

# Mental ill health in those known to social services: What can we learn from Northern Ireland Health and Social Care Data?

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*Co-I Sarah McKenna (PhD Student), Prof Dermot O'Reilly (Director ADRC-NI)*

# Context:

- Over 3,000 children “in care” at any one time in Northern Ireland

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## Number of children in care at record high in NI

By Eve Rosato  
BBC News NI

14 February 2019



A record number of children were recorded in care in Northern Ireland in 2018, official figures show.

According to the Department of Health

Records date back to the introduction in 1995.

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### Social care

This article is more than 9 months old

## Councils under huge pressure as number of children in care soars

There are now 78,150 children in care in England, a rise of 28% in a decade

Sarah Marsh

@slumarsh  
Thu 9 Jan 2020 00:01 GMT



535



▲ More young people are being placed in substandard homes, warn charities. Photograph: Elva Etienne/Alamy Stock Photo

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## Call to reduce number of children in care in Scotland

By Lucy Adams  
BBC Scotland correspondent

19 December 2018



Parents and academics have called for greater support for families to try to reduce the number of children in care.

They also want a less punitive approach to child protection

# Context:

## NEWS

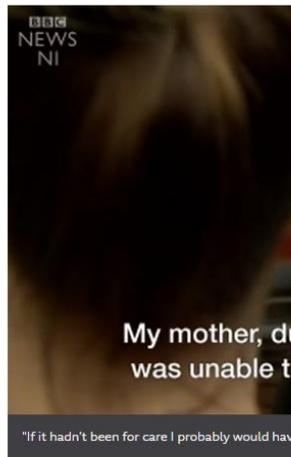
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### Number of children high in NI

By Eve Rosato  
BBC News NI

14 February 2019



A record number of children were recorded in NI in 2018, official figures show.

According to the Department of Health and Social Care.

Records date back to the introduction of the Child Welfare Act in 1995.

## NEWS

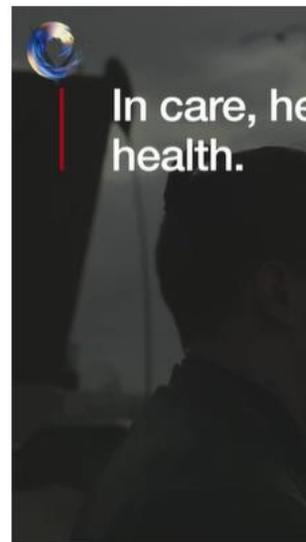
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### 'Speed up mental health treatment for children in care'

By Louis Lee Ray  
BBC Victoria Derbyshire programme

6 November 2017



"It felt like no-one was there for me and no-one cared - I was crying myself to sleep every night."

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### Children in care 'too often miss out on mental health treatment'

By Judith Burns  
Education reporter, BBC News

28 April 2016



Children in care are more vulnerable to mental health problems

Children in care are too often missing out on treatment for mental health problems despite being four times more likely to experience them, says a new report.

The Commons Education Committee says children fostered in England sometimes denied treatment simply because they move placement too often.

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### Children 'end up in care and custody' over mental health

By Hannah Richardson  
BBC News education and social affairs reporter

30 January



Children are ending up in care, custody or hospital because of failings in mental-health services, a report warns.

England's Children's Commissioner says children are still being told they are not ill enough and turned away, only for their conditions to worsen.

Anne Longfield said a "chasm" remained between what children needed and what they received, despite a sustained campaign.

The government said major improvements were already under way.

But Ms Longfield said a comprehensive mental-health service for children remained about "a decade away".

