



**HSE SEXUAL HEALTH AND  
CRISIS PREGNANCY PROGRAMME**

**ANNUAL REPORT  
2015**



Feidhmeannacht na Seirbhíse Sláinte  
Health Service Executive



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## Foreword

The HSE Sexual Health and Crisis Pregnancy Programme (SHCPP) seeks to improve service capacity and quality, influence policy and practice and develop strategic partnerships to achieve improvements in sexual health behaviours and outcomes.

The primary function of the SHCPP is to prepare and implement a strategy to reduce the incidence of crisis pregnancy in Ireland, in consultation with relevant stakeholders. The SHCPP is currently delivering its third National Strategy, which identifies priority actions at strategic, policy, governmental and community levels to address the issue of crisis pregnancy over the five-year period from 2012 to 2016.


Following the publication of the *National Sexual Health Strategy 2015–2020*, the work of the HSE Crisis Pregnancy Programme (CPP) expanded in late 2015 to encompass the coordination of sexual health services nationally. The Programme changed its name to the HSE Sexual Health and Crisis Pregnancy Programme to reflect its broader remit. The SHCPP is working to improve the effectiveness and impact of sexual health services and to improve preventative work in this area. In line with the Healthy Ireland Framework we are building capability and capacity to support national policy and strategy implementation across all health and social care services and with our external partners and funded services.

An Action Plan for 2015 and 2016 was developed to ensure that work started immediately. This represents the first nationally coordinated approach to improving the population's sexual health and wellbeing.

Significant work is taking place in the area of sexual health – covering health promotion, STI services, family planning and crisis pregnancy counselling – in General Practice, pharmacies, schools, youth clubs, community organisations and charities amongst others. The achievements in these areas are the result of the expertise and hard work of many individuals and organisations over many years. The National Sexual Health Strategy provides for coordination, integration and strategic oversight of this work and seeks to develop better and stronger links between state and non-state organisations and agencies. This development is both welcome and necessary.

A collaborative approach is central to our work and we will continue to create and develop strategic partnerships between related services both within existing HSE structures and with partners in external agencies. Implementing the actions from our National Strategy requires a concerted focus on service development, communications, partnership, research and evaluation, and we look forward to continuing to work closely with all our partners on each of these areas.

The SHCPP delivered on a significant business plan in 2015 and this report sets out the progress made for each of the Programme's five strategic objectives.



The B4uDecide.ie outreach team rolled out a pilot street-art education initiative in three Youthreach settings. The response to this initiative has been very positive from the young people and coordinators involved. The B4uDecide.ie website had 62,746 visits in 2015.

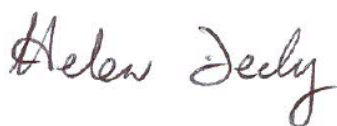
The Research and Policy function worked with research partners with a view to informing practice and service provision in the areas of crisis pregnancy and sexual health. Finalising the Sexual Health and Sexuality Education Needs Assessment of Young People in Care in Ireland (SENYPIC) research project involved preparing and coordinating six stand-alone reports for publication. Work also continued on research exploring the factors that inhibit and enable communication between parents and children aged 4–9 years about relationships, sexuality and growing up. The outputs from the project will be used to support parents in the delivery of relationships and sexuality education in the home. The SHCPP also supported the Health Protection Surveillance Centre, Gay Men’s Health Service and Gay Health Network to carry out the largest internet survey ever on the sexual health and HIV prevention needs of men who have sex with men in Ireland (MISI 2015).

The Funding function supported the availability of face-to-face crisis pregnancy counselling and post-abortion services in over fifty locations nationwide. A key focus of this work in 2015 was the implementation of the Self-Assessment Framework with all funded crisis pregnancy counselling services.

The SHCPP welcomes a further decrease in the total number of births to teenagers, from 3,087 in 2001 to 1,187 in 2015, a decline of 62% over fourteen years. The teenage birth rate in Ireland has fallen from 20 per 1,000 women aged 15–19 years in 2001 to 8.7 per 1,000 in 2015. The number of women giving Irish addresses at UK abortion clinics decreased slightly from 3,735 in 2014 to 3,451 in 2015. The abortion rate is stable at 3.6 per 1,000 women aged 15–44 years. Since the establishment of the CPP in 2001, the number and rate of women giving Irish addresses at UK abortion clinics has significantly declined, from 6,673 in 2001 (7.5 per 1,000) to 3,451 in 2015 (3.6 per 1,000).

I would like to thank the Sexual Health Strategy Implementation Group, the Sexual Health Communications Working Group and the SHCPP Advisory Group for their valuable support and guidance to the work of the Programme in 2015.

I would also like to thank the staff of the SHCPP for successfully delivering on an ambitious service plan in 2015 and for their continued hard work and dedication to the Programme.



Helen Deely

Head of the HSE Sexual Health and Crisis Pregnancy Programme



## Background and Governance Structure of the Programme

The HSE Crisis Pregnancy Programme (formerly Crisis Pregnancy Agency) was established in October 2001 under the Health (Corporate Bodies) Act 1961, and was governed by the Crisis Pregnancy Agency (Establishment) Order 2001 (S.I. No. 446 of 2001), as amended by the Crisis Pregnancy Agency (Establishment) Order 2001 (Amendment) Order 2007 (S.I. No. 175 of 2007). In January 2010 the former agency transitioned to the Health Service Executive (HSE) under the Health (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 2009, which provides, inter alia, that a number of important functions previously vested in the Crisis Pregnancy Agency are legally vested in the HSE.

The Sexual Health and Crisis Pregnancy Programme (SHCPP), part of the HSE's national office for Health Promotion and Improvement, is charged with developing and implementing a national strategy to address the issue of crisis pregnancy in Ireland. It also encompasses the coordination of sexual health services to improve the effectiveness and impact of those services, and of preventative work, in line with the National Sexual Health Strategy 2015–2020.

The Head of the SHCPP reports to the Assistant National Director within the Health and Wellbeing Division of the HSE, and is part of the senior management team for Health Promotion and Improvement.

