



Annual Report 2020

Sexual Health and Crisis Pregnancy Programme



sexualwellbeing.ie



Seirbhís Sláinte
Níos Fearr
á Forbairt

Building a
Better Health
Service



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Abbreviations

AkiDwA	Akina Dada Wa Africa
ACET	Aids Care Education and Training
CHO	Community Healthcare Organisation
COALESCE	Collaborative Alliances for Societal Challenges
CPD	Continuing professional development
ESRI	Economic and Social Research Institute
FPSHP	Foundation Programme in Sexual Health Promotion
gbMSM	Gay, bisexual and other men who have sex with men
GOSHH	Gender. Orientation. Sexual Health. HIV. (Limerick NGO)
GP	General Practitioner
HIV	Human immunodeficiency virus
HP&I	Health Promotion and Improvement
HPV	Human papillomavirus
HSE	Health Service Executive
IPU	Irish Pharmacy Union
NCDS	National Condom Distribution Service
NGO	Non-governmental organisation
NIAC	National Immunisation Advisory Committee
NSHS	National Sexual Health Strategy
PDST	Professional Development Services for Teachers
PLHIV	People living with HIV
PrEP	Pre-exposure prophylaxis
PEP	Post-exposure prophylaxis
RSE	Relationships and sexuality education
SHAG	Sexual health awareness and guidance (awareness week held across third-level institutions)
SHCPP	Sexual Health and Crisis Pregnancy Programme
SPHE	Social, personal and health education
STI	Sexually transmitted infection(s)
U=U	“Undetectable equals untransmittable” in relation to HIV viral load
VOD	Video on demand



Foreword

I am delighted to introduce this report produced by the Sexual Health and Crisis Pregnancy Programme (SHCPP), HSE Health and Wellbeing, which sets out the breadth of work delivered by the programme in 2020.

2020 was a very challenging year across the health service due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Responding to the pandemic required enormous adaptability and flexibility on the part of health services staff. Not only did they have to put in place a service infrastructure to respond to the pandemic, they also had to maintain levels of service delivery across our programmes of work. Indeed, many of our colleagues across HSE Health and Wellbeing were redeployed to the COVID-19 response, providing important support to the COVID-19 contact tracing service and vaccination teams throughout Ireland.

HSE Health and Wellbeing's objective is to coordinate a coherent and comprehensive health service response to key health and wellbeing policy areas; to reduce the growing levels of chronic disease; and to support the development of sustainable approaches to the provision of health and wellbeing services. Within this context, the SHCPP has overall responsibility for leading on the implementation of the National Sexual Health Strategy 2015–2020, which sets out to improve sexual health and wellbeing and reduce negative sexual health outcomes for people living in Ireland.

The SHCPP implements national sexual health strategic goals by supporting evidenced informed clinical practice in the area of HIV and sexually transmitted infections (STIs); by developing targeted education, information and communications initiatives; via funding arrangements with a range of services providing crisis pregnancy counselling, parenting support, community HIV testing, outreach, education and training programmes; and by supporting the development of research and information to underpin the work – all with a focus on population groups with particular needs.

As this report demonstrates, a key strength of the SHCPP's work is the partnership approach it takes, working closely and effectively with a wide range of stakeholders from statutory and community settings.

I would like to commend the hard work and dedication of the SHCPP team in delivering this programme of work.

Helen Deely

Assistant National Director, HSE Health and Wellbeing



Introduction

Last year, the COVID-19 pandemic disrupted service delivery across the healthcare system. For the SHCPP, this involved responding to the restrictions placed on public STI clinics and testing services, as well as responding to limitations on face-to-face crisis pregnancy counselling sessions. Closures of social and public venues meant that venue-based health promotion and public engagement activities were not possible; and the ability to access people in need of free condoms and sexual health information via the National Condom Distribution Service (NCDS) was significantly limited. All face-to-face HSE training was cancelled, including the delivery of the Foundation Programme in Sexual Health Promotion (FPSHP). Concerns emerged about the effect of the COVID-19 virus on people's sexual health and wellbeing, particularly in the context of reduced service provision capacity. Moreover, a major challenge from a service delivery perspective was that SHCPP team members were temporarily diverted away from sexual health work and redeployed to the COVID-19 response.

To respond to these challenges, the SHCPP engaged with service providers, stakeholders and community groups to provide the best possible information to service users under these extenuating circumstances. This included working with HIV Ireland to monitor, maintain and update STI service restrictions on a regular basis for service users; and working with the Gay Health Network to review international practice and develop information on COVID-19 and sexual health for the websites www.sexualwellbeing.ie and www.man2man.ie

In order to ensure that target audiences could continue to access sexual health information in the context of the public health restrictions, sexual health promotion messaging on social media platforms and online dating sites was increased. Additionally, in order to ensure that condoms and sexual health information remained available, the SHCPP established a partnership and developed the 'Play it Safe!' campaign with the Irish Pharmacy Union (IPU) to make sexual health promotion packs for adults available in pharmacies throughout Ireland. Crisis pregnancy counselling service providers quickly adapted their service delivery models to provide remote methods of counselling. Similarly, non-governmental organisation (NGO) partners, funded by the SHCPP to provide community HIV testing, adapted their premises and worked within the public health guidance to continue to provide this important service.

The SHCPP continued to roll out important initiatives from its education, communications and research programmes, including the release of the *Making the 'Big Talk' many small talks* resources for parents; the launch of a national campaign drawing attention to HIV-related stigma and referencing the global 'undetectable equals untransmittable' (U=U) campaign; and the release of the *Talking about sex and sexual behaviour of young people in Ireland* research report.