# The Solution:

# Social Services

# Prescribed Medication

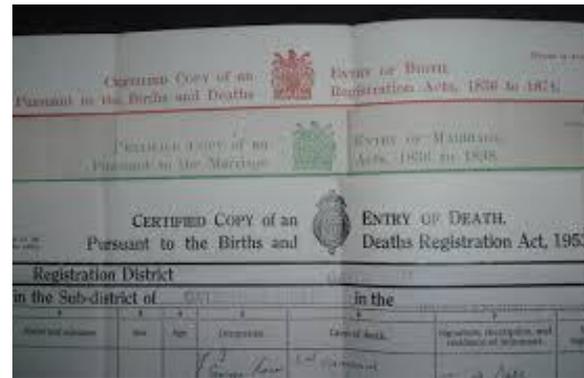
# ED Episodes

## GP Records



## Census Data

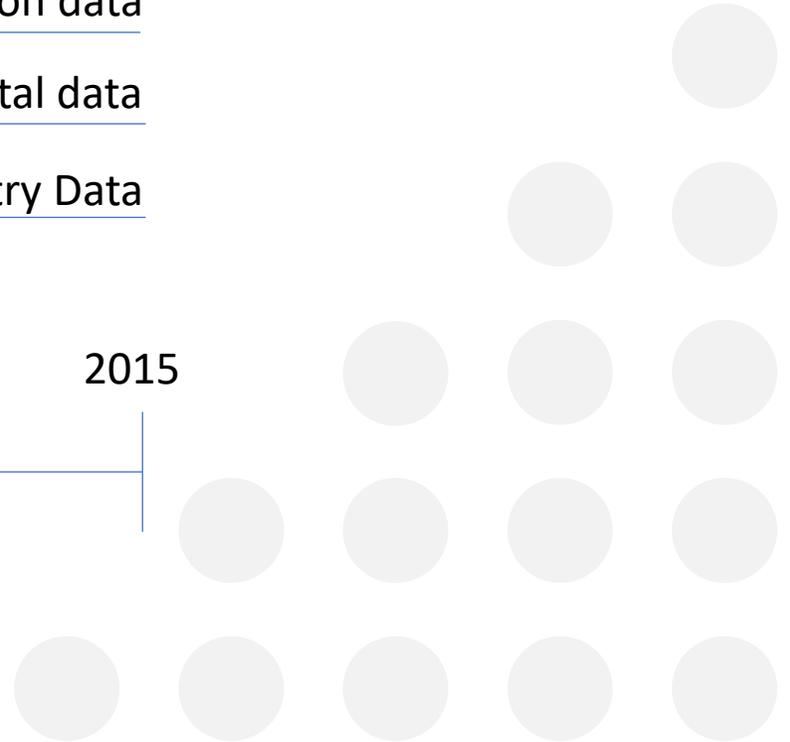
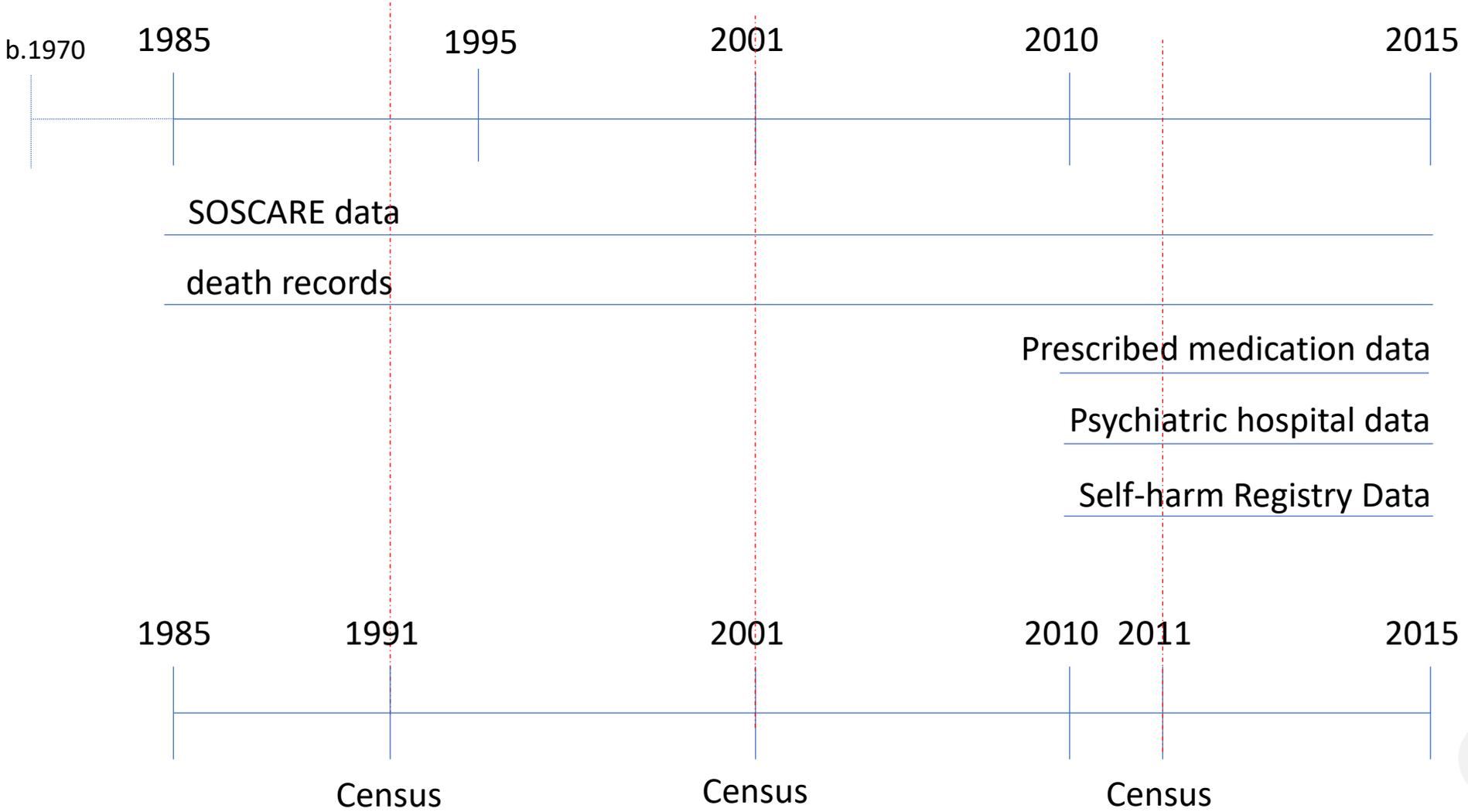
## Inpatient Data