### Staff

The SHCPP had eight members of staff in 2015:

Ms Helen Deely	Head of Programme
Dr Fiona Lyons	Clinical Lead for Sexual Health
Ms Janice Donlon	Funding Officer
Ms Patricia Wallace	Finance and Human Resources Officer
Ms Maeve O'Brien	Research and Policy Officer (on maternity leave May 2015 to March 2016)
Ms Orla McGowan	Education and Information Officer
Ms Roisin Guiry	Education and Information Officer
Mr Ray Madden	Clerical Officer

### *Appointment of Clinical Lead for Sexual Health*

The Health and Wellbeing Division appointed the first national Clinical Lead for Sexual Health in October 2015. The Clinical Lead for Sexual Health is responsible for ensuring standardised and effective sexual health services as outlined in the National Sexual Health Strategy. The Clinical Lead will work cross-divisionally within the HSE and with external partners as required to enhance the practice and delivery of sexual health services. Sexual health services will be supported to evolve in an equitable and integrated way that improves access and is in line with international best practice. The Programme was delighted to welcome the appointment of Dr Fiona Lyons to this important position.



### **Sexual Health Strategy Implementation Group**

The SHCPP established an implementation group to support the fulfilment of the actions identified in the National Sexual Health Strategy 2015–2020. Service users and non-statutory service providers are represented in this group, as well as statutory organisations and healthcare professionals (see Appendix 1).

The implementation group, which meets bi-monthly, provides strategic advice and direction to support the implementation of the National Sexual Health Strategy. The group works with the Programme to develop and monitor an annual action plan to achieve the strategy's goals, actions and targets.

### **Sexual Health Communications Working Group**

A national working group was established to coordinate sexual health communications activities between HSE and non-statutory organisations and to ensure that joint resources are used in the most effective manner. Membership of the group includes organisations actively carrying out sexual health communications work themselves or in partnership with other organisations (see Appendix 2).

Key actions for the group, which meets bi-monthly, include developing and implementing an annual sexual health communications plan in line with the National Sexual Health Strategy, and providing advice and support for planned communications activities. The group is also a medium through which STI outbreaks can be responded to, from a communications perspective, as required by HSE Public Health, including sharing communications and information with other partners outside the working group.

### **Sexual Health Promotion Officers Network**

HSE sexual health promotion officers work in partnership to address key health promotion, education and information actions in the area of sexual health, as outlined in the National Sexual Health Strategy. Their work involves progressing educational initiatives and information relating to sexual health, in partnership with service providers and other key stakeholders. Four meetings of the network were held in 2015. More information on their work is provided under Strategic Objective 4.

### **Advisory Group**

Membership of the SHCPP's Advisory Group (see Appendix 3) includes organisations that represent the views of specific population groups and non-government organisations (NGOs) working in the areas of sexual health and crisis pregnancy. The SHCPP expanded its Advisory Group in 2015 to include members with a wide range of viewpoints and expertise on sexual health from non-statutory organisations.

The Advisory Group, which meets bi-monthly, provides feedback on any matters related to sexual health and crisis pregnancy that have been referred to it by the SHCPP or the Sexual Health Strategy Implementation Group.



## **Crisis pregnancy mandates**

The National Strategy is the mechanism by which the SHCPP achieves the objectives set out in the three mandates specified in the statutory instrument. The three mandates are:

- 1 A reduction in the number of crisis pregnancies by the provision of education, advice and contraceptive services.
- 2 A reduction in the number of women with crisis pregnancies who opt for abortion by offering services and supports which make other options more attractive.
- 3 The provision of counselling services, medical services and such other health services for the purpose of providing support after crisis pregnancy, as may be deemed appropriate by the Programme.

## **Crisis pregnancy strategic objectives**

The SHCPP focuses its work around five key objectives, as outlined in its National Strategy 2012–2016:

- 1 *Improvements in sexual health education, information and knowledge across the lifecycle:* Improve knowledge and awareness of sexual health and relationships through the delivery of targeted communication campaigns, customised information and educational programmes, and other initiatives across a range of settings.
- 2 *Contraception and contraceptive services:* Ensure high levels of awareness of contraception and contraceptive services so as to increase consistent and correct use of contraception for at-risk groups.
- 3 *Crisis pregnancy services:* Improve access to consistent high-quality crisis pregnancy counselling and post-abortion services and promote the availability of community-based post-natal and family supports.
- 4 *Strategic collaboration and policy influence:* Foster the development of strategic partnerships and alliances to increase the participation, resources and collective commitment in improving sexual health in Ireland and the reduction of crisis pregnancy.
- 5 *Knowledge transfer and research:* Sustain a high-quality research base and increase the application of existing and new research through a comprehensive knowledge-transfer strategy directly targeting developments in policy and practice.

## Strategic Objective 1

**Improvements in sexual health education, information and knowledge across the lifecycle:** Improve knowledge and awareness of sexual health and relationships through the delivery of targeted communication campaigns, customised information and educational programmes, and other initiatives across a range of settings.

### Key actions in 2015 included:

#### B4uDecide.ie resource materials

Teachers have identified a lack of resources as a barrier to the full implementation of Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE). In 2015 approximately 1,000 packs containing lesson plans, posters and promotional items were disseminated to teachers and youth workers via training and HealthPromotion.ie. A further 2,034 promotional items (sticker and posters) were disseminated via outreach events and HealthPromotion.ie.

The B4uDecide.ie outreach team attended sixteen events – including teacher conferences, Young Social Innovators and other youth-focused events and conferences targeting youth workers and nurses – in 2015 to promote the education materials and website.

The B4uDecide.ie outreach team rolled out a pilot street-art education initiative in three locations in 2015: Foróige Tallaght & Blanchardstown, Youthreach Killarney and Youthreach Letterfrack & Leitir Móir. There was a very positive response from the young people and coordinators involved.

The B4uDecide.ie website features video interviews with young people talking about their own experiences, real-life stories from teenage parents, quizzes and polls, downloads, and information on building healthy friendships and relationships, peer pressure, feeling good about yourself, why it's better to wait before having sex, the age of consent, contraception, STIs and crisis pregnancy. The website is linked to the resource materials for teachers and youth workers.



*B4uDecide.ie – a website for young people, teachers and youth workers*

There were 62,746 visits to the B4uDecide.ie website in 2015.