Overall, 2020 was a busy year, which required flexibility and adaptability to ensure that up-to-date information and services were provided to the public as far as possible under constrained circumstances. I would like to acknowledge the really hard work and commitment of the SHCPP team, who went above and beyond to deliver on the programme of work outlined in this report, while also contributing directly to the COVID-19 response. I would also like to acknowledge the huge support and commitment provided by our NGO partners and funded services who worked collaboratively in the delivery of much of this work.

Maeve O'Brien

Interim Programme Lead, HSE Sexual Health and Crisis Pregnancy Programme



The Sexual Health and Crisis Pregnancy Programme, HSE Health and Wellbeing

The Sexual Health and Crisis Pregnancy Programme (SHCPP) is one of several national Policy Priority Programmes in HSE Health and Wellbeing. The SHCPP has responsibility for implementing the National Sexual Health Strategy (NSHS) 2015–2020. In 2020, the Programme Lead for the SHCPP reported to the Assistant National Director for Health and Wellbeing, who reported to the National Director for Strategic Planning and Transformation.¹

National Sexual Health Strategy 2015–2020

The NSHS is Ireland's first national framework for sexual health and wellbeing. Its vision is that everyone in Ireland should experience positive sexual health and wellbeing. To achieve this vision, the strategy aims to 'improve sexual health and wellbeing and reduce negative sexual health outcomes by ensuring that everyone living in Ireland has access to high-quality sexual health information, education and services throughout their lives'.

This vision will be addressed through three goals:

GOAL
1

Sexual health promotion, education and prevention: Everyone living in Ireland will receive comprehensive and age-appropriate sexual health education and/or information and will have access to appropriate prevention and promotion services.

GOAL
2

Sexual health services: Equitable, accessible and high-quality sexual health services that are targeted and tailored to needs will be available to everyone.

GOAL
3

Sexual health intelligence: Robust and high-quality sexual health information will be generated to underpin policy, practice, service planning, and strategic monitoring.

The strategy recognises the diversity of sexual identities in Ireland and supports all expressions of sexual identity through positive health and wellbeing outcomes. The SHCPP convenes the Sexual Health Strategy Implementation Group to support its implementation of the NSHS.

Sexual Health Strategy Implementation Group

The Sexual Health Strategy Implementation Group provides strategic advice, oversight and direction to support the implementation of the strategy (see Appendix 1).

¹ As of 14 June 2021, HSE structures changed. The Assistant National Director for Health and Wellbeing reports to the National Director of Strategy and Research, Healthcare Strategy.



The Team

The SHCPP team works across six main functions: Clinical Services; Education and Training; Communications and Information; Funding and Crisis Pregnancy Services; Research; and Finance and Administration. The work of the functions is coordinated by the Programme Lead. The Programme also works closely with HSE Programme and Communications to implement communications campaigns and initiatives.*

SHCPP Team in 2020		
Maeve O'Brien	Interim Programme Lead	
Clinical Services		Redeployed to HSE COVID-19 response
Vacant post	Medical Director for Sexual Health	
Caroline Hurley	Project Manager	Redeployed March to June 2020
Gobnait Creedon	Project Officer	Redeployed March to December 2020
Rachael Mestrstry	Temporary Project Officer, December 2020 onwards	
Education and Training		
Moira Germaine	Education and Training Manager	Redeployed March to May 2020
Caoimhe McClafferty	Health Promotion and Improvement Officer	
Communications and Information		
Anita Ghafoor-Butt	Communications and Information Manager	Redeployed March to April 2020, and October 2020 onwards
Aoibheann Ní Shúilleabháin*	Programme and Campaigns Manager, HSE Communications Division	
Funding and Crisis Pregnancy Services		
Janice Donlon	Funding Manager	
Research		
Tina Bedenik	Temporary Research Manager, January to March 2020	Redeployed April to May 2020, left position in May 2020
Kate Tierney	Temporary Research Manager, November 2020 onwards	
Owen Brennan	Research Assistant	
Finance and Administration		
Patricia Wallace	Finance and Human Resources Manager	
Ray Madden	Clerical Officer	



Clinical Services

The clinical function works on the clinical actions of the NSHS, which includes the development of clinical practice guidance, information and resources to support sexual health services in Ireland. The Medical Director for Sexual Health post remained vacant during 2020.

The COVID-19 pandemic and the Clinical Services function:

- The clinical Project Manager was redeployed to the COVID-19 response, from March to June 2020. The Project Officer who commenced the post in February 2020 was redeployed to the COVID-19 response in March and did not return to this post; it was temporarily filled in December 2020.
- There were unprecedented interruptions to normal healthcare activity, with most services affected, including public STI clinics and related testing services. At times, STI services were restricted to emergency appointments only, or had to close temporarily, in particular during the waves of COVID-19 when acute hospital services were severely impacted. As a result of the ongoing social distancing requirements, most clinics moved to appointment-based systems; provided virtual consultations where possible; and prioritised clinic appointments for those with symptoms or requiring treatment. Throughout the year, the SHCPP continued to engage with service providers, stakeholders, and community groups in order to provide the best possible information and options to service users under the circumstances. Information was communicated via sexualwellbeing.ie, man2man.ie, NGO partner websites, and social media. The SHCPP collaborated with HIV Ireland to maintain an updated [list of service restrictions](#) for service users.

In 2020, we:

- Continued the national roll-out of a HIV pre-exposure prophylaxis (PrEP) programme to prevent HIV in populations at substantial risk of sexual acquisition of HIV. PrEP is available through approved PrEP service providers that meet the National Standards for PrEP, and is free of charge to those who meet clinical eligibility. At the end of 2020, there were 11 public and 9 private approved PrEP service providers in Ireland.

