FSRH and Teenage Pregnancy Knowledge Exchange joint statement on the release of ONS conception rates for women under 18 in England and Wales: 2016

New teenage pregnancy data shows good progress, but more remains to be done

27 March 2018

The Teenage Pregnancy Knowledge Exchange (TPKE) at the University of Bedfordshire and the Faculty of Sexual and Reproductive Healthcare (FSRH) welcome the publication of the Office for National Statistics (ONS) statistics on conceptions for women aged under 18 in England and Wales for the year 2016.

The data published by the ONS today show that in England 18.8 per 1000 women under-18 became pregnant, a reduction of 9.6% from 2015 and 60% since 1998, the baseline year of the Teenage Pregnancy Strategy. The rate of under-16s conceptions has dropped by 18.9% from 2015. Both rates are at the lowest level since records began.

FSRH and TPKE are pleased to see the continuing decline in teenage pregnancy rates, but stress that the progress should not lead to complacency. Stark inequalities in rates persist between local areas, young people are at highest risk of unplanned pregnancy, and teenage births remain higher than comparable Western European countries.

Alison Hadley, Director of TPKE and Teenage Pregnancy Advisor to Public Health England, said:

“Public Health England and the Local Government Association’s new Teenage Pregnancy Prevention Framework is an excellent resource to help councils and their NHS partners continue to make progress, but key to sustaining reductions will be ensuring the new statutory status of relationships and sex education translates into high quality provision for all children and young people.

This requires clear and evidence-based government guidance for all schools to provide comprehensive RSE that reflects the complex issues of the 21st century and includes accurate information on sexual and reproductive health and details of local services. National investment in training to ensure teachers are skilled and confident, and monitoring of RSE quality by Ofsted as part of school inspection are also essential.

Effective implementation will lay the foundations of knowledge and skills for children and young people – releasing Councils’ diminishing resources to focus on the other aspects of effective teenage pregnancy programmes – including easily accessible youth-friendly contraceptive services, targeted help for young people most at risk and high-quality support for young parents.”

Alison also works with the World Health Organisation (WHO) to share internationally the successful lessons of the Labour Government’s Teenage Pregnancy Strategy. Her new book, Teenage Pregnancy and Young Parenthood: effective policy and practice which has a co-authored chapter and foreword from WHO, provides an insight into the strategy and considers how the lessons learnt from its success could be applied internationally.

Dr Asha Kasliwal, FSRH President, said:

“These figures show a welcome trend in declining rates in under-18 pregnancies in England and Wales, but we know that there is still much to be done to tackle persistent regional inequalities.”
The lack of clinical leadership in sexual and reproductive health in some areas is likely to be a contributing factor. Qualified leadership is essential to the provision of safe, effective SRH care. Effective SRH leadership will support the restructuring of services to ensure they are patient centred, youth-friendly and fit with wider attempts to promote good health and tackle inequalities among the population.

Yet leadership alone cannot guarantee that young people will receive the support they need to make informed decisions about their sexual and reproductive health and wellbeing. SRH services are being severely downsized as a result of cuts to the public health grant over the last few years.

This is a false economy, as cuts to prevention mean that years of progress in teenage pregnancy prevention could be jeopardised. Therefore, it is crucial that cuts to SRH services are reversed so that everyone, particularly young people, are able to confidently access the full range of contraceptive methods available to them.

FSRH also strongly supports comprehensive, age-appropriate and inclusive RSE effectively funded and delivered in all schools as a tool to empower young people to take responsibility for their sexual and reproductive health, helping them to avoid unplanned pregnancies.”

Alison Hadley, Dr Asha Kasliwal and experts from WHO are available for interview.

Attached are some examples of good practice being undertaken by several councils. The media contacts for these are also available.

For further information please contact:

Caroline Jacobi  
Communications Officer, University of Bedfordshire  
Email: Caroline.jacobi@beds.ac.uk  
Telephone: 01582 743079

Camila Azevedo  
FSRH External Affairs & Standards Officer  
Email: externalaffairsofficer@fsrh.org  
Telephone: 02037945309  
Mobile: 07379408587

Notes to editors:

About the Teenage Pregnancy Knowledge Exchange (TPKE)

• The TPKE at the University of Bedfordshire is the national source of expert advice and information on teenage pregnancy, providing training, research and consultancy. The aim of the Exchange is to build on the success of the Labour Government’s Teenage Pregnancy Strategy started in 1999 which, led by Alison, culminated in the lowest under-18 conception rate for 40 years. Alison is also Teenage Pregnancy Advisor to Public Health England.

About the Faculty of Sexual and Reproductive Healthcare (FSRH)

• 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 BMJ Sexual & Reproductive Health in partnership with the BMJ. For more information please visit: [www.fsrh.org](http://www.fsrh.org)

**About the Office for National Statistics (ONS)**

- The Office for National Statistics (ONS) statistics on conceptions for women aged under 18 in England and Wales for the year 2016 can be found [here](http://www.ons.gov.uk).