



An Roinn Sláinte  
Department of Health



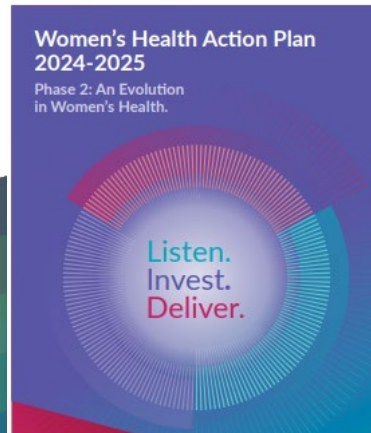
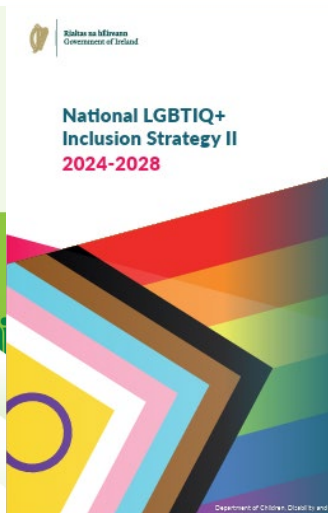
# *Sexual Health Policy in Ireland An Overview*



*Dr. Fiona Mansergh  
Healthy Ireland  
Department of Health*



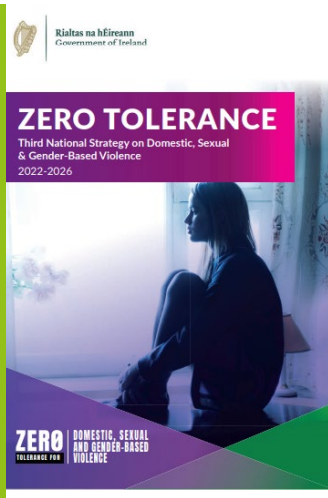
# Other Relevant Strategies



Report to:  An Roinn Sláinte  
Department of Health

Review of the National Sexual Health Strategy

January 2023

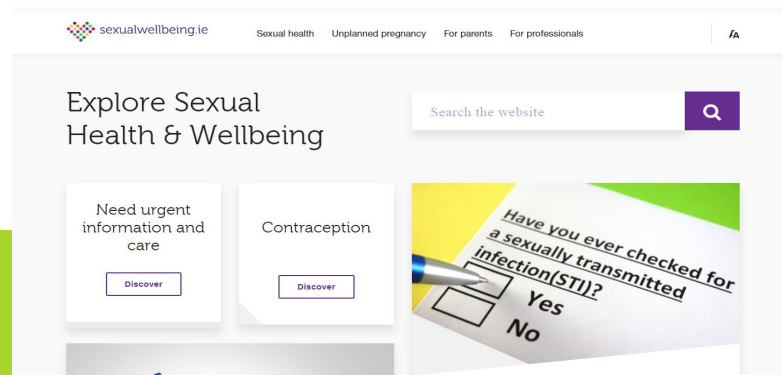


Sexual Health – HSE  
Sexual Health Programme

FCS – HSE Primary Care,  
PCRS, NWIHP, GPs and  
pharmacies

# Achievements and Developments, 2015 - 2025

- National Condom Distribution Service (NCDS), 2015
- Termination of pregnancy (ToP), 2019. Ancillary recommendations, JOC8th
- Free Contraception Scheme (FCS). FCS *budget - €47m in 2025.*
- Women's Health Action Plans, 2022-23 & 2024-25. *Budget €180m from 2020.*
- National Home STI testing service (2022- ), +33% testing capacity, *€4.82m in 2025*
- Building sexual health promotion, education and training capacity in the health, education, further & higher education, youth and community sectors
- HIV prevention initiatives:
  - Pre-Exposure Prophylaxis (PrEP) service – PrEP budget - *€5.9m (2024), €6.5m (2025)*
  - HIV Fast-Track Cities, 2019.
  - HIV anti-stigma campaigns
- Pelvic cancer survivorship, SJH, CUH starting 2025 (*€70,000 per site*).
- *Since 2016, cumulative funding for the HSE SHP has exceeded €100m.*