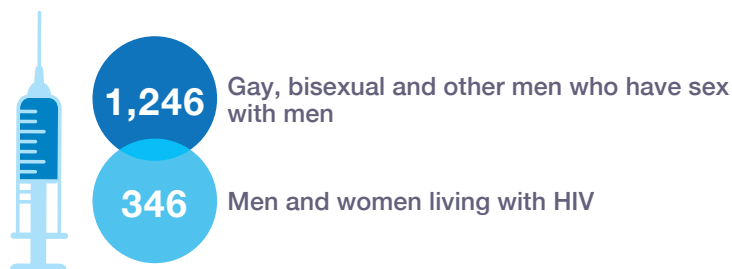




Information for service providers	www.sexualwellbeing.ie/preproviders
PrEP webpage for service users	www.sexualwellbeing.ie/prep
List of approved PrEP services	www.sexualwellbeing.ie/getprep

- Facilitated the continuation of the human papillomavirus (HPV) vaccine programme for at-risk populations through public STI and HIV services, in line with National Immunisation Advisory Committee (NIAC) recommendations.

NUMBERS COMMENCING THE HPV VACCINE COURSE IN 2020



- Facilitated an online Sexual Health Advisors training course run by Staffordshire university. Participants included nurses working in a sexual health capacity in public STI and HIV services, student health services, primary care, prison, and addiction services.





- Provided funding support to the Sexual Health Advisors Association of Ireland. Membership is open to all those working in a sexual health advisory capacity, or with an interest in sexual health advisory. The network held the first meeting of its members in February 2020 and had 34 members by the end of 2020.
- Continued to establish and support the HIV Fast-Track Cities Initiative in Dublin, Cork, Galway, and Limerick. It was not possible to hold stakeholder consultation meetings in each of the cities in 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic, and therefore work to establish the City Steering Groups progressed through direct communication with the relevant HIV stakeholder groups. A HIV scoping study was planned, to document the current service provision and service gaps in a systematic way for the establishment of the Fast-Track Cities Initiative in each of the four cities, and to inform the development of city-level implementation plans.



- Commissioned a pilot project to assess the feasibility, acceptability and impact of an online (home) STI testing service that is integrated with public STI clinics in Ireland. Funding for the pilot project was secured through the Government of Ireland's Sláintecare Integration Fund 2019, with co-funding from the SHCPP. Online STI service provider SH:24 was the successful tenderer. The project is being piloted in the counties of Dublin, Cork, and Kerry, which will allow anyone with an address in these pilot counties to order a free STI test to their home. The project commenced in September 2020 with the development of the online platform and integration with the participating public STI clinics. The service was planned to go live in January 2021. Following the service delivery period, a formal evaluation of the pilot project will be undertaken.



Education and Training

The Education and Training function continued to progress actions under its Sexual Health Promotion Training Strategy to enable parents, teachers and youth workers to address the sexual health education and information needs of children and young people. The function also continued to support professionals in promoting the sexual health of a diverse range of population groups, including the general population, older people, people with disabilities, migrants, and ethnic minorities. This was done in both the provision of training opportunities and the development of resources.

The COVID-19 pandemic and the Education and Training function:

- The Education and Training Manager was redeployed to the South East Community Healthcare area from March to May 2020.
- Face-to-face HSE training was cancelled, including the delivery of the FPSHP. In addition, the project to review and adapt the FPSHP was delayed until November 2020 due to redeployment of Health Promotion and Improvement (HP&I) partners.
- There was a disruption to school life, with children and young people physically in school for just over 6 months of the year. This resulted in wide-ranging impacts on students, families and school staff. Along with all other elements of the curriculum, the delivery of relationships and sexuality education (RSE) was affected. The SHCPP continued working with education partners insofar as circumstances allowed and took over managing the completion and publication of the Busy Bodies (puberty and adolescence) booklet, when the Project Lead (Cork and Kerry Community Healthcare – CHO4) was redeployed.

In 2020, we:

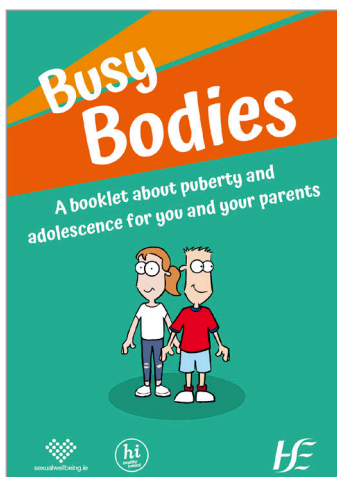
- Developed, published, and launched a range of resources for parents under the series title, *Making the 'Big Talk' many small talks*. These booklets will support parents to have 'age and stage'- appropriate conversations about relationships, sexuality and growing up, throughout their children's childhood, adolescence, and young adulthood:



Booklets are currently available in English (Irish versions will be available in Spring 2021):

- ◆ ***Making the 'Big Talk' many small talks: 4–7 years*** (This rebranded resource consists of a parent guide and a children's booklet, *Tom's Power Flower*.)
- ◆ ***Making the 'Big Talk' many small talks: 8–12 years***
- ◆ ***Making the 'Big Talk' many small talks – Healthy Ireland Collection*** (details of a range of books available in the 330 public libraries nationally).

Please visit <https://www.sexualwellbeing.ie/for-parents/resources/> to download the resources.



