

Briefing Note – Publication of 2nd SADA Project Report Self Harm in Irish Prisons 2018

Background – SADA Project

The SADA project (Self-Harm Assessment and Data Analysis) was developed in 2016 by staff in the Irish Prison Service, in collaboration with the National Office for Suicide Prevention and the National Suicide Research Foundation. This project resulted in the first Self Harm in the Irish Prison Service Report being published in 2018 with regard to episodes of self-harm across the estate in 2017. The Reports inform and update the Irish Prison Service response to maintaining safer prisons.

The SADA project ensures that each incident of self-harm is reviewed and lessons are learned in order to prevent future episodes of harm. It represents a unique, multi-disciplinary, inter-agency, national collaboration to making life in prisons safer.

Publication of 1st SADA Report

In 2018, the Irish Prison Service (IPS) presented the first 12 months data on the analysis of all episodes of self-harm (SADA) across the Irish Prison Estate during the year 2017. In 2018 the report was launched by the Minister Daly, then Minister of State at the Department of Health on the occasion of the publication of the National Office for Suicide Prevention (NOSP) Annual Report and the National Suicide Research Foundation (NSRF) Self-harm Registry Ireland 2017 Annual Report launch. <https://www.hse.ie/eng/services/list/4/mental-health-services/connecting-for-life/news/nosp-and-nsrf-report-launches.html>

This report presents the second year of data in the analysis of all episodes of self-harm (SADA) across the Irish Prison Estate during the year 2018. The Report was due to be published in December 2019 however, there was a delay in the analysis of the data. It is expected that the Report for the 2019 cohort will be published in Q4 of this year.

This data forms part of the work of the Irish Prison Service National Suicide and Harm Prevention Steering Group (NSHPG) and contributes towards meeting the goals and objectives of 'Ireland's National Strategy to Reduce Suicide 2015-2020 'Connecting for Life' of providing high quality data on

suicide and self-harm. 'Connecting for Life' is Ireland's National Strategy to Reduce Suicide 2015-2020, which comprises of a cross sectoral group of high level representatives from Government Departments and key state agencies, including the Department of Justice and Equality and the Irish Prison Service.

National Suicide and Harm Prevention Steering Group (NSHPSG)

The Irish Prison Service Steering Group for the Prevention of Self-Harm and Death in the Prison Population provides a forum for collating the reports of the local Suicide Prevention Committees and disseminating significant findings throughout the prison system. This Group was renamed in December 2014 as the National Suicide and Harm Prevention Steering Group (NSHPSG). This multi-disciplinary group consists of representatives of Senior Prison Management, IRISH PRISON SERVICE Headquarters (Care and Rehabilitation, and Operations Directorates), Samaritans Ireland, Irish Prison Service Healthcare Services, Irish Prison Service Psychology Service, Prison Chaplaincy Service, Prison Officers Association, Probation Service, and the National Forensic Mental Health Services.

A representative from the Department of Justice and Equality also attends the meetings of the National Steering Group. The NSHPSG monitors the incidence and nature of self-harm and death, reviews each with a view to improving prevention and response measures, and ensures the sharing of relevant information on risk factors and best practice with the local Suicide & Harm Prevention Steering Group. In this context, the Reports of the Inspector of Prisons and the Office of the Inspector of Prisons, into deaths in custody and the recommendations therein are also considered by the National Steering Group. It also examines any recommendations made by the Jury in an inquest which are communicated to the Irish Prison Service by the County Coroner's.

The NSHPSG promotes best practice in preventing and, where necessary, responding to self-harm and death in the prisoner population. Analysis of data on self-harm will inform policy and practice development within the Irish Prison Service, to seek to reduce the incidence of self-harm among those in custody.

The multi-disciplinary teams across the prison estate make a significant contribution towards the National Suicide and Harm Prevention Steering Group (NSHPSG) by analysing each instance of self-harm and/or suicide in their respective prisons using the Self-Harm Assessment and Data Analysis (SADA) Project procedure, holding local Steering Group meetings for Suicide and Harm Prevention and making recommendations to local management and the NSHPSG.

Self Harm in Irish Prison Service 2018 Report - Executive Summary

This is the second annual report on all recorded episodes of self-harm by individuals in the custody of the Irish Prison Service. The report provides data from all prisons in the Republic of Ireland in 2018 arising from the Self-Harm Assessment and Data Analysis (SADA) Project.

