

Data Insights\_

## Mortality amongst young adults with a care history in Northern Ireland

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**Death by suicide is the leading cause of death in adults aged under 45 years in Northern Ireland (NI). Understanding risk within this population is of vital public health importance in order to target interventions effectively. Research suggests Adverse Childhood Experiences, such as a history in social care, are associated with poorer outcomes in adulthood. Our programme of research explores the mortality of all children born in NI 1970-2015 based on exposure to social services interventions.**

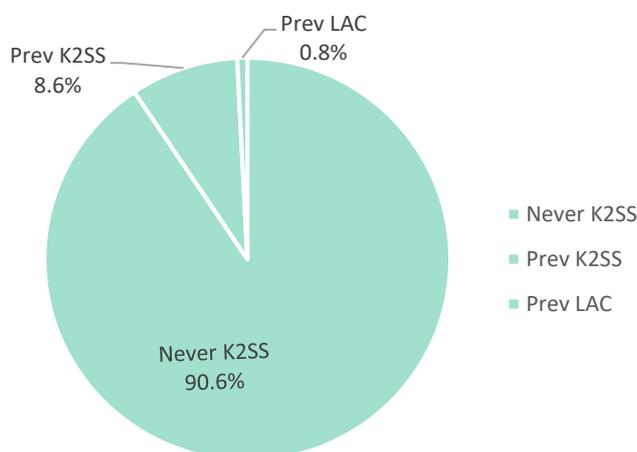
### What we did

NI is unique as it has an integrated health and social care system, holding data centrally on all individuals known to social services. This Data Insight reports on a project that linked de-identified social services data from the Social Services Client Administration and Retrieval Environment (SOSCARE) to primary care registration data and death records to explore the mortality of all young adults with a history of interactions with social services.\* Cohort members were categorised based on exposure to social services; i.e. ever known to social services as a Child in Need (K2SS), previously or currently a Looked After Child (LAC) and never K2SS.

### Why it matters

Reducing Suicide in NI is the main aim of the government's "Protect Life 2" strategy which highlights a need for specific actions for young people with a history in care. Understanding mortality risk within this group may contribute to better identification of possible areas for targeting interventions.

### What we found

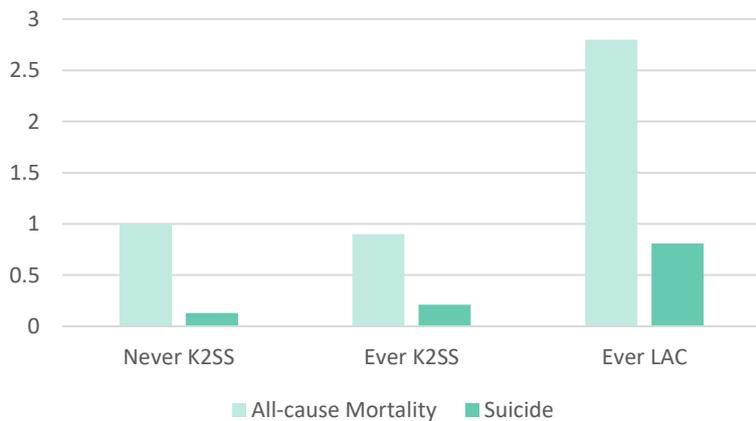


- Our cohort identified 1,508,850 individuals born between 1970 and 2015 followed up until end 2019
- **Almost 1 in 10 (9.4%) individuals aged under 45 years in NI are or have been K2SS**
- Almost 1 in 120 (0.8%) individuals aged under 45 years in NI are or have been a LAC

**Figure 1: Cohort description based on exposure to social services**

\*Health & Care Number was missing/incorrect for 21% of children in care records and 13% of Children In Need records. Records do not equate to individuals. At the time of publication researchers and the DoH are exploring ways to improve data capture

**Figure 2: Percentage of individuals <45 years in NI who died according to previous exposure to social services**



- All-cause mortality is highest in those with a history of being LAC
- Suicide rate increases across the categories and is highest in those with a history of being LAC
- Overall 0.8% of LAC died by suicide, this is over 6 times higher than those never K2SS

### What are individuals with a history of being LAC dying from?

- Almost 1 in 3 (30%) of all deaths in those aged under 45 years with a history of being LAC were due to suicide
- 40% of all deaths in those aged under 45 years with a history of being LAC were due to preventable deaths<sup>‡</sup>  
(*‡alcohol/ illicit drug/ RTA/ falls/ accident/ poisoning/ drowning/ suicide/ violence*)

### Of all suicide deaths how many with known to social services?

- Over 1 in 6 (17%) of all individuals aged 45 years and under who died by suicide were previously known to social services
- Almost 1 in 20 (4.5%) of all individuals who died by suicide aged under 45 years were previously a Looked After Child

### What next?

Our study provides first insights into the mortality risks within the NI care population. Next steps will be to explore how a range of factors such as care pathways, age of presentation, the reason a child is known to social services, and duration in care influence the likelihood of poorer outcomes.

**Disclaimer: These are preliminary results using administrative data sets that have never before been used for research purposes. Some records from the SOS CARE data sets were unable to be linked to the other administrative data. Researchers are working to improve data capture before presenting final results.**

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