- Adapted and published an updated Busy Bodies booklet for children and young people, which addresses puberty and early adolescence. This was achieved in partnership with HP&I CHO 4, and with the support of an advisory group (National Council for Curriculum and Assessment; Department of Education Inspectorate; the Professional Development Service for Teachers (PDST); the National Parents Council – Primary; BeLonG To Youth Service, HP&I; HSE CHO 1; Sexual Health Centre Cork). Copies are available to parents and schools in both Irish and English from healthpromotion.ie Booklets can also be downloaded from sexualwellbeing.ie

- Supported our HP&I and NGO colleagues in the completion of six FPSHP courses; training 81 professionals. In 2020, five additional courses were deferred due to the embargo on face-to-face training – an essential component of the FPSHP. One of these courses was completed online.
- Finalised and published (online) the RSE element within Unit 1 of the new Social, Personal and Health Education (SPHE) resource for schools, in partnership with the Programme Manager for Education, Health and Wellbeing. The resource will support the delivery of the Junior Cycle SPHE Short Course. The RSE module may be found at <https://www.hse.ie/eng/about/who/healthwellbeing/hse-education-programme/junior-cycle-sphe-training-resources/rse/>



- Worked with Tusla to progress content development for its online learning tool to enable social workers, social care workers, and foster parents to address the sexual health and sexual education needs of children in care. A plan was developed to launch the resource in Spring 2021.
- Funded and collaborated with the Sexual Health Centre Cork and BeLonG To Youth Service to finalise and publish the In the Know training manual to enable youth work professionals to deliver the 'In the Know' sexual health programme to young gbMSM. Within the same partnership, we also initiated and progressed the development of the 'In the Know' Facilitator Training Programme, which is due for completion in 2021.
- Provided funding to:
 - ◆ The National Parents Council – Primary to deliver the 'Parenting: Supporting Your Child to Build Healthy Friendships and Relationships' programme to 178 parents
 - ◆ The Irish Family Planning Association to deliver the 8-week 'Speakeasy' training programme to 110 parents.
 - ◆ The National Youth Council of Ireland to deliver training workshops in relation to sexual health policy development and pornography to 72 participants from the youth work sector.
 - ◆ Foróige to deliver the 'REAL U training for trainers' programme to 182 participants from the youth work sector.



Communications and Information

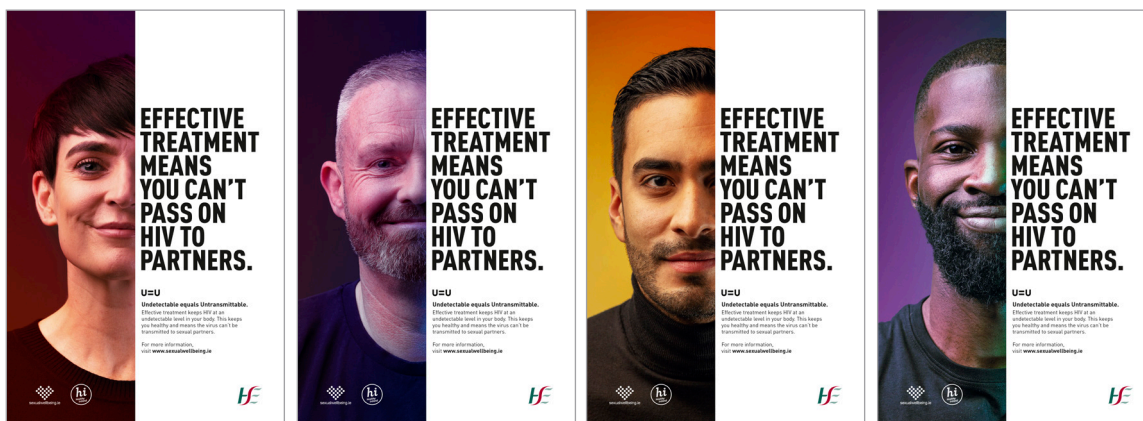
The Communications and Information function provides communications support to the SHCPP functions and works closely with the HSE Programmes and Campaigns team to design and implement targeted sexual health campaigns, and develop and disseminate information; it also oversees the NCDS.

The COVID-19 pandemic and the Communications and Information function:

- The Communications and Information Manager was redeployed to the COVID-19 response from March to April 2020 and from October 2020 into 2021.
- The closure of social venues meant that the out of home, venue-based advertising strategy was changed to a digital strategy, which included increasing messaging on social media platforms and dating sites, and working with podcasters.
- There was a significant reduction in the number of condoms and lubricant sachets ordered from the NCDS by services. A number of services established postal services in response to venue closures.
- As pharmacies remained open throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, a partnership was put in place with the IPU to make condoms and sexual health information available via pharmacies.

In 2020: Campaigns

- Launched a national campaign to address HIV-related stigma. The campaign focused on the fact that someone on effective treatment cannot pass on HIV to partners, it referenced the global U=U campaign.





The campaign was developed in collaboration with community groups and sexual health NGOs. It highlighted the importance of treatment for those living with HIV, for their own health, and so that they do not have to worry about passing on HIV to partners. For the wider public, the campaign highlighted the progress that has been made in HIV treatment – that someone on effective treatment cannot pass on HIV to partners – and the value of early testing and treatment for those who may be at risk. In January and February 2020, campaign posters with the tagline ‘Effective treatment means you can’t pass on HIV to partners’ appeared on public transport and at public transport stops/stations/platforms; they also appeared in social venues, on third-level campuses across the country, and on digital platforms.