# STIs - Trends



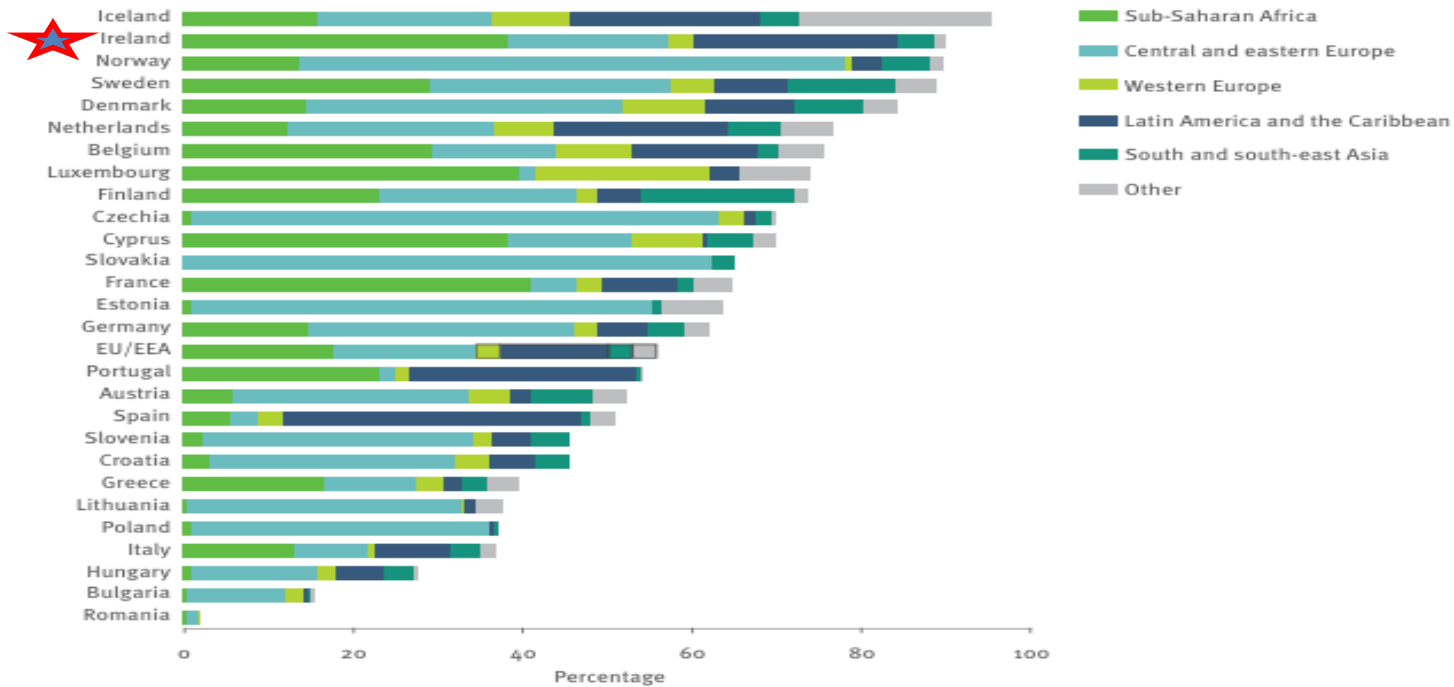
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- **STI rates have been rising, both nationally and internationally;**
- **Multiple drug-resistant STI variants (MDR gonorrhoea), emerging STIs (e.g. mpox);**
- **Demographic changes:** an increasingly diverse, rapidly growing and ageing population – from **4.8m** in 2016 to **5.4m** in 2024
- Supporting sexual health and wellbeing in the context of **ageing demographics**, increased incidence of **chronic conditions, disability and neurodiversity;**
- Supporting sexual health and wellbeing in the **digital age;**
- **increasing demand for services**, both in terms of capacity and diversity of need.