## **TRUST resource**

TRUST (Talking Relationships Understanding Sexuality Teaching) is a resource for Senior Cycle RSE, developed by the SHCPP in partnership with the Department of Education and Skills. Approximately eighty copies of the TRUST resource were disseminated through RSE Senior Cycle training for teachers, delivered by the Professional Development Service for Teachers, and through the National Youth Council of Ireland (NYCI) to youth organisations.

## **Sexual and reproduction health infographic**

The SHCPP provided funding to the Irish Family Planning Association (IFPA) and HIV Ireland (formerly Dublin AIDS Alliance) for the development and implementation of a sexuality education infographic that provides young people with clear information about the dual risk of contracting a sexually transmitted infection (STI) and/or experiencing a crisis pregnancy. The infographic provides easy-to-follow pathways and guidance on a young person's options in the event that his/her contraceptive choice and/or safe sex practices have failed. It offers clear routes to obtaining emergency contraception and covers long-term contraceptive options in conjunction with STI testing in an accessible format.

This infographic was piloted during Sexual Health Advice and Guidance (SHAG) Week in 2015 and then used to support sexuality education and reproductive health programmes run by the IFPA, HIV Ireland and other organisations funded by the SHCPP.

## **Young Social Innovators**

The Young Social Innovators (YSI) programme empowers young people to use their talents to be social innovators in order to create a fairer, more caring and equal society. The SHCPP is an education partner to YSI, sponsoring the 'Relationship and Sexual Health' challenge.


Students of Largy College, Clones, Co. Monaghan won the coveted gold award in 2015 for their worthy project 'LGBT – Let's get by together'. The project aimed to tackle discrimination against the LGBT community, including homophobia and transphobia, and to create a safe environment for LGBT students and staff in Largy College.

YSI also disseminated Programme resource packs and information to 200 teachers/youth leaders attending YSI in-service training in September and January.

## **Resources for parents**

A range of materials to support parents in talking to their children about relationships and sex were disseminated through HealthPromotion.ie, the SHCPP's free text service, and at events in 2015. These information resources included:

- 9,113 'Parents – Tips for Talking to Older Teenagers' booklets
- 2,825 *You Can Talk To Me* DVDs and booklets

- 
- 32,131 *Busy Bodies* DVDs and booklets
  - 2,911 *The Facts* DVDs and booklets.

### **Information dissemination**

The SHCPP has developed a variety of information and education materials on sexual health that are available to the general public and to those who deal with the prevention and management of crisis pregnancy in the course of their work. The primary method of communication and dissemination of all SHCPP resource materials is the HealthPromotion.ie website.

In 2015, 253,489 of the SHCPP's combined resource materials were disseminated to a range of target audiences through a variety of events, conferences and health promotion activities, and through HealthPromotion.ie. Events included: Irish Guidance Counsellors conference, Teaching Union of Ireland (TUI) conference, Association of Secondary School Teachers in Ireland (ASTI) conference, Irish Youth Media Awards, Irish Pharmacy Union conference, Obstetrics and Gynaecological events, Youth Work Ireland national conference, Social Inclusion Week, and the National Parents Council Primary conference.

### **Training the trainers**


A range of training initiatives for youth workers and parents on relationships and sexual health continued to receive funding from the SHCPP in 2015:

- The National Parents Council Primary received funding to deliver 'Parenting: Supporting your child to build healthy friendships and relationships' training for parents; 1,098 parents attended the information and training sessions in 2015.
- The Irish Family Planning Association (IFPA) received funding to deliver 'Speakeasy' training for parents; 109 parents completed the eight-week intensive training programme, which commenced in November 2014 and was completed in late 2015.
- The National Youth Council of Ireland (NYCI) received funding for the delivery of 'Leave it til later' training, which supports the SHCPP's B4uDecide.ie education initiative. The NYCI also received funding for the delivery of training sessions for youth workers to support the review and development of sexual health policies for their organisations; 56 youth workers attended this training in 2015.
- 'REAL U: Relationships explored and life uncovered' training was delivered by Foróige to 167 youth workers in 2015.

### **Training for young people**

The SHCPP funded a number of training initiatives aimed directly at young people in 2015, including:

- Blanchardstown Youth Service, Foróige, Dublin, for the delivery of the Teenage Health Initiative for young men aged 13–17 years.

- 
- Donegal Women's Centre, Letterkenny, for the delivery of a holistic sexual health and personal development education pilot programme for young women experiencing social exclusion.
  - Here2Help (formerly Pact), for the delivery of its RSE programme in schools in Dublin, Cavan and Wicklow.
  - 'Real Deal' is a peer-led sexual health education training programme for early school-leavers or those at risk of being early school-leavers in the Leinster region and in Mayo.
  - Sexual Health Centre, Cork, for a community mobilisation project that involves relationships and sexual health education components for young people in both formal and non-formal education settings.
  - SouthWest Counselling Centre, Kerry, for the delivery of the 'Getting Real' personal development programme for adolescents who are at risk of becoming early school-leavers or who are early school-leavers.

### **Youth health cafés**

The SHCPP continued to provide funding to support the delivery of three youth health cafés in 2015:

- Zone Youth Health Café, Blanchardstown
- Exit Youth Health Café, Tallaght
- Squashy Couch Adolescent Health and Information Project, Waterford.

In addition to providing a welcoming space for young people, these projects were designed to engage with teenagers who are at risk of crisis pregnancy and to provide opportunities for them to receive relationships and sexual health education. The target age group for the youth cafés is 14–19 years. Over 3,500 young people regularly used these services in 2015.

### **Crisispregnancy.ie**

Crisispregnancy.ie provides relevant information and research in an easily accessible format to a range of health professionals, educators and researchers. The website received approximately 14,500 visits in 2015.

### **Public and media relations**

The SHCPP issued press releases in 2015 relating to service provision, education outreach, RSE and key statistics, and responded to regular media enquiries in conjunction with the HSE press office. The SHCPP regularly submitted articles to health-related publications such as the HSE's *Health Matters* magazine.

### **E-newsletter and Sexual Health News**

The e-newsletter kept subscribers up to date with relevant research reports, sexual health initiatives, training and events. The SHCPP issued two e-newsletters in 2015, before it was merged into the new national *Sexual Health News*.

