

## **Decrease in number of women giving Irish addresses at abortion clinics in England and Wales in 2018**

### **HSE encourages women to contact the *My Options* service to access free unplanned pregnancy counselling and post-abortion supports**

The HSE Sexual Health and Crisis Pregnancy Programme (SHCPP) today, 13<sup>th</sup> June 2019 comments on figures issued by the UK Department of Health, which show that there was a decrease in the number of women who gave Irish addresses at abortion clinics in England and Wales in 2018. The figures decreased from 3,019 women in 2017 to 2,879 women in 2018.<sup>1</sup> This represents a rate of 2.9 per 1000 women who travelled to the UK for an abortion in 2018, representing a 57% decrease in numbers since 2001.

Data for the same year, which was provided to the SHCPP by an online provider of the abortion pill, reports that the number of women from the island of Ireland who were supported by their service to obtain medical abortion was 1,405. This figure increased by 188 since 2017. (See note 4)

Since January 1<sup>st</sup> 2019, abortion services have been legally available in the Republic of Ireland under medical supervision up to 12 weeks gestation. Notwithstanding this, the online abortion pill provider reports that 107 women from Ireland contacted their service in the first three months of 2019. The provider directed all women who contacted their service to the My Options phone line to support them to access medically supervised abortion in Ireland. The provider reports that 43 of those women received 'additional support' from the online service over the period, compared to 184 women over the same period in 2018. The HPRA has reported that 9 seizures of 104 abortion pills were made in the first 3 months of 2019. (See note 5)

Helen Deely, Acting Assistant National Director for Health and Wellbeing said: 'Women who reached out to an online provider earlier this year may not have been aware that new abortion services had been introduced and are available free of charge in Ireland. The online provider who shared data with the SHCPP directed all of the women who contacted their service to My Options. My Options was established as the first point of contact for women seeking information and support in relation to an unplanned pregnancy. Professional and experienced counsellors provide information and support on all options, including

---

<sup>1</sup> Department of Health, UK. Report on Abortion Statistics for England & Wales, 2018.

abortion information and continued pregnancy supports. If a woman is in any way concerned about her health following an abortion, we encourage her to call the My Options service”. “

My Options information and counselling service is available from 9am to 9pm Monday to Friday and Saturday 10am to 2pm at - [www.myoptions.ie](http://www.myoptions.ie) 1800 828 010 (00 353 1 6877044 if calling from Northern Ireland). The service also signposts callers to face-to-face counselling in many locations nationwide. The service provides a 24 hour nursing line, with trained nursing staff who provide medical advice.

## ENDS

### Notes to Editors:

1. Figures on abortions to women who are residents of the Irish Republic are published annually by the Department of Health in UK. The reports are available here <https://www.gov.uk/health-and-social-care/abortion>
2. The rate is calculated using annual population estimates for females aged 15 to 44 published by Central Statistics Office.
3. The Netherlands is the only other jurisdiction to which women from Ireland travel for abortion procedures in any numbers. The Ministerie van Volksgezondheid, Welzijn en Sport (Dutch Ministry of Health, Welfare and Sport) has collated this data since 2010. Prior to 2010 the former Crisis Pregnancy Agency linked directly with service providers.

### Abortions to women giving Irish addresses in UK and the Netherlands

Year	UK	Netherlands <sup>2</sup>	Rate per 1000 females population aged 15-44*
2001	6673	N/A	7.5
2002	6522	N/A	7.2
2003	6320	N/A	6.9
2004	6217	N/A	6.7
2005	5585	42	5.9
2006	5042	461	5.6
2007	4686	451	5.1
2008	4600	351	4.9

<sup>2</sup> Data for 2005 – 2009 was provided directly by services in the Netherlands. Data from 2010 – 2017 is reported by the Ministerie van Volksgezondheid, Welzijn en Sport (Dutch Ministry of Health, Welfare and Sport. *Jaarrapportage 2017 van de Wet afbreking zwangerschap*.

2009	4422	134	4.5
2010	4402	31	4.4
2011	4149	33	4.1
2012	3982	24	4.0
2013	3679	12	3.8
2014	3735	16	3.9
2015	3451	34	3.6
2016	3265	22	3.5
2017	3019	34	3.1
2018	2879	N/A	2.9
* The rates are calculated per 1000 females aged 15-44 population based on CSO population estimates			

3. The HSE Sexual Health and Crisis Pregnancy Programme is a national programme tasked with implementing Ireland's first framework for sexual health and wellbeing, the [National Sexual Health Strategy 2015 – 2020](#).

4. In recent years, the online provider of the abortion pill referred to above previously reported sending pills to the following number of women in Ireland and Northern Ireland: 2016: 1172; 2017: 1217; 2018: 1405

5. The Health Products Regulatory Authority, in conjunction with the Revenue's Customs Service and An Garda Síochána monitor and investigates instances of illegal supply of medicinal products in physical sales and via the internet and actively enforces against suspected breaches of the law. The HPRA has recorded 14 seizures containing 204 abortion pills from January-March 2018.

6. Since the commencement of My Options on 1<sup>st</sup> of January the helpline has received over 7,500 calls

7. As of 31<sup>st</sup> May 2019, the My Options website had received 122,000 visits since its launch in December 2018. The My Options phone line can provide information and support in over 240 languages. When an interpretation service is required My Options arrange for an interpreter to phone a caller back for a three way conversation between them, a counsellor and an interpreter, where the interpreter will help the client to speak to a counsellor in their own language.

8. My Options also support Irish Sign Language users with their call to My Options by providing a live video-link to an Irish Sign Language interpreter. (<https://iris2.gettimely.com>). This service is free of charge.

Issued by:

**National Press Office**  
**Health Service Executive**  
Tel: 01 6352840  
Email: [press@hse.ie](mailto:press@hse.ie)