# HIV – ECDC data

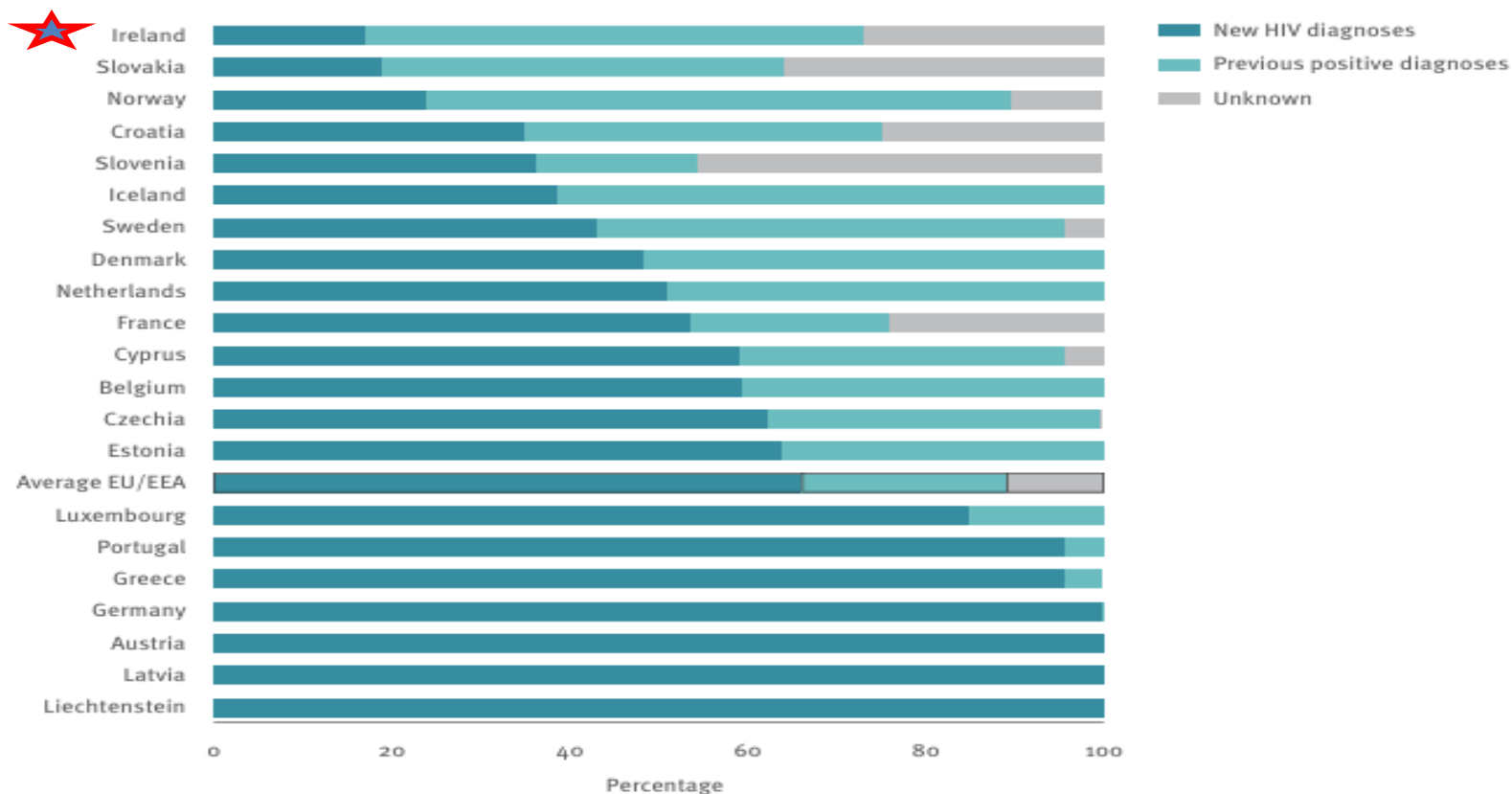
**Fig. 1.6. Percentage of HIV diagnoses among migrants out of all reported cases with known information on the region of origin, by country of report, EU/EEA, 2023 (n = 21 230)**



- EU/EEA - 5.3 HIV diagnoses/100 000 .
- Ireland – 17.3/100,000 – 2nd highest.
- *Increased testing a factor in Ireland*
- Most « new » diagnoses previously diagnosed abroad, and majority virally suppressed

# HIV – ECDC data

**Fig. 1.10.** Percentage of previous positive diagnoses and new HIV diagnoses by country of report, 21 EU/EEA countries, 2023 (n = 15 150)





