Statement on Department of Health’s
‘Abortion statistics, England and Wales 2015’

Statistics published by the Department of Health indicate that, overall, the abortion rates in England and Wales remain fairly static. However, many abortions result from difficulties in accessing or using contraception and FSRH is concerned that these statistics, which reveal a total 0.7% increase in comparison to 2014, do reflect an unmet need for contraceptive care. We believe this unmet need is increasing and that this is a consequence of the year-on-year cuts to local authority, public health and GP funding for contraception provision. FSRH fears that this situation will become further exacerbated in 2016 as the impacts of further budget reductions manifest themselves in poorer access to the full range of contraceptive methods.

We are particularly concerned by the continuing increase in abortion rates in women over 25 - abortion rates amongst women aged 30-34 have risen from 14.5 in 1000 to 17.1 in 1000 over the past ten years. With this in mind, FSRH reiterates its call upon education and healthcare leaders to ensure consistent and clear messaging for women of all ages regarding their fertility.

FSRH also notes the rise in second or subsequent abortions (from 37% in 2014, to 38% in 2015), and are concerned that figures vary greatly between local areas. In part these variations may reflect differences in local practice regarding post-abortion contraception provision and some missed opportunities to provide women with the contraception of their choice.

In light of this data, FSRH calls upon the Department of Health to implement the Chief Medical Officer’s recent recommendation to establish a more integrated healthcare delivery system around women’s needs, and ensure that the provision of contraceptive information, personalised support in contraceptive choice and immediate provision where clinically appropriate becomes standardised practice in the commissioning of all abortion services.

Jane Hatfield, FSRH CEO, said:

“Our doctors and nurses will be concerned that these statistics may reveal the first tangible consequences of the Government’s cuts to public health which include funding of contraception services. Only with high-quality sexual and reproductive healthcare that is accessible to all - regardless of age, locality or funding source - will we be able to reduce unintended pregnancy and abortion rates to those of comparable wealthy countries.”

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


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