



Deputy Micheál Martin

Dáil Éireann

Kildare Street

Dublin 2

30th September 2019

PQ Ref: 38227/19

“To ask the Minister for Health the way in which he will collect improved data and research on suicidal behaviour as outlined in the National Office for Suicide Prevention Annual Report 2018; and if he will make a statement on the matter.” Micheál Martin

Dear Deputy,

The HSE National Office for Suicide Prevention (NOSP) has been requested to respond to you with regard to your Parliamentary Question above.

Context

The reference to the improvement “of data and research on suicidal behaviour” in our 2018 Annual Report, relates to Strategic Goal 7 of Connecting for Life, Ireland’s National Strategy to Reduce Suicide 2015-2020 (CfL).

Goal 7 of the strategy is; to improve surveillance, evaluation and high quality research relating to suicidal behaviour. Further objectives under this strategic goal are;

- Evaluate the effectiveness and cost-effectiveness of Connecting for Life (objective 7.1)
- Improve access to timely and high quality data on suicide and self-harm (objective 7.2)
- Review (and if necessary revise) current recording procedures for death by suicide (objective 7.3)
- Develop a national research and evaluation plan that supports innovation and is aimed at early identification of suicide risk, assessment, intervention and prevention (objective 7.4).

There are 9 targeted actions under these objectives, which have multiple lead/partner agents including, for example, the HSE NOSP, Department of Justice and Equality, Coroners Offices, CSO, HEA and research bodies. Further details on these actions can be found in;

- Connecting for Life: <https://www.hse.ie/eng/services/list/4/mental-health-services/connecting-for-life/publications/connecting-for-life-ireland-s-national-strategy-to-reduce-suicide.html>
- Connecting for Life Implementation Plan 2017-2020: <https://www.hse.ie/eng/services/list/4/mental-health-services/connecting-for-life/publications/connecting-for-life-implementation-plan.html>

Key developments in this area

The NOSP, Irish Coroners and the Health Research Board are currently engaged in a 4-year partnership project to collect improved national data on suicidal behaviour through expanded health surveillance. This project supports CfL objectives 7.2 and 7.3 and more specifically, action 7.2.2.

In March 2016 the NOSP commissioned the Health Research Board (HRB) to undertake a study to assess the feasibility of leveraging the existing methodology and logistics of the National Drug Related Death Index (NDRDI) - already established in 2005.

The NDRDI reports on the number of deaths by drug and alcohol poisoning and deaths among drug users and people who are alcohol dependent in Ireland. The study concluded that it was technically, operationally and financially feasible to collect information on suicide and deaths in people with risk factors for fatal self-harm from Coronial files, using the methodology and logistics of the NDRDI.

In August 2017 the NOSP then entered into a 3-year contract with the HRB to undertake additional annual censuses of closed Coroners files (for 2015, 2016, 2017 and 2018) across all (40+) Coronial districts in Ireland - collecting information on suicide and suspected suicide (i.e. more likely than not).

Findings from this project will provide rich national data on demographics, socio economics, history and behaviour, that we currently do not have visibility of. Data collection, cleaning and analysis is still underway, and we intend that findings for initial years (2015 and 2016) will be published by Q1_2020.

The work of the National Suicide Research Foundation (NSRF)

The HSE NOSP continues to fund the programme of works of the NSRF. Of particular relevance to your question, is the “National Self-Harm Registry Ireland” (NSHRI) which is a national system of population monitoring for the occurrence of self-harm. The Registry represents an important resource both nationally and internationally, identifying key trends and risk factors for self-harm which can guide policy and further research. It was established over 15 years ago at the request of the Department of Health and Children, by the NSRF. It is funded by the NOSP and remains the world’s first national registry of cases of intentional self-harm presenting to hospital emergency departments.

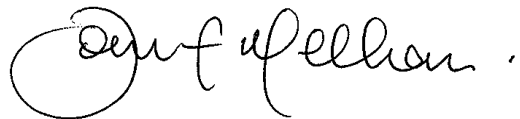
The NSHRI collects data based on persons presenting to hospital emergency departments as a result of an episode of self-harm, as defined by the Registry. As of 2006 the Registry has obtained full coverage of all general and paediatric hospital emergency departments in the Republic of Ireland.

Also of note, is the recent collaborative development of a self-harm surveillance system in Irish Prisons by the NSRF, Irish Prison Service and supported by the HSE NOSP. This is supportive of CfL action 7.2). The “Self-Harm Assessment and Data Analysis (SADA) Project” provides analysis of all episodes of self-harm across the Irish Prison Estate and is the first step in understanding and learning valuable lessons for the future protection of persons committed to prison.

- National Self-Harm Registry Ireland and Self-Harm in Irish Prisons (SADA) reports are available at <https://www.nsrif.ie/publications/reports/>

I trust this information is helpful for you.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "David O'Connell". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial 'D'.

Mr John Meehan

HSE Assistant National Director, Mental Health Strategy and Planning

Head of National Office for Suicide Prevention (NOSP)