The SHCPP issued its first *Sexual Health News (SHN)* in autumn 2015, marking yet another step in the promotion and sharing of sexual health as an integral component of our overall health. The *SHN* allows the Programme to share knowledge of new resources being developed, what (and where) sexual health services are delivering and what is happening in the area of research.



ISSUE 01

# SEXUAL HEALTH NEWS

WELCOME TO ISSUE 1, SEPTEMBER 2015



## INSIDE THIS ISSUE

- Strategic approach to sexual health promotion
- ellaOne now accessible direct from pharmacies
- Foundation Programme in Sexual Health Promotion – A capacity building model
- Sexualisation in a technological age
- National condom distribution service
- Smoking and erectile dysfunction (ED)
- Minister Varadkar promotes safer sex message
- Resources, reports & training

## Strategic Objective 2

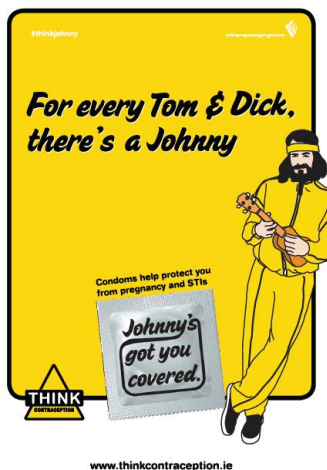
**Contraception and contraceptive services:** Ensure high levels of awareness of contraception and contraceptive services so as to increase consistent and correct use of contraception for at-risk groups.

### Key actions in 2015 included:

#### 'Relax – Johnny's got you covered'

The SHCPP continued to roll out the new phase of its Think Contraception campaign to encourage consistent use of condoms among sexually active young adults. This phase directly addresses both contraception and sexually transmitted infections (STIs). The campaign features a character called Johnny who helps to deliver the campaign's messages in an entertaining way. Johnny encourages sexually active young men and women (not wishing to get pregnant) to plan for sex and to consistently use condoms to protect against unplanned pregnancy and STIs.


Johnny appeared at a number of public and student events and festivals throughout the summer and autumn of 2015. According to independent market research, there was 78% awareness among the target audience of the new 'Johnny's got you covered' campaign in 2015. Johnny's Twitter account (@thinkjohnny) and Facebook page ('Johnny's got you covered') were very popular in 2015, with over 55,312 people 'liking' the Facebook page.



*'Johnny's got you covered' poster displayed in college washrooms*

The overarching aim of the education outreach programme is to promote responsibility, planning and better care of sexual health. By presenting this programme at festivals, concerts, pubs, clubs and colleges, the SHCPP aims to make young adults feel more comfortable with issues relating to sexual health and to empower them to plan for, discuss and use contraception. The target audience is always encouraged to visit [www.thinkcontraception.ie](http://www.thinkcontraception.ie) for more detailed information.





There were 161,852 visits to [www.thinkcontraception.ie](http://www.thinkcontraception.ie) in 2015 (a 25,000 increase on the previous year) and 99,635 Think Contraception booklets were disseminated, an increase of 47% on 2014.

### **Condom distribution**

The SHCPP established a national process to distribute condoms to statutory agencies/services and non-government organisations (NGOs) through [HealthPromotion.ie](http://HealthPromotion.ie). This new service commenced in autumn 2015. It aims to support statutory agencies/bodies and NGOs in their respective promotion of condom usage in order to prevent both crisis pregnancies and STIs, and to support safer positive sexual health experiences for adults. The distribution service will support the Programme's outreach work, as part of its national work, and also the HSE-funded [Man2Man.ie](http://Man2Man.ie) outreach programme that targets men who have sex with men.

### **Union of Students in Ireland (USI)**

The USI launched its Sexual Health Awareness and Guidance (SHAG) campaign with the SHCPP. The campaign was rolled out in campuses across Ireland and launched at a comedy gig, 'Johnny's got you covered', in the Odeon, Harcourt Street, Dublin. Forty thousand SHAG packs (containing a condom and sexual health information) were distributed to college campuses in 2015.

As part of SHAG Week, the Irish Family Planning Association (IFPA), in partnership with HIV Ireland, developed a new infographic highlighting options available to young people who have had unprotected sex. The tool emphasised the importance of accessing both STI testing and emergency contraception services and signposted readers to longer term contraception options and crisis pregnancy counselling centres. The infographic was piloted in third-level colleges during SHAG Week and a web-enabled version was also available.


#### *Annual USI training week*

The SHCPP developed and facilitated training on the topic of sexual health for incoming student welfare officers for all colleges affiliated with the USI. The training aimed to open up discussion in relation to holistic sexual health and to provide a practical opportunity for welfare officers to brainstorm ideas about developing a sexual health initiative in their own colleges.

### **Festivals and concerts**

In 2015 the Think Contraception team distributed over 47,250 Think Contraception Protection Packs to people attending Student Races days; Sea Sessions, Donegal; Knockanstockan, Wicklow; Cork Jazz Festival; Longitude, Dublin; Life Festival, Westmeath; Castlepalooza, Offaly; and Electric Picnic, Laois.

A key aspect of activity at festivals and concerts was the Johnny mobile a 'Johnny's got you covered' branded multi-person pedal cycle. It engages the target audience with the Think Contraception key message but can also be used



to provide short spins around the area, bridging transport gaps at events or taking festival goers from place to place on-site. This activity further promotes the message that 'Johnny's got you covered'. In 2015 the SHCPP also introduced Johnny's got you covered headbands. These proved to be a great addition and were hugely popular at festivals/events.

### **Pubs and clubs**

The Think Contraception team also distributed Think Contraception Protection Packs over busy bank-holiday weekends in 2015 outside pubs and clubs in Galway, Cork and Dublin.

The SHCPP continued to roll out the 'Johnny's got you covered' branded Shoot Booth, where people can dress up like the character Johnny, engage with the safer sex message in a fun environment and take home 'Johnny's got you covered' branded photos directing them to [www.thinkcontraception.ie](http://www.thinkcontraception.ie) for further sexual health and safer sex information.

