



## The complex pathway to good contraceptive care

### What is going wrong?

- The fragmentation of commissioning responsibilities for contraceptive services between local authorities, CCGs and NHS England has created a lack of joined up leadership, planning, accountability and delivery of local contraceptive care
- Tightening public health budgets are creating a 'perfect storm', with services being cut and restrictions on access to services being put in place (for example, based on a woman's age or place of residence)
- Increasing demand on general practice, which delivers approximately 80% of contraceptive care,<sup>1</sup> making it difficult for primary care to deliver more or better contraceptive care if community sexual health services are restricted or discontinued
- Training budgets, particularly to support training in the fitting and removal of some long acting reversible contraceptive (LARC) methods, are being significantly cut,<sup>2</sup> further limiting women's access to the full range of methods both now and in the future

### What is the impact on women?

- Women are often unable to get information and access to all methods of contraception, particularly longer acting methods that are known to be most effective
- In areas where full contraceptive services are not available, women's abortion rates are higher than the national average
- The inability to plan pregnancy may have health consequences for the women and her unborn child
- Further cuts to funding for contraceptive services will mean that even more women will struggle to get the contraceptive care they need

### What is the impact on society?

- Investment in contraception is one of the most cost-effective 'buys' for the NHS; every £1 invested in contraception saves £11 in averted costs to the NHS<sup>3</sup>
- Therefore the failure to meet women's contraceptive needs comes at a significant ongoing cost to health services and the broader public sector
- Even if current levels of access to services continue, recent research estimates that unintended pregnancies will cost the NHS more than eight billion pounds in the next five years<sup>4</sup>

Produced by the Advisory Group on Contraception  
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**REFERENCES** **1** All-Party Parliamentary Pro-Choice and Sexual Health Group, *A report into the delivery of sexual health services in general practice*, October 2007 **2** Bayer HealthCare, *Fit for Purpose? A Freedom of Information audit of the provision of training for fitting intrauterine contraceptive devices*, April 2015 **3** Department of Health, *A Framework for Sexual Health Improvement in England*, March 2013 **4** Family Planning Association, *Unprotected Nation*, 2015.