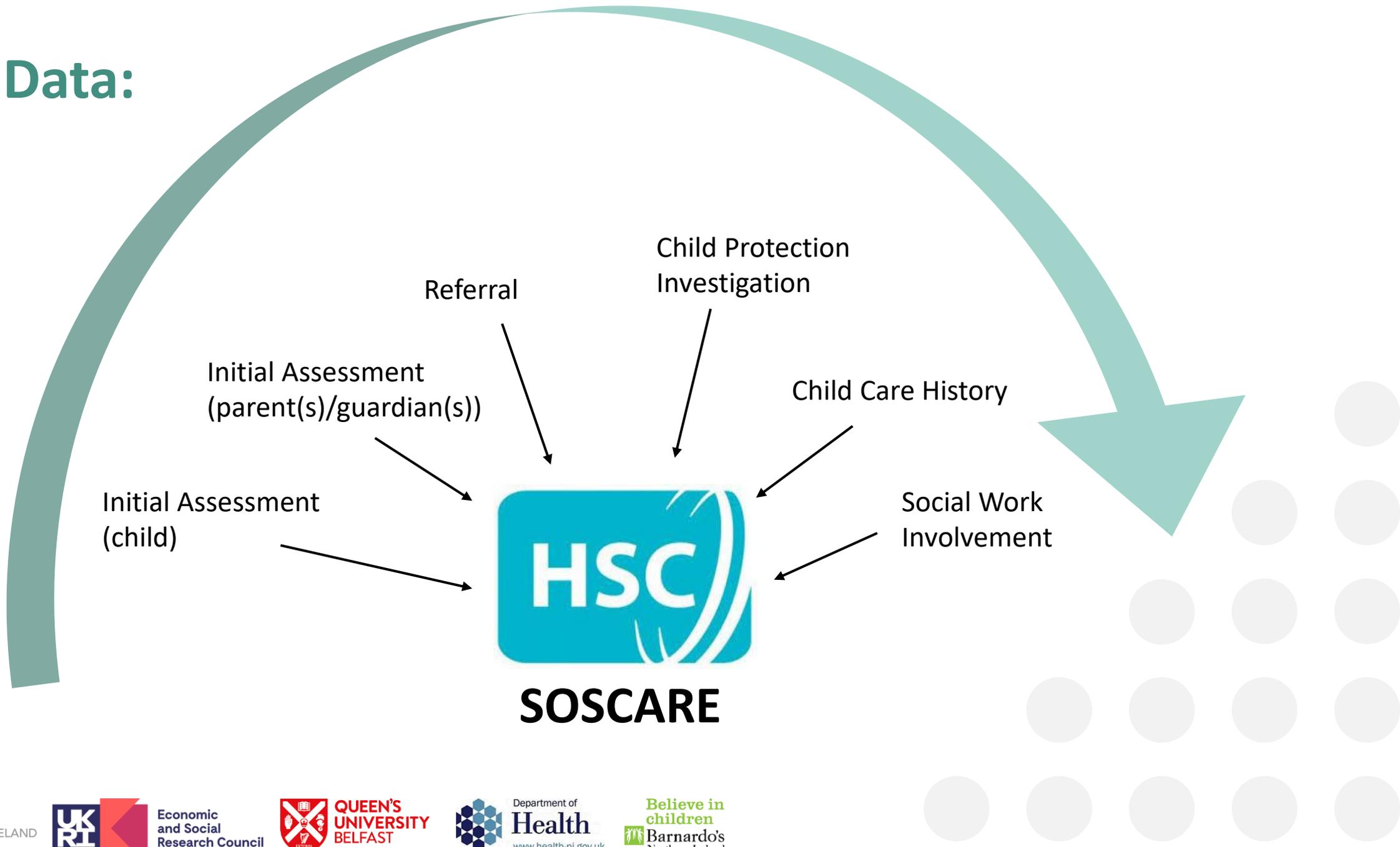
## Death Data



# The Northern Ireland