### **Contraception 35+**

The Contraception 35+ leaflet covers a broad range of topics relevant to women who are in their 30s, 40s and 50s, including contraception options, fertility after childbirth, breastfeeding and contraception, perimenopause and menopause, pregnancy, emergency contraception and STIs. The leaflet is mainly ordered by maternity hospitals, GPs and pharmacists through the [HealthPromotion.ie](http://HealthPromotion.ie) website. 23,682 Contraception 35+ leaflets were distributed in 2015.

### **Contraceptive services**

The SHCPP continued to work with a number of specialised contraceptive support services and information providers in 2015, including:

- Donegal Women's Centre, Letterkenny, for the 'iLASH' women's health clinic.
- Youth Health Service (YHS), for the provision of family planning services for young people under the age of 23 years.
- Sexual Health Centre, Cork, for drop-in sexual health information and support, as part of a wider health promotion project.
- Irish College of General Practitioners (ICGP), for the provision of contraception workshops to GP trainers, particularly on the use of long-acting reversible contraceptives (LARC).



## Strategic Objective 3

**Crisis pregnancy services:** Improve access to consistent high-quality crisis pregnancy counselling and post-abortion services and promote the availability of community-based post-natal and family supports.

### Key actions in 2015 included:

#### Crisis pregnancy and post-abortion counselling

Support for the availability of free and accessible crisis pregnancy and post-abortion counselling and medical services remained a priority in 2015. The SHCPP funds a range of service delivery models across a number of settings and locations. Sixteen service providers were funded to provide counselling services in over fifty locations nationwide. Eight of these services also provided access to free post-termination medical check-ups. These service-providers were:


- Ballinasloe Crisis Pregnancy Support Service
- Bray Women's Health Centre\*
- CURA
- Femplus Clinic, Dublin\*
- Here2Help, Dublin and Cavan
- Irish Family Planning Association\*
- Kerry Crisis Pregnancy Counselling Service\*
- Life Pregnancy Care Service now t/a Anew Support Services
- Limerick Family Planning Clinic (free post-abortion medical check-ups only)
- Mayo Crisis Pregnancy Support Service
- Midlands Crisis Pregnancy Counselling Service\*
- One Family, Dublin
- Sexual Health Centre, Cork\*
- The Well Woman Centre, Dublin\*
- West Cork Crisis Pregnancy Counselling Service
- Youth Health Service, Cork\*

\* These services received grant funding to provide free post-abortion medical check-ups.

#### Positive Options

The Positive Options campaign highlights the fact that there is always a supportive listener available to help during a crisis pregnancy and promotes the message that 'talking to a counsellor can help'. Positive Options posters and leaflets are displayed in GP's surgeries nationwide. In 2015, 62% of the target audience was aware of the 'Positive Options' campaign and its message.





Approximately 63,000 Positive Options leaflets and 7,000 wallet cards were distributed in 2015. Around 42,000 of these leaflets were distributed via Women's Mini Marathon goodie bags. The remaining leaflets and the wallet cards were distributed through HealthPromotion.ie.

There were 26,927 visits to [www.positiveoptions.ie](http://www.positiveoptions.ie) in 2015.



*Positive Options poster displayed in washrooms and GP surgeries nationwide*

## **Abortion Aftercare**

The Abortion Aftercare campaign promotes the availability of free post-abortion medical and counselling services to women in Ireland. The website [abortionaftercare.ie](http://abortionaftercare.ie) received approximately 9,748 visits in 2015. The SHCPP distributed approximately 2,210 Abortion Aftercare leaflets, primarily through HealthPromotion.ie, HealthBrochures.ie, GPs and UK abortion clinics.

## **Supervision and training**

The SHCPP works with all service providers to maintain the highest possible level of service quality. This support was demonstrated in 2015 through funding provided directly to service providers to assist with ongoing training, continuing professional development (CPD) and supervision (internal and external) for those providing crisis pregnancy counselling and related services.

## **Certificate course**

The Certificate in Crisis Pregnancy Counselling Skills is delivered by the Department of Adult and Community Education at the National University of Ireland, Maynooth (NUIM), and funded by the SHCPP. The course aims to enhance counselling and support skills and to set standards of good practice in this unique field of counselling. Its structure facilitates the networking and sharing of learning, which in turn enhances service delivery.

Sixteen HSE staff and crisis pregnancy counsellors completed the year-long, skills-based programme in May 2015. A new course commenced in October 2015.



## **Masterclasses**

Masterclasses for 'Supporting an Unplanned Pregnancy' create an opportunity for professionals to gain more in-depth knowledge and skills that will help them to manage the challenges they face in supporting women, their partners and families in relation to an unplanned pregnancy. The masterclasses provide a supportive and informative space for dialogue and reflection. They are particularly relevant for health professionals, GPs, teachers, youth workers and others who, in the course of their work, encounter people who are experiencing or have experienced an unplanned pregnancy. The masterclasses further support the work of the SHCPP in the area of quality and standards development.

Masterclasses were held in NUI Maynooth and in Cork in 2015. The topics covered were:

- 1 Termination: Dealing with Complex Issues (Maynooth)
- 2 Understanding Fatal Fetal Abnormality as a Crisis Pregnancy (Maynooth)
- 3 Termination: Dealing with Complex Issues (Maynooth)
- 4 Law and Crisis Pregnancy Counselling (Cork City)
- 5 Law and Crisis Pregnancy Counselling (Maynooth).

Over 150 places were taken up by health professionals at these masterclasses in 2015. Further masterclasses of relevance to health professionals working in this area will be run in 2016.

## **Self-Assessment Framework**


The implementation phase of the Self-Assessment Framework continued in 2015 within all funded crisis pregnancy counselling services. The SHCPP facilitated a number of workshops to support service providers with their implementation. Quality Improvement Plans have been developed and are being used by the service providers as an impetus to effect change within their service. The implementation and monitoring phase will continue in 2016.

## **Services for parents**

The SHCPP continued to support One Family's and Treoir's national information services for one-parent families and unmarried parents. These services handled nearly 5,000 calls to their information lines in 2015, in addition to providing face-to-face and outreach information supports. Both services reported an increase in clients with queries related to financial hardships and changes in legislation affecting one-parent and unmarried families. The SHCPP also supports One Family's adult education training service, which provides, among other services, training and parent mentoring programmes.