# *STIs – ECDC data*

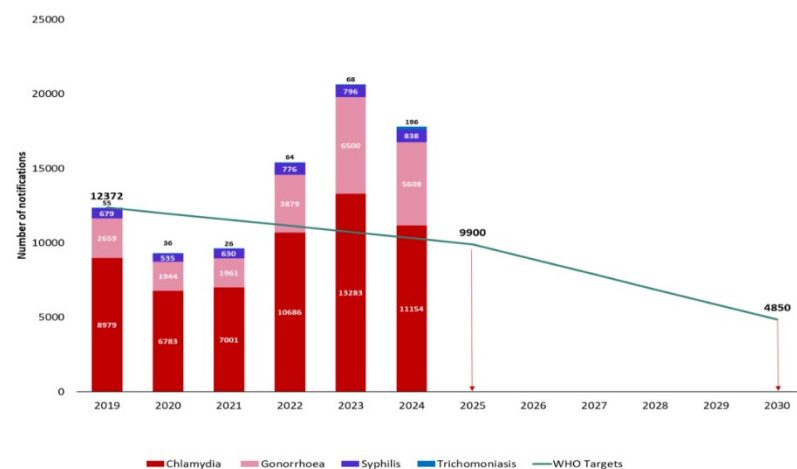
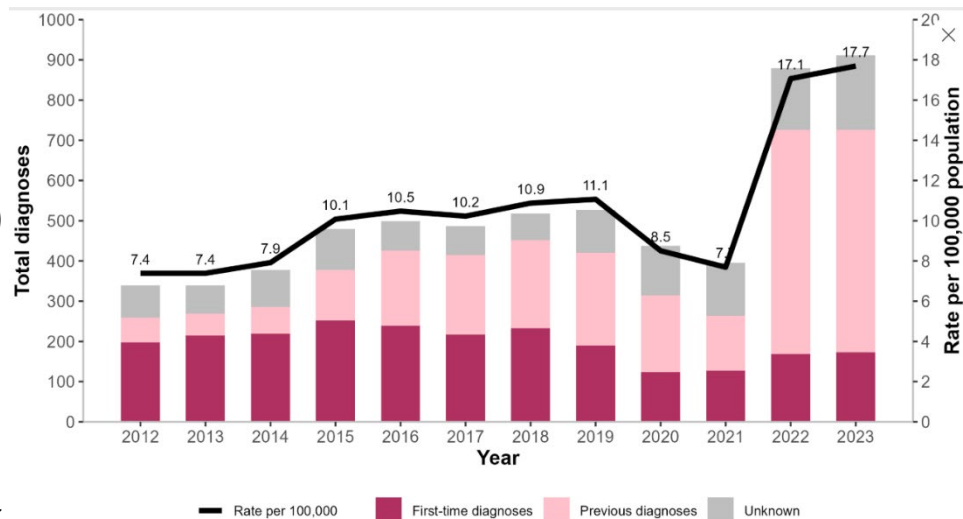
- 2023 – Gonorrhoea - 31% increase vs 2022, increase of more than 300% vs 2014
- 2023 – Syphilis - 13% increase compared to 2022, and a doubling compared to 2014.
- Chlamydia cases – up 3% from 2022 and 13% from 2014





# HIV & STIs – HPSC data

- STI notification rate in 2024 decreased by 11% compared to 2023 (from 451 to 400 per 100,000 population)
- Decrease driven by decreases in chlamydia (16%) and gonorrhoea (12%) notifications.
- In 2024, Ireland saw a 14% decrease in
- STIs in those aged 15-49 years vs 2023 but 44% increase compared to 2019
- *Young people <25 years & gbMSM at highest risk*
- *Easily treated, but if not treated, STIs can lead to serious health complications.*
- **HPSC recommendations**
- *Comprehensive sexual health services*
- *Raise awareness on sexual health*
- *Reduce barriers and address stigma*
- *Ensure availability of prevention tools*

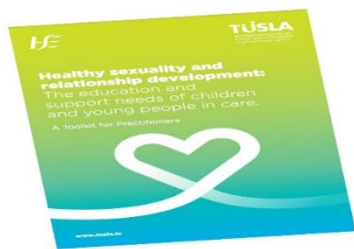




# National Sexual Health Strategy, 2025-35

## Vision, Goal, Principles

- **Vision:** “that everyone in Ireland experiences positive sexual health and wellbeing and has access to high quality sexual health information, education and services throughout life”.