Data:



# The Data:



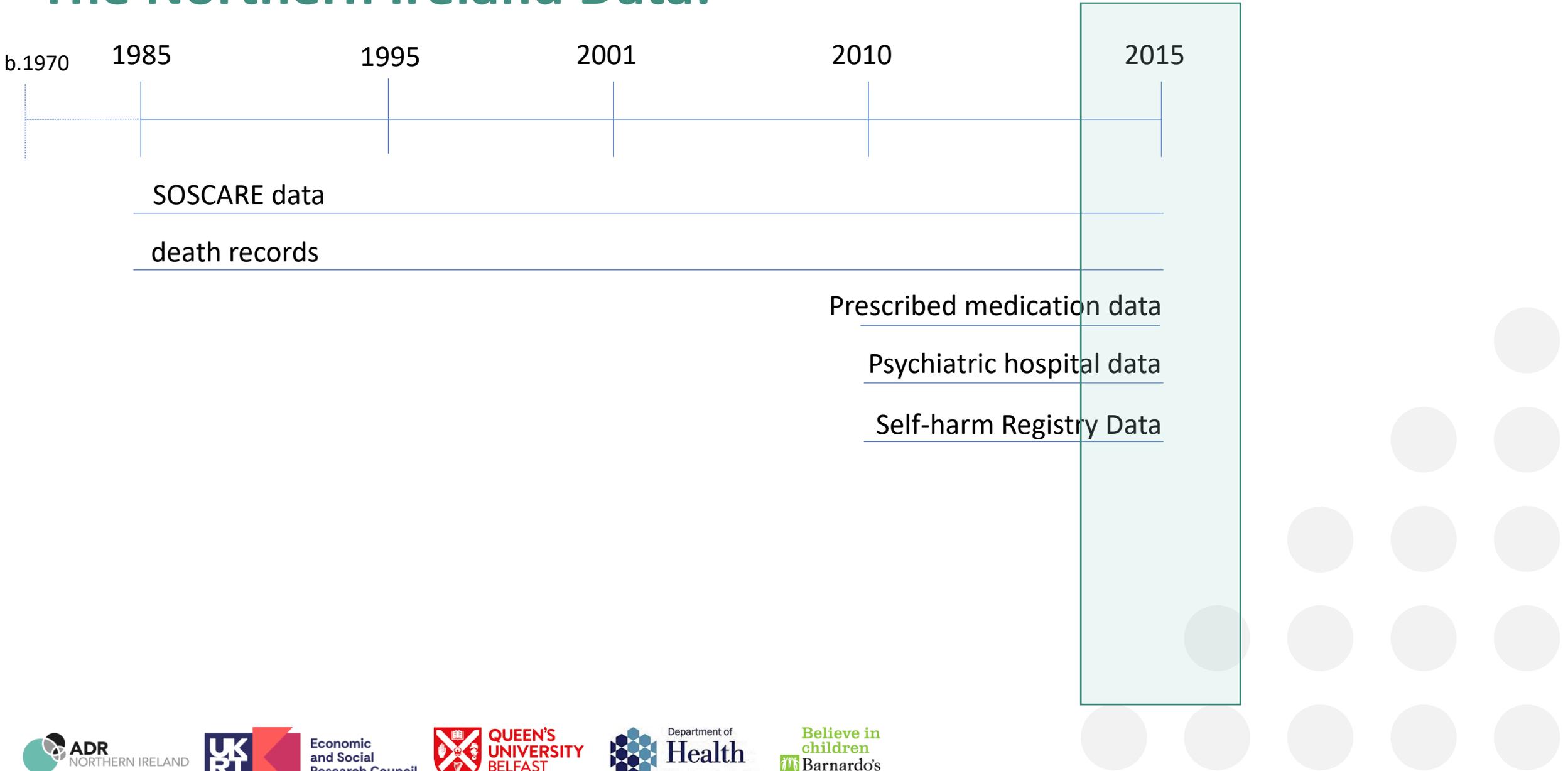
# The Results:

***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.***

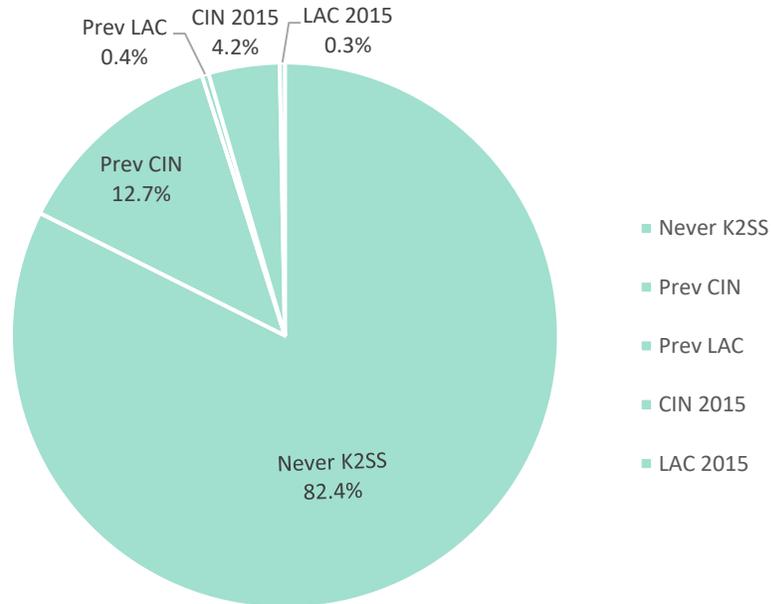


# The Northern Ireland Data:



# The Results:

## Mental Health of Children “Currently” Known to Social Services

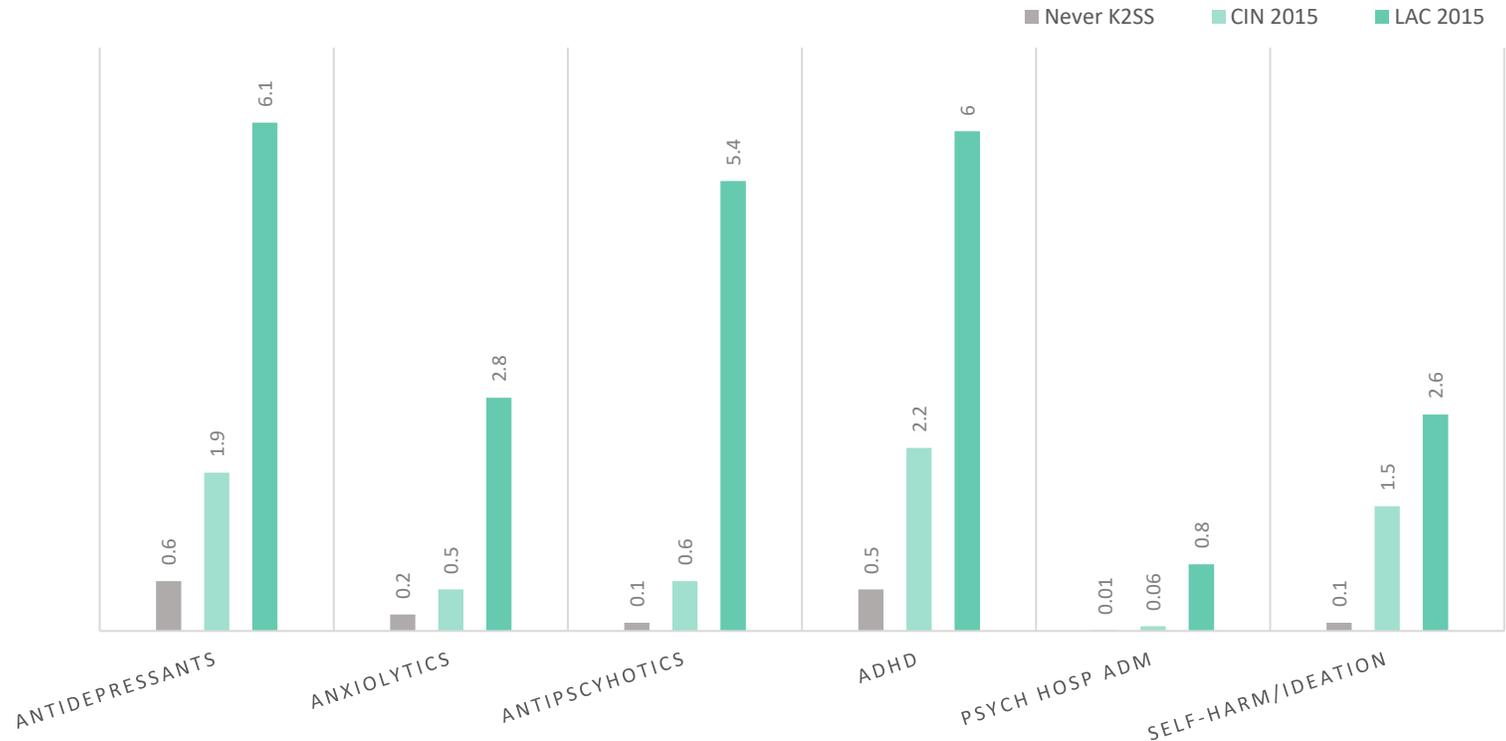


- Our cohort identified 535,801 children alive and resident in NI in 2015
- Over **1 in 6** (17.6%, n=94,232) children aged 18 years and under in NI in 2015 were previously or currently known to social services (K2SS)
- Approximately 1 in 20 currently known to social service as CIN (4.2%) or LAC (0.3%)