- In response to the COVID-19 pandemic restrictions lifting over the summer months, we launched a new sexual health campaign ‘Play it Safe!’ in partnership with the IPU. The aim of the campaign was to provide young adults with access to helpful information to support them in safeguarding their sexual health and wellbeing during the pandemic. The campaign involved making 100,000 sexual health protection packs available in 1,820 pharmacies nationwide. These packs included an information leaflet and a free sexualwellbeing.ie condom. The leaflet contained information on: how to reduce the risk of coronavirus if sexually active and when to consider avoiding sex; contraception, emergency hormonal contraception and condoms; STI testing; PrEP and post-exposure prophylaxis (PEP); and the importance of sexual consent. The leaflet directed people to www.sexualwellbeing.ie

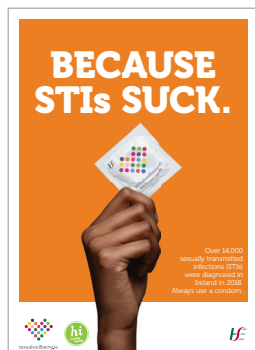
for further information, and advised that young people speak to their pharmacist if they have any queries about their sexual health. The campaign was supported by social media messages, which had 227,000 impressions, a reach of 138,000, and 29,500 post engagements. An omnibus survey carried out in December 2020 found that 37% of the target audience had heard of the ‘Play it Safe!’ campaign and 44% of males who responded to the survey stated that they would be likely to use a condom as a result of seeing this campaign.

- Launched ‘Sex: Fact or Fiction?’, a series of videos aiming to debunk myths around sexual health in an engaging fashion. The videos show real people responding to statements relating to sexual health, and reinforce the importance of condom use to reduce the risks of STIs. The ‘Sex: Fact or Fiction?’ videos launched in February and ran in March, October and December 2020





on video on demand (VOD). VOD ran across the RTÉ Player, Virgin Media Player, All 4, Sky, and YouTube. According to the omnibus survey, 42% of respondents said they would be likely to use a condom after seeing the videos.



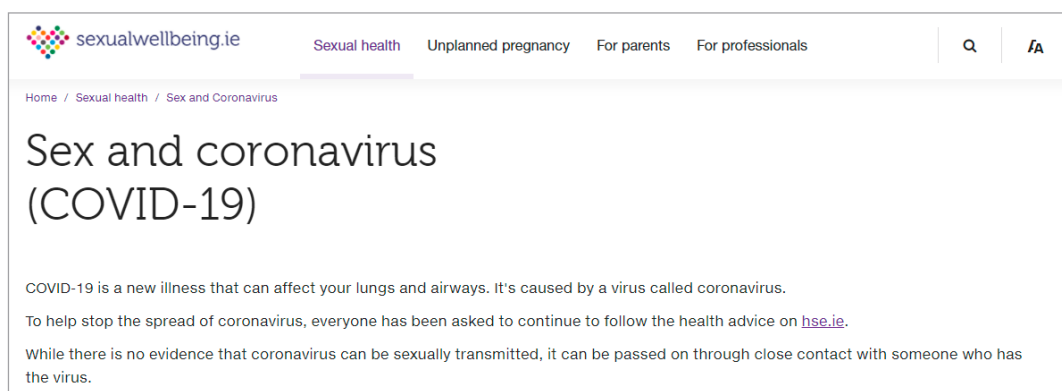
- Continued the 'Because' campaign promoting condom use and good sexual health aimed at young adults. 'Out of home' advertising ran at different times throughout the year. The omnibus survey findings showed that 42% of the target audience had seen the posters before. Display advertisements ran from January to March and from August to December. We also had articles on Her.ie on sexual consent and condom use.

- Ran the 'My Options' campaign in March 2020, highlighting the availability of free support services, such as counselling and a telephone helpline, for those experiencing an unplanned pregnancy. A radio advertisement ran on RTÉ Radio 1, RTÉ 2FM, Today FM, and on regional radio stations. The social media messaging campaign worked well, driving significant traffic to the My Options website. An article was also published on Her.ie, which was shared on its social media channels. Traffic to myoptions.ie increased significantly in 2020, with a 53% increase from 2019.



Information

- A webpage titled 'Sex and COVID-19' went live on sexualwellbeing.ie on 30 March; this led to a huge spike in website traffic. There were 8,700 visits to the webpage on 31 March, representing a 527% increase in traffic from the previous week. Online news outlets generated a large amount of traffic to the website, and advertisements on social media in April and August 2020 led to 42,500 visits to the 'Sex and COVID-19' webpage.





- Promoted HIV prevention messages, including information on PrEP, PEP and information on STI and HIV testing. Due to COVID-19 public STI service restrictions, information was reviewed and updated regularly on sexualwellbeing.ie, man2man, digital and social media channels.
- Facilitated 8 days of outreach in third-level institutions during February and the beginning of March 2020, including four Sexual Health Awareness and Guidance (SHAG) Week events. Six thousand two hundred condoms and 4,800 lubricant sachets were distributed to students, along with sexual health information. Further activations were paused due to the COVID-19 pandemic.
- Launched a partnership with some of Ireland’s top podcasters to discuss the topic of sexual consent and to promote the information on www.sexualwellbeing.ie – ‘The 2 Johnnies Podcast’, ‘I’m Grand Mam’ and ‘Owning It’. The campaign had 268,700 listens across all podcast episodes. The omnibus survey findings showed that 30% of the target audience had heard discussions about sexual consent on podcasts.