# NSHS; Goals

1

**Sexual health promotion and education;** Evidence informed, inclusive and tailored sexual health promotion will be available to all. This will be achieved through the provision of information, education and communications campaigns that support positive sexual health and wellbeing, and the prevention of negative sexual health outcomes across the life-course.

2

**Sexual health services;** Equitable, accessible and high-quality sexual health services for the maintenance and improvement of sexual health and prevention of sexual ill-health that are targeted and tailored to need, will be available to everyone.

3

**Contraception and unplanned pregnancy;** High quality information and services will be available to all, enabling reproductive choice in relation to contraception and unplanned pregnancy options and supporting those who have experienced domestic, sexual and gender-based violence.

4

**Sexual health surveillance, monitoring, evaluation and research;** Robust and high-quality sexual health surveillance, monitoring, evaluation and research will underpin all aspects of policy, practice, service delivery and planning of sexual health outcomes.

## Key Principles

**Key Principle 1: Sex Positivity** –building capacity at individual and community level to develop and maintain positive sexual health and wellbeing.

**Key Principle 2: Diversity, Equality and Social Inclusion** – all ages, abilities, genders and orientations, backgrounds and ethnicities. Sláintecare vision - equitable access to services based on need, and not ability to pay.

**Key Principle 3: Working Together in Partnership** –collaboration across the health system, public services, and Government, engaging with communities to deliver user-friendly services that are accessible, culturally competent, and value for money.

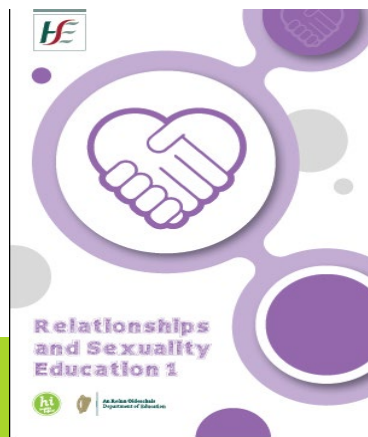
**Key Principle 4: International Commitments** – Deliver services in line with international agreements, accords etc. to which Ireland is a signatory.

**Key Principle 5: Supporting Delivery through Our People:** Support & value staff, providing opportunities for upskilling, and expanding capacity

**Key Principle 6: Widening access and capacity, ensuring** equitable access, expanding the delivery of sexual health services to include a wider range of primary care , acute and community services

# Information, education, promotion

- **sexualwellbeing.ie** - comprehensive information on sexual health, consent, STI testing, contraception, HIV, PrEP and more.
- **Educational resources**, in collaboration with the Department of Education, Oide, NCCA, Healthy Campuses
- **Partnership** with Gay Health Network to develop Man2Man.ie and HIV/STI testing campaigns targeting gay and bisexual men.
- Podcasts and resources on **consent**, collaboration with **CUAN**
- **Aims:** continue, redevelop, expand



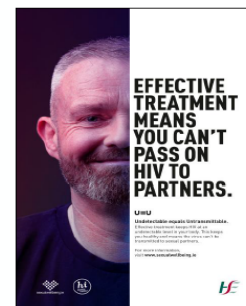
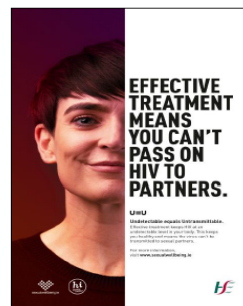
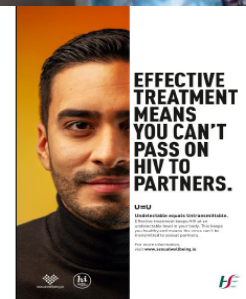
# Sexual health services – STI testing, diagnosis, treatment

## Sexual Health Services

- STI testing, diagnosis and treatment
- 23 public STI clinics
- Guide to STIs – 5 languages
- Information on specific STIs
- Free home STI testing
- SIF projects – including 3<sup>rd</sup> level
- HIV Prevention – PEP and PrEP
- Services for people living with HIV
- HIV Fast-track Cities, address Stigma

## Aims

- Expand PrEP and PEP services, STI testing
- Additional access through primary care
- Model of Care for Sexual Health
- Improved geographic equity
- Expanded care for people living with HIV
- Vaccine access, address gaps