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

# The Results:

## Mental Health of Children “Currently” Known to Social Services

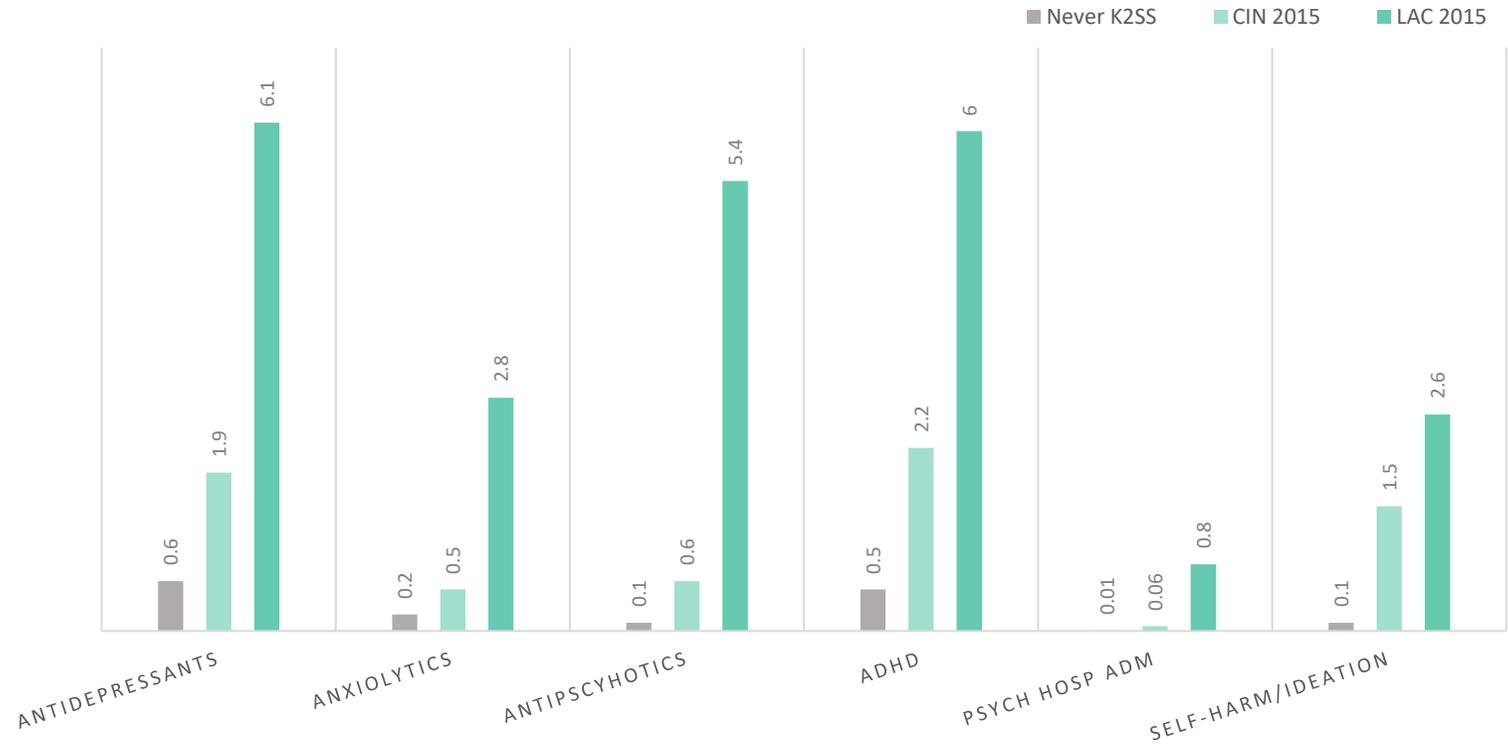


- **10 times** the rate of antidepressant prescribing in LAC compared to those not known to social services
- **50 times** the rate of antipsychotic prescribing in LAC compared to those not known to social services
- **25 times** the rate of self-harm in LAC compared to those not known to social services

**Figure 2: Percentage young people aged 0-18 years in NI with each mental health outcome in 2015 based on exposure to social services**

# The Results:

## Mental Health of Children “Currently” Known to Social Services



Direction of cause?

