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PQ Ref 35714/22

To ask the Minister for Health if the Government will commit to commissioning updated research into suicide in the Traveller community.

Dear Deputy,

The HSE National Office for Suicide Prevention (NOSP) has been requested to respond to your question above.

[Connecting for Life, Ireland's National Strategy to Reduce Suicide](#), recognises that “effective suicide prevention strategies must be rooted in robust data”. The need for a more in-depth understanding of suicide and suicide prevention in Ireland is explicit in the strategy. For example, strategic Goal 7 aims to improve surveillance, evaluation and high-quality research relating to suicidal behaviours.

To this end, the HSE NOSP supports a variety of innovative research projects to improve the evidence base, for suicide and self-harm prevention in Ireland. The Connecting for Life strategy identifies particular high risk or priority groups, i.e. groups that have consistently been shown by national and international research to have increased risk of suicidal behaviour. The national strategy (and additional local plans closely aligned to the national strategy) include actions that are targeted population-wide and others that are targeted to these priority groups. Members of the Traveller community are considered as a priority group in the strategy and feature in objectives and actions throughout.

Current research supported by the HSE NOSP

In December 2020 the HSE NOSP launched its first grant scheme for collaborative research projects on these priority groups. The purpose of the scheme is twofold: to further our understanding of the groups that are at increased risk for self-harm and suicide; and to promote and support collaborative research projects between researchers and services working in the area of suicide prevention in Ireland.

Three research projects of note are presently underway, with research outputs due early 2023. To facilitate support and guidance, and opportunities for information sharing and collaboration for these projects, a research project working group has now been established, comprised of representatives from each project, the HSE, Traveller Services and the Traveller Community. The projects are:

- Traveller Mental Wellness Continuum Framework: A cultural intervention model of mental wellbeing and suicide prevention for members of the Travelling community in Ireland (funded through Sláintecare)
- Closing the Gap: Exploring the co-variates of Suicidality among Irish Travellers "Project" (funded through Sláintecare)
- Digital storytelling as a therapeutic intervention for Traveller men affected by suicide (funded through the HSE NOSP).

The HSE NOSP regularly supports other research to better understand how to target approaches to reduce suicidal behaviour and improve mental health among priority groups. One such initiative is a study examining the incidence of self-harm and suicide-related ideation among Irish Travellers presenting to hospital emergency departments (EDs). This study uses data from the HSE National Clinical Programme for Self-harm and Suicide-related Ideation, and is a collaboration between the HSE and the National Suicide Research Foundation (NSRF) at University College Cork.

The aims of the study are to compare the incidence of hospital-presenting self-harm and suicide-related ideation by Travellers to non-Traveller patients, and to describe any differences in the aftercare received. The study is the first national study conducted on self-harm and ideation related presentation in 24 ED services based on the Traveller population of Ireland.

The preliminary results of the study show particular cohorts of Travellers who are more at risk of self-harm as well as particular methods of self-harm used. It also emphasises the opportunity for suicide prevention training of ED staff, an initiative currently underway as part of the HSE NOSP Education and Training Plan and as part of the training delivered by the National Clinical Programme for Self-Harm.

I trust this information is useful for you. Please do revert if you require anything further.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "John Meehan". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial 'J'.

Mr John Meehan

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& Head of National Office for Suicide Prevention (NOSP)
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