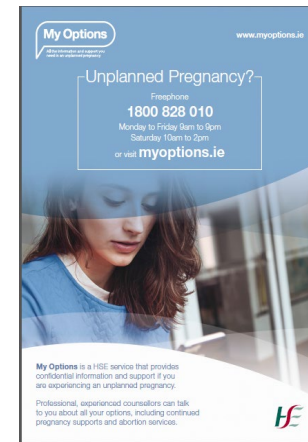


# Contraception and reproductive health

- National Condom Distribution Service
- Free Contraception Scheme – women aged 17-35
- My Options Unplanned Pregnancy services
- Free HRT scheme

## Aims:

- Expand NCDS to primary care
- Expand FCS to entire reproductive age-range; 17-55, synchronise with HRT scheme over time
- HRT, menopause, women's health supports
- Expand the role of pharmacy in delivering FCS
- Provision through NWIHP – post-natal, post-ToP and SATUs, WHS
- Scope out: Sterilisations, telemedicine and product range, contraception reliability
- Adapt MyOptions



Free contraception

Discover



# Women's, Men's, LGBTIQ+ health

- Investment in Women's Health €180m since 2020

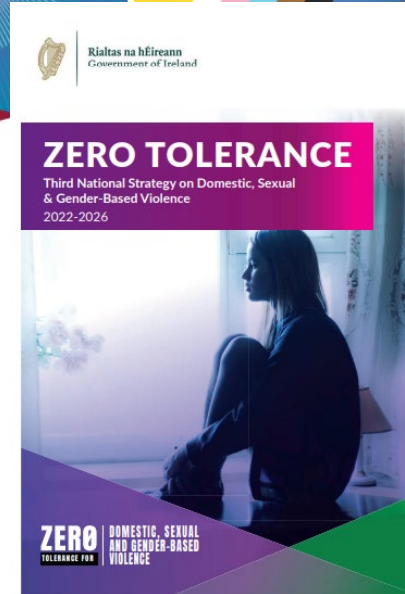
## Women's Health Action Plans:

- Walk-in Gynaecology Clinics*
- Specialist Menopause Clinics*
- Specialist Endometriosis teams*
- Free Contraception Scheme*
- Free HRT scheme*
- Campaigns – It's My Time*
- Women's Health Fund*
- Maternity care, Breastfeeding*
- Period Dignity*
- Fertility*

HSE Men's Health Action Plan

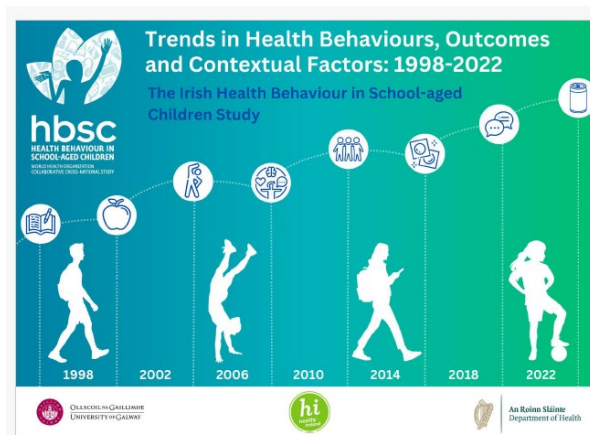
National LGBTIQ+ Action Plan

Zero Tolerance



# NSHS Research, KPIs

- Aims: continue, develop, improve



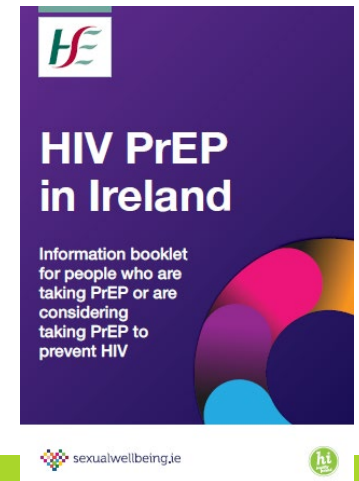
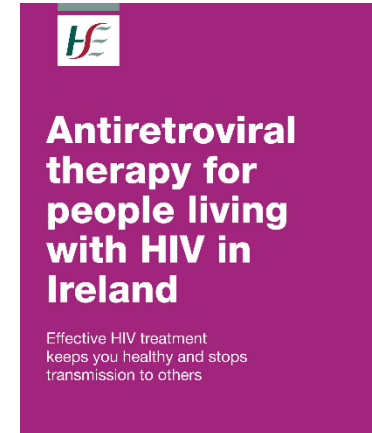
# *Working Together in Partnership*