- Two editions of Sexual Health News (SHN) were published in 2020 in partnership with HP&I (CHO 5). Five hundred print copies of the Spring issue were distributed to approximately 2,000 health professionals and 250 health services nationally. The Autumn issue was published electronically. SHN covers a wide variety of issues, including contraception use, crisis pregnancy, and sexual health information. The SHN newsletter is available to download, or to order, free of charge. For the full newsletter, please visit: <https://www.sexualwellbeing.ie/for-professionals/research/sexual-health-newsletter/sexual-health-newsletter.html>





Information Dissemination in 2020

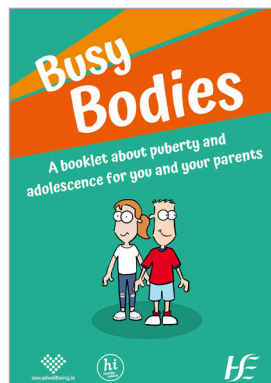
Orders from healthpromotion.ie in 2020



Making the 'Big Talk' many small talks:
For parents of 4–7 year-olds:
11,754



Making the 'Big Talk' many small talks:
For parents of 8–12 year-olds:
1,855



Busy Bodies:
27,757



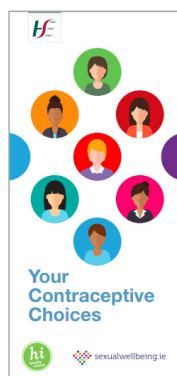
Aistear na nÓg:
426



Making the 'Big Talk' many small talks and Ag déanamh comhráite beaga as an 'gComhrá Mór' – Healthy Ireland Library Collection:
55,968 (large bulk distribution to public libraries)



My Options
(all languages) leaflet:
52,189



Your Contraceptive Choices
booklet:
55,771



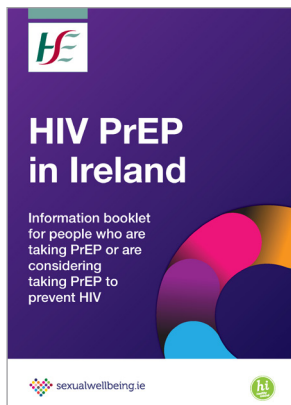
Your Guide to Emergency Contraception
booklet:
3,561



Clinical Information Resources Distributed



Your Guide to Sexually Transmitted Infections (STIs) booklet (all languages): **38,999**



HIV PrEP in Ireland (all languages): **6,253**



Antiretroviral therapy for people living with HIV in Ireland (all languages): **821**

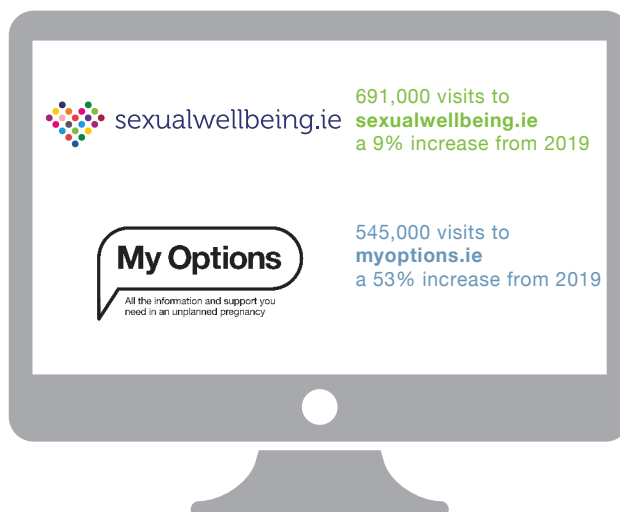


HPV Vaccine Information for MSM: **1,343**



STI and genital conditions leaflet series: **17,458**

Website Figures 2020





National Condom Distribution Service

- In 2020, 445,658 condoms and 255,370 lubricant sachets were ordered by 64 organisations to distribute among key target groups.
- Eight organisations established postal services to ensure that condom distribution to their service users continued uninterrupted. For further information on the NCDS, please visit: <https://www.sexualwellbeing.ie/for-professionals/national-condom-distribution-service/>

2020 NCDS product orders

2020	Condoms	Lubricant sachets
Public sector services	140,507	61,170
NGOs	140,801	106,950
Third-level institutions	162,400	85,300
Other	1,950	1,950
Total	445,658	255,370



Funding and Crisis Pregnancy Services

The SHCPP manages the funding arrangements for over 30 statutory organisations and NGOs that are financed to provide crisis pregnancy counselling, parenting support, and sexual health promotion training.

The COVID-19 pandemic and the Funding function and Crisis Pregnancy Services:

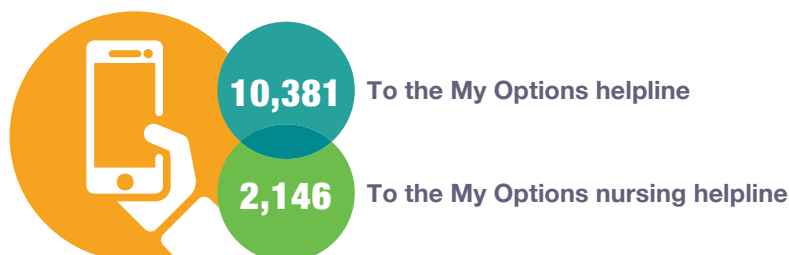
- The COVID-19 pandemic has had an impact on all funded services. Many of the face-to-face services, such as counselling, moved quickly to transfer services to remote models of care. These services started to provide services over the telephone or through online methods to ensure that clients could still access the same level of care. During this time, clear lines of communication between the SHCPP and the funded services remained in place in order to ensure continuity of service where possible.
- For those services that provide training and parenting supports, extensive work was carried out to adapt training to make it available to be delivered online.
- Due to the COVID-19 pandemic restrictions, the full complement of master classes was not delivered by NUI Maynooth; however, these were supported with online network meetings and facilitated debriefing and training.
- The SHCPP provided support to all services throughout and facilitated peer support networks for many of the funded services.

