Long Acting Reversible Methods of Contraception (LARC) in Scotland
Year ending 31 March 2019

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About this release
This release by Information Services Division reports on the proportion of women of reproductive age (15-49) prescribed long acting reversible methods of contraception (LARC) in primary care and sexual health settings. This includes the contraceptive implant, intrauterine device (IUD) and intrauterine system (IUS).

Main Points
In primary care and sexual health settings combined in 2018/19:

- Prescribing of LARC increased to the highest rate in the reported period after a steady fall over the previous five years. Rates rose from 51.5 per 1,000 women in 2017/18 to 53.7 in 2018/19.

- The most common method of LARC was the contraceptive implant: prescribing rates were 26.7 per 1,000 women compared to 20.4 for the IUS and 6.6 for the IUD. Both IUS and IUD have shown a steady increase in rates in the last few years.

- Women under the age of 35 were more likely to be prescribed the contraceptive implant while women aged 35 and over were more likely to be prescribed the IUS.

LARC prescribing rate by age group, 2018/19
• The most deprived areas had higher LARC prescribing rates than the least deprived at 42.6 per 1,000 women compared to 37.7.

Background
This report focuses on very long acting methods of contraception; namely the contraceptive implant, IUD and IUS. Contraceptive injections are also reported on but are presented separately. As multiple contraceptive injections are required per year it is difficult with the current information to determine person level data. As such, while rates are shown to allow comparison between NHS Board areas, caution should be taken interpreting these rates.

In typical use, the ‘long acting’ methods of contraception have a lower failure rate than alternative reversible methods such as the contraceptive pill or condoms¹.

In August 2011, the Sexual Health and Blood Borne Virus Framework 2011-2015 was launched, followed in 2015 by the Sexual Health and Blood Borne Virus Framework 2015-2020 Update. Both of these support the use of LARC and the 2015-2020 update states that work has been carried out to improve access to such contraception.

¹. https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/contraception/how-effective-contraception/

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Further Information
The data from this publication is available to download from our web page along with a metadata document which provides additional information about data sources and tables presented.

ISD publishes a wide range of information on birth, pregnancy and sexual health, including teenage pregnancies and terminations of pregnancy in Scotland. Further information can be found on our Maternity and Births and Sexual Health pages.

The next release of this publication will be September 2020.