- DFAT – International treaties, accords, engagement, SDGs
- DoJM, Cuan – Zero Tolerance, DSGBV prevention
- DFHERIS, HEA – Sexual Health on Campus
- DoEY, DCDE – information, education, engagement with young people, disability



# Governance and reporting

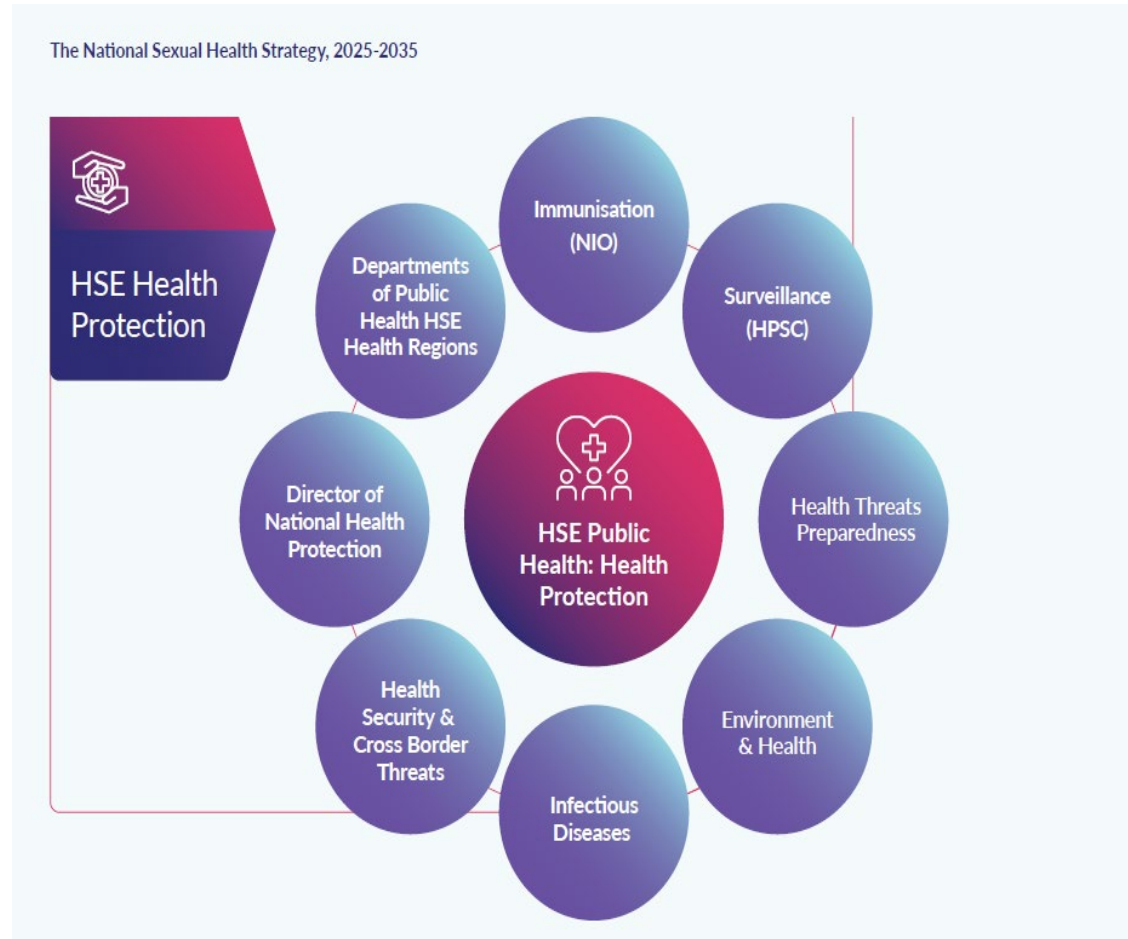
- Implementation Group – membership similar to Drafting Group, meetings 2-4 times per year, specific issue sub-Groups, reporting back to the main Group.
- Cross – Government and Stakeholder engagement - regular engagement and reporting on specific issues.
- Existing reporting structures are in place for most relevant programmes, measures and KPIs - to be enhanced as part of the work of the Strategy.
- 3X Action Plans, mid-term and final Independent Reviews to be carried out.
- Publication of key research data also planned