### *One-to-one parenting supports*

The SHCPP continued to support CURA's national support service for new mothers and fathers. This follow-on service provides new mothers and fathers



with personal and emotional support, as well as practical help and information. The service is also open to grandparents and guardians.

The SHCPP also provided funding to a number of crisis pregnancy counselling services for the provision of additional supports to those who have experienced a crisis pregnancy and are parenting.

#### *Information resources*

The SHCPP funded the development and updating of a number of resources in 2015, including Treoir's 'Information Pack for Unmarried Parents', which is disseminated to healthcare professionals and unmarried parents. It contains helpful information on issues such as the rights and obligations of cohabiting parents, guardianship, access, custody and shared parenting. It also includes pertinent information on other legal and financial matters of relevance to unmarried parents, in addition to sections on education and training opportunities and 'Useful Contacts' for individuals and health professionals who may need additional support or information.

#### *Ongoing services supporting the continuation of pregnancy*

In addition to the examples of services outlined, the SHCPP continued to fund a broad range of projects that provided support, training and information to expectant or new parents throughout the country in 2015, including:

- 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/subsequent crisis pregnancy. This programme is delivered by Limerick Social Service Council in conjunction with the Teen Parents Support Programme, Limerick.
- Parents First – a parenting education programme in Co. Kerry for both first-time parents and parents who feel unsupported due to geographic or social disadvantage. It provides group work, workshops and one-to-one information and support sessions. The programme is delivered through the SouthWest Counselling Centre.
- A student parent coordinator in Mary Immaculate College, Limerick, who provides support and information for student/expectant parents.
- A counselling and short-term foster service for mothers considering adoption, delivered by Cúnamh, Dublin.
- Sexual health and parenting supports for families through the residential services provided by The Bessborough Centre, Cork.
- The production of a range of helpful resources and related research by Treoir, the National Federation of Services for Unmarried Parents and their Children.



## Strategic Objective 4

**Strategic collaboration and policy influence:** Foster the development of strategic partnerships and alliances to increase the participation, resources and collective commitment in improving sexual health in Ireland and the reduction of crisis pregnancy.

### Key actions in 2015 included:

#### EDUCATION, INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATIONS

##### NUI Maynooth

The SHCPP continued to collaborate with NUI Maynooth on the Certificate in Crisis Pregnancy Counselling Skills course and on a series of masterclasses for 'Supporting an Unplanned Pregnancy'.

##### HSE Sexual Health Promotion Officers

The Sexual Health Promotion Officers Network and the SHCPP coordinated sexual health training and education in the HSE and progressed planning for the implementation of the National Sexual Health Strategy.


Four meetings of the network were held in 2015, focusing on:

- Delivery and coordination of the Foundation Programme in Sexual Health Promotion in all HSE areas (see below)
- Submission to the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA) on the SPHE (Social, Personal and Health Education) Short Course Consultation Paper
- Research with parents of 4–9 year olds
- Coordination of *Sexual Health News*
- Management of the condom distribution service.

##### *Foundation Programme in Sexual Health Promotion (FPSHP)*

The FPSHP is a ten-day training programme that seeks to integrate sexual health promotion into the core work of diverse disciplines within the health, education and community sectors. It is now the national sexual health training programme and has been identified as such under the National Sexual Health Strategy. It is planned that 100 health professionals will be trained per year. The course is run through local strategic partnerships between HSE Health Promotion and NGOs.

The FPSHP targets HSE sexual health (and related) clinicians, HSE Health Promotion and Improvement staff, HSE allied health professionals, and community, voluntary and educational service professionals. In 2015, 95 health care professionals participated in the FPSHP in five locations: Killarney, Galway, Cork, Waterford and Clonmel.



The training was developed by health promotion officers in HSE South in 2009. It was expanded to include a course in Galway in 2015. The Galway site helped to identify any challenges prior to the FPSHP being rolled out nationally in 2016.

### **Department of Education and Skills (DES)**

The SPHE Support Service of the DES continued to promote and disseminate the B4uDecide.ie and the TRUST resource materials to teachers of Junior and Senior Cycle students at in-service training in 2015.

### **National Youth Council of Ireland (NYCI)**

The NYCI continued to support the promotion of the B4uDecide.ie education initiative in youth work settings in 2015.

### **HSE National Communications Unit (NCU)**

The SHCPP worked in close collaboration with the NCU on the management of the Think Contraception, Positive Options, Abortion Aftercare and B4uDecide.ie campaigns in 2015.

### **Union of Students in Ireland (USI)**

The SHCPP continued its partnership with the USI on key projects in 2015: Sexual Health Advice and Guidance Week and annual welfare officer training.

### **HIV Ireland (formerly Dublin AIDS Alliance)**

The SHCPP initiated a partnership with HIV Ireland to distribute Think Contraception Protection Packs to non-Irish nationals via HIV Ireland's outreach programme.

## **RESEARCH AND POLICY**

### **Tusla – Child and Family Agency**

The SHCPP continued to partner with the Child and Family Agency on the management of the Sexual Health and Sexuality Education Needs Assessment of Young People in Care in Ireland (SENYPIC) programme of research. This research project will be used to develop a set of actionable recommendations to support the needs of young people in foster care and residential care.

### **Irish Research Council**

Since 2011 the SHCPP has partnered with the Irish Research Council through its open call research funding schemes, by providing funding for one research project per year. The project must have an applied focus, whose objectives are in line with national crisis pregnancy strategic objectives and whose results will provide new insights on key issues. In 2015 the SHCPP participated in the Research for Policy and Society Award.



## **HSE Health Protection Surveillance Centre, HSE Gay Men's Health Service and Gay Health Network**

The SHCPP, in partnership with the Health Protection Surveillance Centre, the Gay Men's Health Service and the Gay Health Network, rolled out a national internet survey of men who have sex with men. The survey aims to identify the sexual health and HIV prevention needs of this particular group.