- Between 01 January and 31 December 2018, there were 263 episodes of self-harm recorded in Irish Prisons, involving 147 individuals. There were 223 episodes of self-harm by 138 individuals in 2017. Thus, the number of self-harm episodes was 18% higher in 2018 than in 2017 and the number of persons involved increased by 7%. The overall prison population also increased by 7% between 2017 (n=3,427) and 2018 (n=3,690). Therefore, the annual person based rate of self-harm in 2018, at 4.0 per 100 prisoners, was identical to the 4.0 per 100 prisoners' rate in 2017. Thus, an episode of self-harm was recorded for 4% of the prison population.
- The majority of prisoners who engaged in self-harm were male (n=121; 82.3%) but taking into account the male prison population, their rate of self-harm was 3.4 per 100. Twenty-six female prisoners engaged in self-harm in 2018 equating to a 19.3 per 100 rate of self-harm among female prisoners, which is 5.7 times higher than the rate among male prisoners.
- The rate of self-harm was higher among prisoners on remand than those sentenced (5.0 versus 3.7 per 100) though by a smaller margin than reported for 2017 when the rate of self-harm among prisoners on remand was 7.4 per 100 and the rate among sentenced prisoners was 3.1 per 100.
- The rate of self-harm was highest among prisoners aged 18-29 years. The rate of self-harm among prisoners in this age group was 40% higher than in 2017 (7.4 versus 5.3 per 100).
- Across all age groups, the rate of self-harm was higher among female prisoners.
- Almost half of all self-harm incidents (44%) occurred between 2pm and 8pm. Most episodes (60%) occurred while prisoners were unlocked from cells.
- One third (32.7%) of individuals engaged in self-harm more than once during the calendar year. This was more pronounced for female prisoners — 8% of male prisoners repeated self-harm (36 out of 121 individuals) compared with 46.2% of female prisoners (12 out of 26 individuals). Two individuals engaged in self-harm more than ten times in 2018.
- The most common method of self-harm recorded was self-cutting or scratching, present in 69% of all episodes. The other common method of self-harm was attempted hanging, involved in 20% of episodes.
- In line with 2017 figures, three-quarters (73%) of self-harm episodes involved prisoners in single cell accommodation. Considering the overall prison population, 51.9% were accommodated in single cells in 2018.
- 44% of prisoners who engaged in self-harm were in general population accommodation and a further 37% were on protection (including Rule 62 and 63) at the time of the self-harm act.

- No medical treatment was required in more than one quarter (27%) of episodes. Over half (59%) required minimal intervention or local wound management in the prison and one in eight (11.8%) required hospital (inpatient or outpatient) treatment. This reflects an improvement (decrease in the rate of hospitalisation) since 2017.
- Self-harm episodes by male prisoners were associated with increased severity — 87.4% of male prisoners who self-harmed required treatment compared with 30.8% of female prisoners.
- Over two thirds (70%) of self-harm episodes were recorded as having no / low degree of suicidal intent. 17% of episodes were recorded as having medium intent and approximately one in eight (13%) were deemed to have a high degree of suicidal intent.
- There was a range of contributory factors associated with the episodes of self-harm recorded, relating to environmental, relational, procedural, medical and mental health factors. The majority (45.6%) of factors related to mental health issues, 32.7% to environmental issues and 22.1% to relational issues.

Irish Prison Service

23rd July 2020.

PRESS RELEASE

Publication of the SADA - Self-Harm in Irish Prisons 2018 Report

23rd July 2020

The Irish Prison Service has today (DATE TBC), published its second report on episodes of self-harm recorded in Irish Prisons. This Report includes data on episodes of self-harm that occurred during the year 2018.

The SADA project (Self-Harm Assessment and Data Analysis) was developed in 2016 by the Irish Prison Service, in collaboration with the National Office for Suicide Prevention and the National Suicide Research Foundation. The reports, which are published for each year, inform and update the Irish Prison Service response to maintaining safer prisons.

The SADA project ensures that each incident of self-harm is reviewed and lessons are learned in order to prevent future episodes of harm. It represents a unique, multi-disciplinary, inter-agency, national collaboration to making life in prisons safer place.

In 2018, the SADA project recorded 263 episodes of self-harm nationally, involving 147 persons. The rate of individuals engaging in self-harm was 4 per 100 - essentially unchanged from that in 2017.

The report continues to highlight those individuals who are at greatest risk of self-harm and suicide in a prison setting and compares its findings to those in the community. The highest rates of self-harm were among female prisoners (5.7 times higher than male prisoners), and the rate was higher amongst younger prisoners aged 18-29 years (7.4 per 100), which represents an increase since 2017. Compared with sentenced prisoners, the rate of self-harm decreased amongst prisoners on remand since 2017, although it was still 2.4 times higher among prisoners on remand (5.0 versus 3.7 per 100).

On publication of the report, Caron McCaffrey, Director General, Irish Prison Service, said:

"The issue of suicide and self-harm remains a major concern in Irish Prisons. The report highlights the significant role of mental health difficulties in the incidence of self-harm amongst those in custody. The Self-Harm Assessment and Data Analysis (SADA) Project allows the Irish Prison Service to learn from every episode of self-harm and hopefully reduce incidents in the future.

The data contained in these Reports is now providing the Irish Prison Service with information and evidence that can be used to develop targeted responses to self-harm and suicide, which will allow us to be better able to reduce the prevalence of self-harm in our prisons going forward.

“The 2018 outcomes underline an on-going need for prevention and intervention programmes to be improved at national level, in line with relevant strategic goals and actions in Connecting for Life, 2015-2020. In addition to this, the Irish Prison Service is currently engaged in researching therapeutic frameworks and interventions for suicide and self-harm assessment and treatment. It is envisaged that we will have developed and implemented a prison specific approach with leading specialists in this field in the coming year. Annual SADA reports will play a huge role in informing and influencing our response to self-harm and suicide into the future”.

The full Report is available on the Irish Prison Service Website www.irishprisons.ie

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