

STRATEGY SUMMARY

LEADING AN INTEGRATED APPROACH
TO REDUCING CRISIS PREGNANCY

2007-2011



Since its establishment in 2001 the Crisis Pregnancy Agency has published 23 research reports related to crisis pregnancy prevention and support. This places the Agency in a very strong position to reliably profile crisis pregnancy in Ireland. This research allows the Agency to identify the antecedents of crisis pregnancy and effectively plan strategies to address the issue of crisis pregnancy over the next five years. The research programme has established a number of baseline indicators to track key measures related to crisis pregnancy and to evaluate the impact of the Agency's work.

The Establishment Order of the Crisis Pregnancy Agency defines crisis pregnancy as "a pregnancy which is neither planned nor desired by the woman concerned and which represents a personal crisis for her". The Agency understands this definition to include the experiences of those women for whom a planned or desired pregnancy develops into a crisis over time due to a change in circumstances.

The Strategy for the Crisis Pregnancy Agency 2007 – 2011 focuses on three central objectives, derived from its mandates:

- Reduce the number of crisis pregnancies.
- Reduce the number of women choosing abortion as an outcome of crisis pregnancy.
- Safeguard women's physical and mental health following termination of pregnancy.

Seven strategic priorities will help the Agency deliver these objectives.

i. Knowledge about Relationships and Sexuality for Adolescents

Achieve measurable improvements in knowledge about relationships and sexuality among adolescents through home-, school- and community-based education

Projects for Change

- Achieve measurable improvements in the delivery of Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE) in post-primary schools, to enable 100% of schools deliver an RSE programme, in the context of Social, Personal & Health Education (SPHE) over the next five years.
- Achieve effective delivery of SPHE/RSE by outside facilitators as appropriate.
- Build systems and processes to capture the views of young people in programme and resource development.
- Assist parents to provide relationships and sexuality education in the home. Develop new resources to equip parents with relevant information and communication skills.
- Improve teacher (including principal) training in RSE/SPHE by developing opportunities for accreditation.

ii. Contraception

Improve access to and information on contraception and contraceptive services – particularly for groups at risk of crisis pregnancy

Projects for Change

- Finalise three sub reports of the Irish Study of Sexual Health and Relationships (ISSHR).
- Use findings from ISSHR and other research to develop an evidence-based proposal to support the inclusion of contraceptive service development in Department of Health and Children and Health Service Executive sexual health plans. Support national sexual health plans related to the Agency's mandates.
- Fund pilot models of service delivery to improve access to services, increase take-up of services, and promote consistent and correct contraceptive use among at-risk groups. Evaluate these pilots with a view to mainstreaming.
- Develop policy proposals for the Department of Health and Children and the Department of Finance on how cost of contraception can be minimised in order to facilitate consistent contraceptive use by sexually active young men and women.

iii. Communications

Conduct effective and innovative communications campaigns to promote positive behavioural and cultural changes regarding sexual attitudes, choices and behaviour

Projects for Change

- Develop a three-year integrated marketing campaign on consistent and effective contraceptive use. The campaign will have a particular focus on those with lower educational attainment and lower socio economic status (SES). Target groups will include young men, young women and women aged 35–55.
- Run a campaign aimed at delaying early sexual activity in adolescents.
- Extend the Positive Options campaign for a further three years to promote access to crisis pregnancy services and address the stigma of crisis pregnancy.
- Promote the availability of free post-abortion medical and counselling services.
- Develop partnerships with statutory and voluntary bodies to improve sexual health information for asylum seekers.
- Execute a national and regional public relations programme to communicate the strategic objectives of the Agency.

iv. Crisis Pregnancy Services

Improve access to and delivery of crisis pregnancy counselling services and post-abortion medical and counselling services

Projects for Change

- Quantify the need for crisis pregnancy and post-abortion services nationally, comparing this to the level of services delivered. Provide grant funding to ensure that service provision meets demand.
- Develop a commissioning toolkit to guide and assist those establishing new crisis pregnancy counselling services.
- Plan the development of a self-assessment Quality Assurance Framework for crisis pregnancy counselling and post-abortion counselling.
- Develop a National University of Ireland (NUI) accreditation programme on crisis pregnancy counselling skills for counsellors in State-funded agencies.

v. Continuation of Pregnancy

Improve the range and nature of supports central to making continuation of pregnancy more attractive. Ensure that women, their partners and families are fully informed about these supports

Projects for Change

- Develop a workplace project to improve the experience of working women (and men) facing crisis pregnancy. The project will centre on managing statutory leave entitlements (e.g. maternity leave) and providing information on benefits, rights and entitlements.
- Fund pilot initiatives to increase the engagement of men in the support of their partners during crisis pregnancy, in coping with the experience of crisis pregnancy and parenting.
- Fund pilot initiatives aimed at women - particularly young women - who need a high degree of support and assistance in progressing with their pregnancy and coping with parenting.
- Develop and disseminate good-practice guidelines on addressing and presenting the choice of adoption and on the development of referral pathways to adoption.
- Complete a review of demand for initiatives such as supported accommodation and short-term fostering.
- Support the inclusion in the Domestic Adoption Framework of the natural mother's central role in the selection of prospective adoptive parents.

vi. Research

Strengthen understanding of the contributory factors and solutions to crisis pregnancy; use research findings to promote evidence-based practice and policy development

Projects for Change

- Improve the Agency's evidence base: identify knowledge gaps and commission new research to address them. Publish annual statistical reports to monitor baseline indicators. Place Crisis Pregnancy Agency quantitative databases in data archives.
- Build research capacity on topics related to crisis pregnancy by commissioning research and by establishing research scholarships and awards schemes.
- Publish good-practice guidelines, in partnership with professional bodies, to improve professional practice in areas related to crisis pregnancy and ensure practice is informed by sound evidence.
- Increase awareness of the Agency's research programme by extending the current series of research summaries to include new national and international user groups.
- Conduct periodic reviews to ensure the evaluation framework underpinning the work of the Agency is informed by best practice.

vii. Policy Influence

Influence policy makers and key players regarding prevention of crisis pregnancy, reproductive decision-making and crisis pregnancy outcomes

Projects for Change

- Publish policy reviews on key topics related to crisis pregnancy.
- Participate in and organise policy fora on key issues.
- Implement a system for monitoring policy change nationally to assess the impact of the Agency's contribution, and disseminate the findings.

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Formulating & Implementing a National Strategy



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