In 2020, we:

- Continued the operation of the My Options helpline, which delivers support and information to those with an unplanned pregnancy. The helpline is staffed by experienced counsellors and is operational from 9am to 8pm Monday to Friday, and from 10am to 2pm on Saturday. A 24/7 nursing helpline is also available to anyone who has undergone a termination. This service continued to be delivered throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, without any reduction in service.

2020

TOTAL **CALLS** MADE

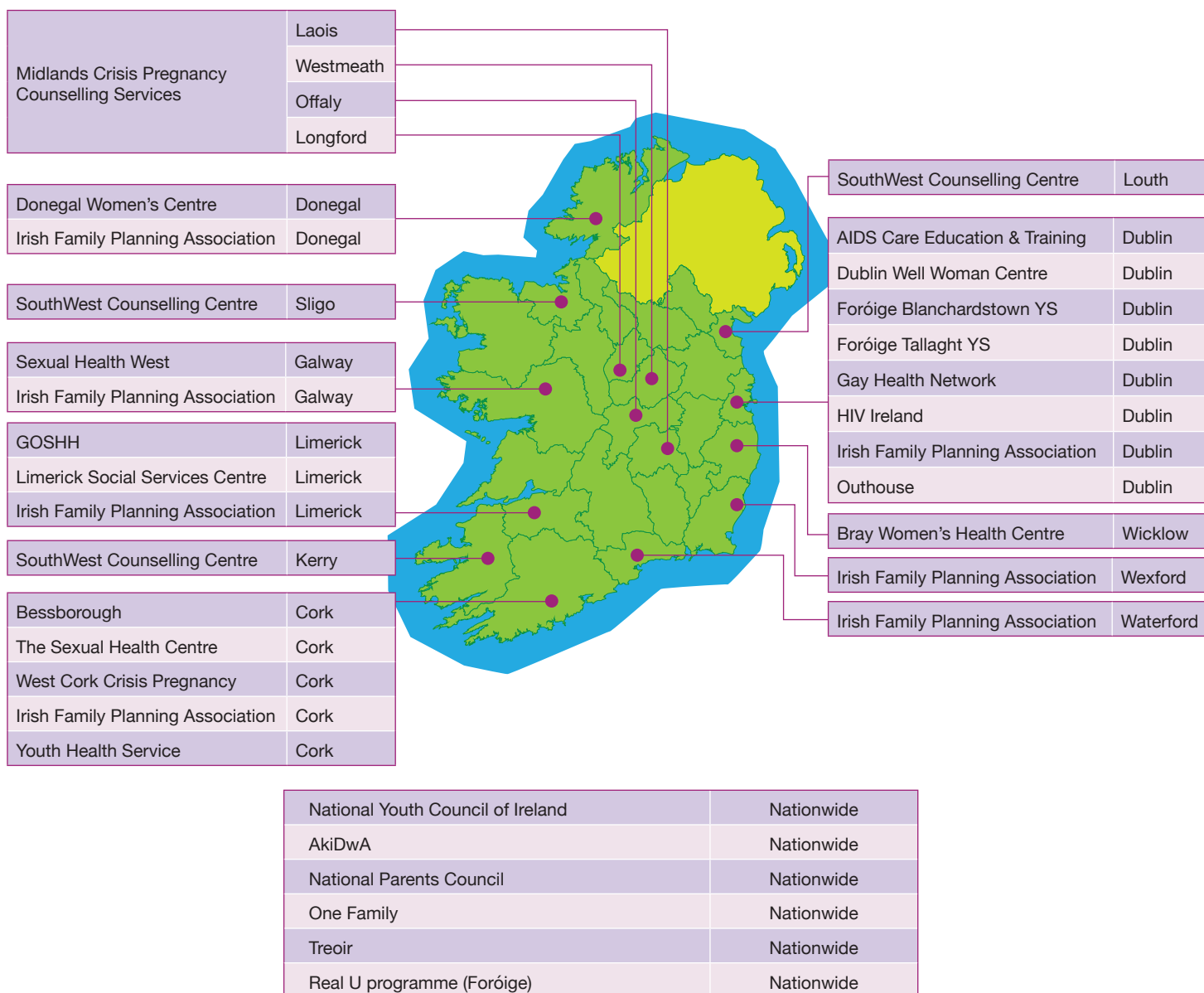




- Continued to provide funding to 11 services to deliver free and accessible face-to-face crisis pregnancy and post-abortion counselling. During the COVID-19 pandemic, services were moved primarily to telephone or online counselling. These services include Irish Family Planning Association (Cork, Donegal, Dublin, Galway, Limerick, Louth, Sligo, Waterford, Wexford); Sexual Health Centre Cork; West Cork Crisis Pregnancy Counselling Service; Youth Health Service; Dublin Well Woman Centre; One Family; Ballinasloe Crisis Pregnancy Support Service; SouthWest Counselling Centre; Midlands Crisis Pregnancy Counselling Services (Laois, Longford, Offaly, Westmeath); Mayo Crisis Pregnancy Counselling Service; and Bray Women's Health Centre.
 - ◆ Supported crisis pregnancy counselling services through the provision of funding directly to service providers to assist with ongoing training, continuing professional development (CPD) and supervision (internal and external).
 - ◆ Funded a number of crisis pregnancy counselling services for the provision of additional support to those who have experienced a crisis pregnancy and are parenting.
- Provided funding to NUI Maynooth to deliver master classes on topics relevant to crisis pregnancy. Due to COVID-19 pandemic restrictions, the full complement of master classes was not delivered. Crisis pregnancy services were supported with online network meetings and facilitated debriefing and training.
- Supported both One Family's and Treoir's national information services for one-parent families and unmarried parents. In 2020, these services handled over 5,000 queries via their information channels, in addition to providing face-to-face and outreach information support. The SHCPP also supported the delivery of One Family's adult education training service, which provides, among other services, training and parent mentoring programmes.
- Provided funding to the Limerick City Slickers programme – a parenting support group for young parents residing in Limerick City and its immediate environs who are socially excluded or at risk of social exclusion, targeting those at risk of a second or subsequent crisis pregnancy. This programme was impacted by COVID-19 pandemic restrictions, but continued to be delivered via online methods.
- Provided funding to AkiDwA to deliver information sessions on reproductive health to women seeking asylum and living in accommodation centres in Ireland. In 2020, a total of 136 women from 13 accommodation centres attended online sessions. A programme of sexual health information sessions for men commenced in 2019, and in 2020 a total of 25 men from seven accommodation centres received training; in addition, condoms and information were delivered to 13 accommodation centres
- Provided funding to NGO partners (HIV Ireland; ACET; Sexual Health Centre; GOSHH; Sexual Health West) to provide community HIV testing in Dublin, Cork, Galway and Limerick. Although work was disrupted by the COVID-19 pandemic due to travel restrictions and the closure of community testing venues, NGO partners adapted their services and provided free rapid HIV testing from their offices or alternative venues.
- Provided funding to the MPOWER outreach programme under HIV Ireland, for gbMSM, in line with the programme logic model. A monitoring and evaluation framework was developed.



