

Further decrease in the number of women giving Irish addresses at abortion clinics in England and Wales

Women from Ireland continue to contact online abortion pill providers

HSE encourages women to attend free crisis pregnancy counselling and post-abortion supports

The HSE Sexual Health and Crisis Pregnancy Programme (SHCPP) today, 7th June 2018 commented on figures issued by the UK Department of Health, which shows that there has been a further decrease in the number of women giving Irish addresses at abortion clinics in England and Wales, from 3,265 in 2016 to 3,092 in 2017.¹ This equates to a decrease in the rate of women travelling to the UK for an abortion from 3.5 per 1000 women in 2016 to 3.1 per 1000 in 2017, which is in line with the general downward trend in these rates over the past number of years.

The SHCPP also reports that women from Ireland are continuing to contact online providers of abortion pills in large numbers. One online provider reported that 1,217 women from the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland '*received the medical abortion pill*' from their service in 2017.² A second online provider reports that 878 women from the Republic of Ireland '*used the service*' in 2017.³

Commenting on these figures, Helen Deely, Programme Lead for the SHCPP said: "If a woman takes an abortion pill and has prolonged heavy bleeding, bad pain, faints, or experiences other complications, we strongly encourage her to attend an emergency department or GP straight away. If a woman is in any way concerned about her health following taking an abortion pill or travelling abroad for an abortion, we encourage her to attend a free post-abortion medical check-up funded by the HSE. These services are free of charge and the full list of services is available on www.abortionaftercare.ie.

Ms Deely continues, "Anyone experiencing a crisis pregnancy should be aware of the support available to them free of charge. There are HSE funded crisis pregnancy and post abortion counselling services in over 30 locations nationwide. Crisis pregnancy counsellors provide on-going support and information to women and their partners. A list of crisis pregnancy services is available on www.positiveoptions.ie and abortionaftercare.ie

¹ Department of Health, UK. Report on Abortion Statistics for England & Wales, 2017.

² This provider does not disaggregate contacts from the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland

³ These figures do not represent the number of abortions that have taken place among women in Ireland as a result of engaging with these services

ENDS

Notes to Editors:

1. Figures on abortions to women who were residents of Irish Republic are published annually by the Department of Health in UK. The reports are available here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/abortion-statistics-for-england-and-wales-2017>
The abortion rate is calculated using annual population estimates for females aged 15 to 44 published by Central Statistics Office.
2. The Netherlands emerged as 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 ⁴	Abortion 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
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	3092	N/A	3.1

* The rates are calculated per 1000 females aged 15-44 population based on CSO population estimates

3. Early medical abortion is available in limited circumstances in Northern Ireland since October 2012. The Department of Health in Northern Ireland does not gather data on abortions to women giving addresses in the Republic of Ireland in the abortion clinic in Northern Ireland so the figures are unavailable.

⁴ Data for 2005 – 2009 was provided directly by services in the Netherlands. Data from 2010 – 2016 is reported by the Ministerie van Volksgezondheid, Welzijn en Sport (Dutch Ministry of Health, Welfare and Sport. *Jaarrapportage 2016 van de Wet afbreking zwangerschap*.

4. Abortifacients (abortion pills) are not legally available in Ireland and it is not legal to supply or receive “prescription-only” medicine through online sources. 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. In 2017 487 tablets were detained in 36 cases of importation.
5. Two providers of the abortion pill have provided data to the SHCPP. The first provider reported that in 2016, a package containing the medical abortion was sent to in total 1169 women in ROI and NI. The second provider reported that in 2016, the number of packages sent to women in ROI in 2016 was 299.
6. 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](#). The Programme also has a statutory responsibility for the delivery of three mandates as originally set out within the Crisis Pregnancy Agency (Establishment) Order 2001 (S.I. No. 446 of 2001).
7. Crisis Pregnancy Counselling Services
For information about free crisis pregnancy counselling services funded by the Crisis Pregnancy Programme, members of the public can visit www.positiveoptions.ie or freetext LIST to 50444.
8. Abortion Aftercare Services
For information about free post-abortion medical and counselling services funded by the Sexual Health & Crisis Pregnancy Programme, members of the public can visit www.abortionaftercare.ie or freetext Aftercare to 50444

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