2014 show that only Bulgaria, Romania, Slovakia, Hungary and Latvia have higher rates than the UK.

Jane Hatfield, Chief Executive, FSRH said:

“Today it was announced that the World Health Organisation is looking to promote England’s Teenage Pregnancy Strategy to other countries and these statistics are a timely testament to the efficacy of the cross Government, multiagency approach that the previous Teenage Pregnancy Strategy implemented. However, the variation of conception rates across local authorities strongly suggests the need for a continued Government i.e. National-level strategy to ensure that, in a climate of funding cuts, the successes of the old Teenage Pregnancy Strategy are not lost in the years to come.”

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.
- Office for National Statistics (May 2016) *Quarterly conception to women under 18: March 2015* Available at: http://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/birthsdeathsandmarriages/conceptionandfertilityrates/datasets/quarterlyconceptionstowomenagedunder18englandandwales
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