### **Multi-disciplinary working group**

In 2015 a multi-disciplinary working group was established to contribute to and to oversee the successful completion of a mapping of contraception and STI services in Ireland. The working group comprises key stakeholders linked to sexual health services and information mapping from within and outside the HSE, including the SHCPP, Health Promotion and Improvement, Public Health Medicine, Health Intelligence, St James's Hospital and the Irish College of General Practitioners.

## Strategic Objective 5

**Knowledge transfer and research:** Sustain a high-quality research base and increase the application of existing and new research through a comprehensive knowledge-transfer strategy directly targeting developments in policy and practice.

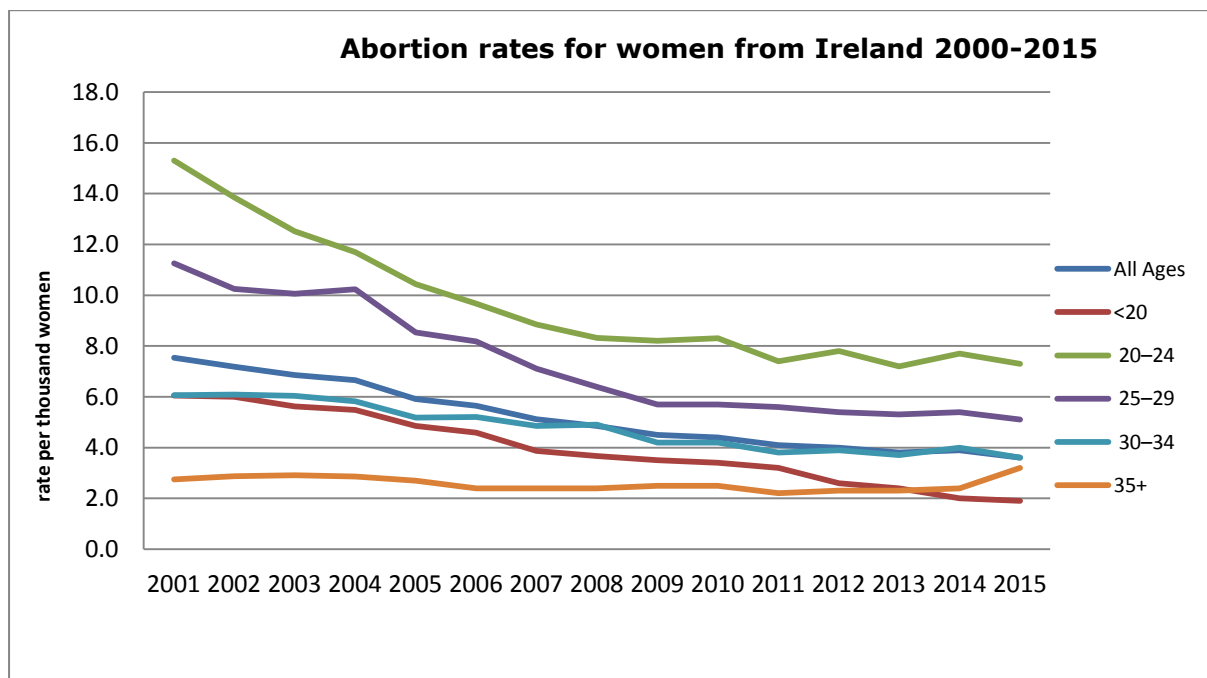
### Key actions in 2015 included:

#### Monitoring trends

In 2015 the SHCPP continued to build an evidence base, and develop and implement knowledge-transfer activities.

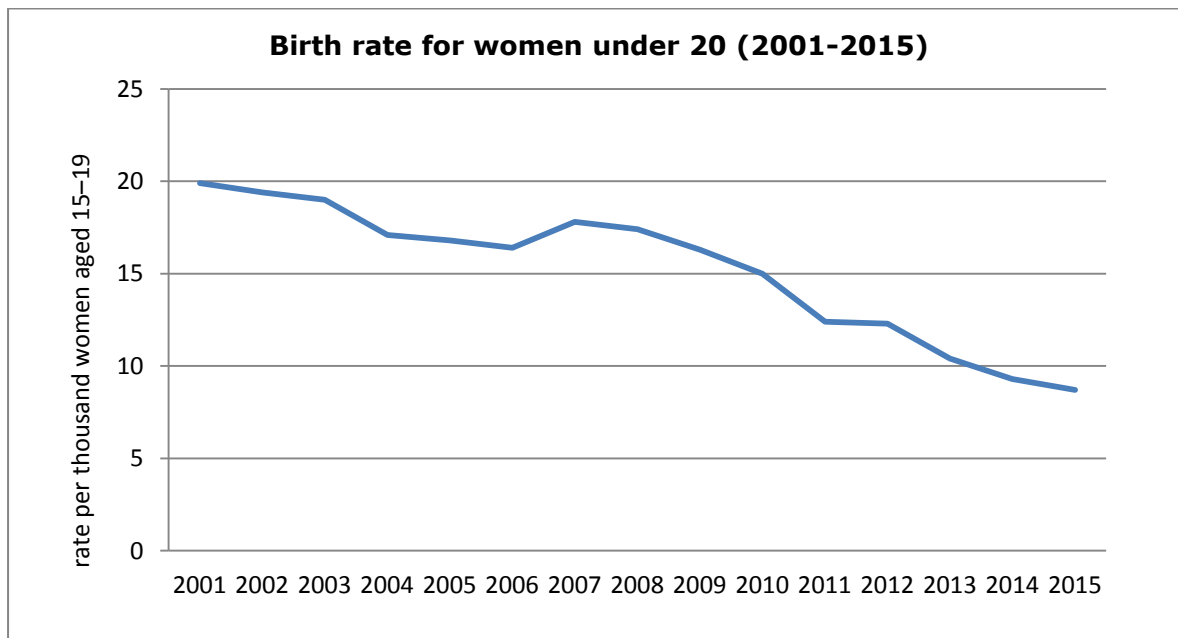
A core role of the SHCPP is to monitor behavioural trends of direct relevance to its mandates, using a range of measurement tools and indicators. Key findings in 2015 included:

- The rate of women travelling to the UK for an abortion decreased from 3.8 per 1,000 in 2014 to 3.6 per 1,000 in 2015.
- Since 2001, the number of women giving Irish addresses at UK abortion clinics has decreased from 6,673 to 3,451 in 2015.
- The abortion rate per 1,000 women has reduced from 7.5 in 2001 to 3.6 in 2015.