Services with funding agreements in place with the SHCPP in 2020





Research

The Research function commissions research and evaluation studies; monitors trends related to crisis pregnancy and sexual health; and disseminates and supports the implementation of research findings to inform policy and improve practice.

The COVID-19 pandemic and the Research function:

- The Interim Research Manager employed on a temporary basis, was redeployed to the COVID-19 response in March, and the position was vacant until November 2020.
- All commissioned research studies were temporarily paused in the initial months of the COVID-19 pandemic. Approaches to data collection were subsequently adapted in line with public health protocols.
- This impacted the project delivery timelines of a number of projects being managed by the Research function.

In 2020:

- The Talking about sex and sexual behaviour of young people in Ireland report was launched by Minister Frank Feighan, Minister of State for Public Health, Well Being and National Drugs Strategy in November 2020. This study was part of a broader research programme established with the Economic and Social Research Institute (ESRI) to explore data from the national longitudinal study on children's lives, with regard to their health and wellbeing. The *Talking about sex and sexual behaviour of young people in Ireland* report emphasises the importance of ongoing communication between parents and children about relationships and sexuality. For more information, please visit: <https://www.sexualwellbeing.ie/for-professionals/research/research-reports/talking-about-sex-and-sexual-behaviour-of-young-people-in-ireland.pdf>
- Released the *Clusters of health behaviours among young adults in Ireland* report, another output from the joint research programme with the ESRI. This report identified three distinct health behaviour clusters among young adults in Ireland and emphasises individual and family-level factors associated with these, as well as the role of school environments in supporting young people to lead healthy lives. For more information, please visit: <https://www.sexualwellbeing.ie/for-professionals/research/research-reports/rs101.pdf>





- Provided oversight and chaired the steering group for a large-scale qualitative research study commissioned by the SHCPP exploring women’s experiences of abortion and unplanned pregnancy support services since the implementation on the Health (Regulation of Termination of Pregnancy) Act 2018 on 1 January 2019. The study aims to generate an in-depth understanding of the experiences of women who have accessed unplanned pregnancy support services and abortion care services. The study will be published in 2021.
- Oversaw the progression of a scoping study to inform the development of a survey on sexual health knowledge, attitudes and behaviours among the general population in Ireland. This involved engaging with a range of stakeholders with regard to priority areas. The scoping study will provide an overview of the key considerations required to commission such a study, including clarity on key priority topic areas; best practice methodologies; and operational procedures.

- Completed and published a report of the activities of the NCDS in 2019. This report provides information on services that ordered condoms and lubricant sachets from the NCDS, as well information on who they provided condoms to, and how the services distributed these condoms. For further information, please visit: <https://www.sexualwellbeing.ie/for-professionals/research/research-reports/ncds-2019-final.pdf>



- Continued to work on the development of a set of STI and HIV indicators to contribute to the development of a second-generation sexual health surveillance system for Ireland.
- Participated in the steering groups for two Irish Research Council-administered COALESCE award research studies which were funded due to their potential contribution to supporting the implementation of the National Sexual Health Strategy 2015–2020. These include research on teacher professional development for RSE and an ethnographic analysis of gay male sexual worlds.
- Commissioned and managed an evaluation of the SHCPP’s campaign performance in 2020. The results revealed good levels of awareness of new campaigns, including ‘Play it Safe!’, ‘Because’, as well as a growth in traffic to the www.sexualwellbeing.ie website.



Appendices

Appendix 1: Members of the Sexual Health Strategy Implementation Group 2020

Maeve O'Brien	Interim Programme Lead, SHCPP
Caroline Hurley	Project Manager, SHCPP
David Hanlon	National Clinical Advisor and Group Lead, HSE Primary Care
Joseph Doyle	National Lead, HSE Social Inclusion
Vacant	HSE Acute Hospitals Division
Stephen O'Hare	Director, HIV Ireland
Marie Cregan	Service User Representative
Damien Nee	Service User Representative
Aoibheann Ní Shúilleabháin	Programme and Campaigns Manager, HSE Communications Division
Ronan Kielt	Department of Education and Skills
Dr Mary Favier	Director of Women's Health, Irish College of General Practitioners
Dr Ann Nolan	Assistant Professor in Global Health, Trinity College Dublin