# Priorities

- Information, Education, Communication
- Action Plan, Model of Care, HIV
- Supports for PLHIV, PrEP access
- Model of Care for Sexual Health
- Health Regions
- Supports for people living with chronic conditions, disabilities
- Access to vaccines and testing
- Wider access to treatments through Primary Care
- DSGBV prevention and care for victims, supports for SATUs, consent, CUAN
- Access to contraception
- Governance and stakeholder engagement, patient – public involvement



# *Long term strategic aims, opportunities*

Systems approach, in collaboration, DoH and HSE Divisions, wider Government, to work towards more joined up provision of sexual and reproductive health services over time

Joined up service delivery – ideally, patients to experience seamless transition between services

Moving with demographic change

Ability to absorb new/expanded services, treatments

Equality, Diversity, and Social Inclusion

Gender & Orientation: women's, men's and LGBTIQ+ health

Meeting our international commitments

Key element of public health reform, prevention





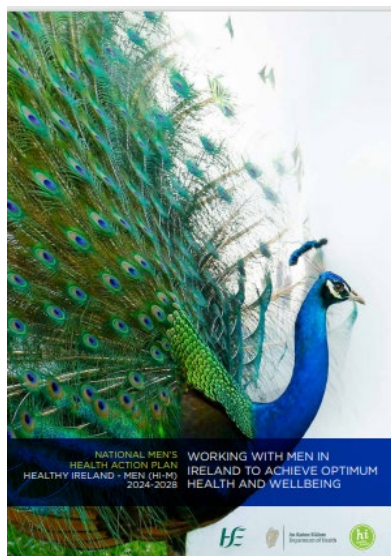
# Stakeholders and partners

- **NSHS core drafting group:** HSE SHP, Public Health, NWIHP, HSE Primary Care, WHT, Social Inclusion, Bioethics (ToP) and LGBTI+ Inclusion (CLU) represented in addition to H&WP and WHT. ICGP and SH Clinical Lead also included.
- **Consulted:** Contraception IG: (H&WP, WHT, DoH Primary Care – Medicines, Community Pharmacy, GP&GMSU, Eligibility, Primary Care Policy), CNO Division (SATUs), HSE Men's Health, IIDPU, LGBTI+ Inclusion, DPSIU, WHS, Women's Health Taskforce, CHO6, Cancer Unit, MAGPU
- **Government partners:** DFAT, DFHERIS, HEA, DoEY, DCDE, HPSC, DoJM, CUAN.
- **Plans:** Analogous structures for implementation, WHT enabling community communication on women's health, radical listening/stakeholder feedback structure on the sexual health side – LGBTI+, Social Inclusion, NGOs, Men's Health, continued engagement across Government.

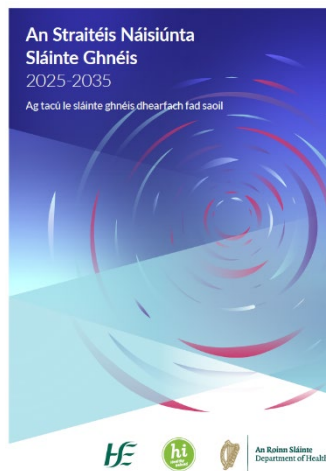




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# Thanks for listening!



"If I could make **one change** to improve health outcomes **for women and girls** in Ireland it would be..."

More Screening Pregnancy Support HPV  
Mental Health  
**To Feel Heard** Better Diet Better Childcare  
Vaginal Mesh Clinical Trials Access Personalised Treatment Better Data  
**Breastfeeding Support**  
Health Education Endometriosis Fertility Treatment Support Carers Incontinence  
Sex Education Improved Records Improved Access Menopause  
Better Work Conditions Periods Cancer  
Female Leaders Tackle Social Issues Promote Fitness  
Staff Training



[www.gov.ie/healthyireland](https://www.gov.ie/healthyireland)

<https://www.gov.ie/en/campaigns/-womens-health/>