- Ireland experienced another decrease in the rate of births to teenage mothers, from 9.3 per 1,000 in 2014 to 8.7 per 1,000 in 2015.

- Teenage births have decreased by 62% since 2001.
- The number of teenage women travelling to the UK for an abortion has declined by 72% since 2001.



### **Building on the evidence base**

The SHCPP commissions research that directly relates to its strategic mandates. In 2015 the SHCPP worked collaboratively with research teams and associated partners on the following projects:


- **Sexual Health and Sexuality Education Needs Assessment of Young People in Care in Ireland (SENYPIC)**

The SHCPP, in partnership with Tusla – Child and Family Agency, continued to provide guidance, support and oversight to the research team working on the SENYPIC programme of research. The research is being carried out by a team of researchers led by Professor Abbey Hyde, School of Nursing, Midwifery and Health Systems, University College Dublin (UCD). The research involves the participation of service providers, foster carers, birth parents and young care leavers. The work in 2015 involved preparing six stand-alone reports for publication.

- **Exploring the factors that inhibit and enable communication between parents and children aged 4–9 years about relationships, sexuality and growing up**

The SHCPP continued to work with Dr Catherine Conlon and Professor Virpi Timonen from the School of Social Work and Social Policy, Trinity College, Dublin (TCD) on research exploring the factors that inhibit and enable





communication between parents and children aged 4–9 years about relationships, sexuality and growing up. The research involves focus groups with approximately 100 parents of 4–9 year olds. The outputs from the project will inform the SHCPP and its partners on how best to further support parents in the delivery of relationships and sexuality education in the home.

- **Evaluation of 'If I were Jack'**

In 2015, as part of the Queen's University Belfast PhD programme, the SHCPP supported the School of Nursing and Midwifery in the evaluation of the 'If I were Jack' educational resource. The resource was developed from SHCPP-funded research that explored young men's attitudes to teenage pregnancy and parenthood. The evaluation is being carried out in a number of post-primary schools in Ireland.

- **MSM Internet Survey Ireland 2015 (MISI 2015)**

The SHCPP supported the Health Protection Surveillance Centre, the Gay Men's Health Service and the Gay Health Network to roll-out an internet survey on the sexual health and HIV prevention needs of men who have sex with men (MSM) in Ireland (MISI 2015). The on-line survey was available for thirteen weeks between March and May 2015. By the closing date there were 3,090 valid responses, making it the largest survey of MSM in Ireland. Data analysis was carried out for the remainder of the year.

### **Research for Policy and Society Award 2015**

The SHCPP worked with the Irish Research Council to establish a crisis pregnancy and sexual health strand in the council's Research for Policy and Society Award 2015. The award was granted to Dr Padraic MacNeala and team from NUI Galway for 'Evaluating an Intervention to Promote Active Consent on the Part of Young Adults'.

### **Healthy Ireland Survey**

The SHCPP continued to participate on the Steering Group of the Healthy Ireland Survey, chaired by the Department of Health. The work in 2015 focused on reviewing outputs and planning for future rounds of data collection for this nationally representative general population survey.



## Appendix 1

### **Members of the Sexual Health Strategy Implementation Group**

Ms Helen Deely, Head of Sexual Health and Crisis Pregnancy Programme

Dr Fiona Lyons, Clinical Lead for Sexual Health

Ms Caroline Hurley, Programme Manager Sexual Health

Dr Fionnuala Cooney, Specialist in Public Health Medicine

Dr Derval Igoe, Specialist in Public Health Medicine

Dr David Hanlon, National Clinical Advisory Primary Care

Ms Diane Nurse, National Lead Social Inclusion

Ms Carmel Beirne, General Manager, Hospital Group

Dr William Flannery, Consultant Psychiatrist, Mental Health

Mr Niall Mulligan, Director HIV Ireland

Dr Miriam Daly, Irish College of General Practitioners

Ms Olive O'Connor, Service User

## Appendix 2

### **Members of the Sexual Health Communications Working Group**

Ms Helen Deely, Head of Sexual Health and Crisis Pregnancy Programme

Ms Grace Cassidy, HSE National Communications Unit

Ms Emma Coughlan, Sexual Health Centre, Cork

Ms Susan Donlon, HIV Ireland

Mr Sean Frayne, BeLongTo

Ms Aoife Ní Shúilleabháin, Union of Students in Ireland

Ms Denise Ryan, Irish Family Planning Association

Mr Adam Shanley, Gay Health Network

Dr Fionnuala Cooney, Specialist in Public Health Medicine

Mr Joe McDonagh, Aids West

Mr Alysander Preston, Positive Now

Ms Grainne Wolfe, GOSH

Ms Patricia Purcell, Spun Out

Ms Sharon Parkinson, Health Promotion Officer

Ms Siobhan O'Dea, Manager, Gay Men's Health Service



## Appendix 3

### **Members of the Advisory Group**

Dr Anne Marie McGauran (Chair), Senior Analyst, National Economic and Social Council

Ms Helen Deely, Head of Sexual Health and Crisis Pregnancy Programme

Ms Brenda Forde, representative of Treoir, the National Federation of Services for Unmarried Parents and their Children

Ms Alison Begas, Chief Executive and representative of Dublin Well Woman

Ms Sherie de Burgh, Director of Counselling and representative of One Family

Ms Louise Graham, National Coordinator and representative of CURA

Ms Deirdre Seery, Director of Sexual Health Centre, Cork

Mr Niall Mulligan, Director of HIV Ireland

Ms Ailish O'Neill, representative of National Youth Council of Ireland

Ms Deirdre Sullivan, representative of National Parents Council Primary

Ms Tonya Myles, representative of CAIRDE, Challenging, ethnic minority health inequalities

Ms Moninne Griffith, Director of BeLongTo

Ms Bronagh Conlon, representative of Foróige

Ms Broden Giambrone, representative of TENI, Transgender Equality Network Ireland

Mr Niall Behan, Chief Executive Officer, Irish Family Planning Association

Mr Noel Sutton, Director of Gay Health Network