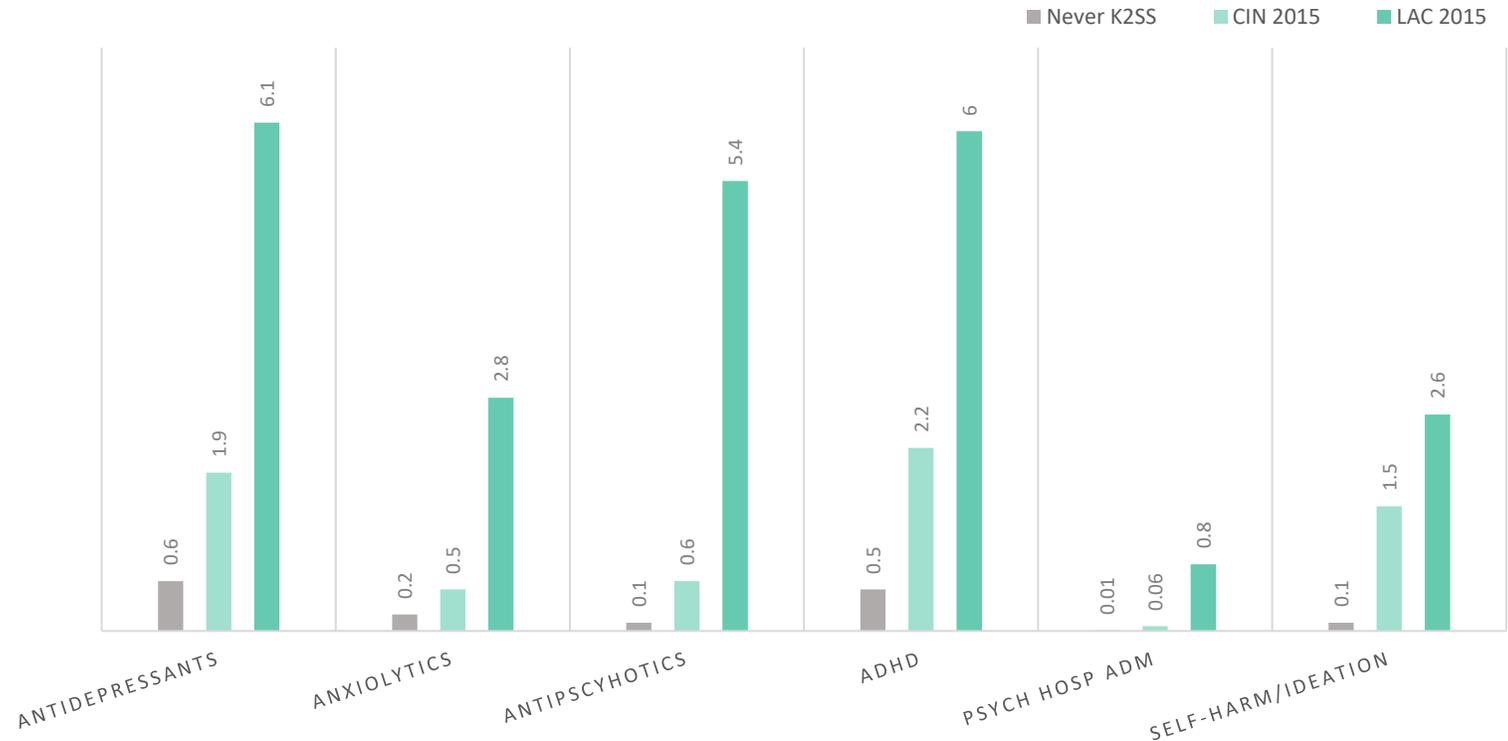


Impact of Social Service Intervention?

**Figure 2: Percentage young people aged 0-18 years in NI with each mental health outcome in 2015 based on exposure to social services**

# The Results:

## Mental Health of Children “Currently” Known to Social Services



### Next steps explore variation by:

- care provision
- reason a child is known to social services
- age first entry to social care system
- duration in care
- those deemed “not in need”

**Figure 2: Percentage young people aged 0-18 years in NI with each mental health outcome in 2015 based on exposure to social services**

# The Northern Ireland Data:



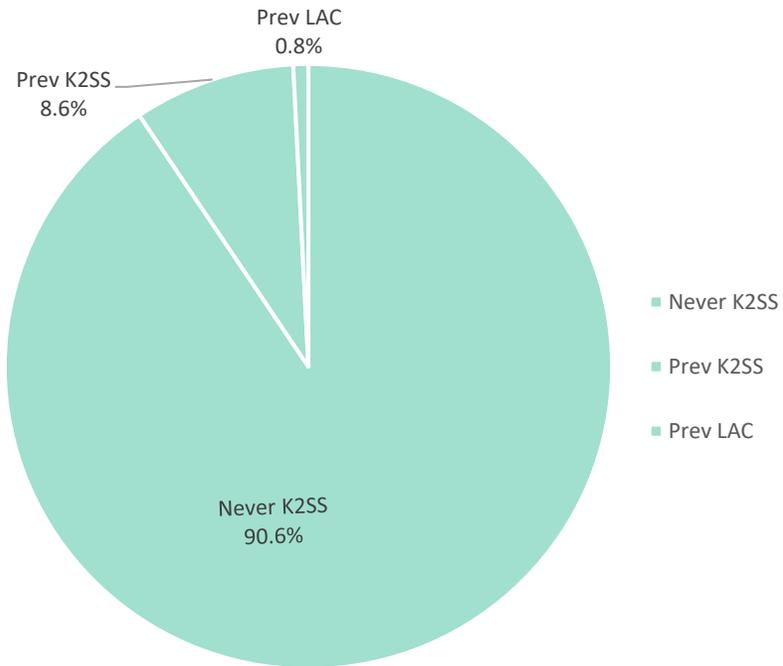
SOSCARE data

death records



# The Results:

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

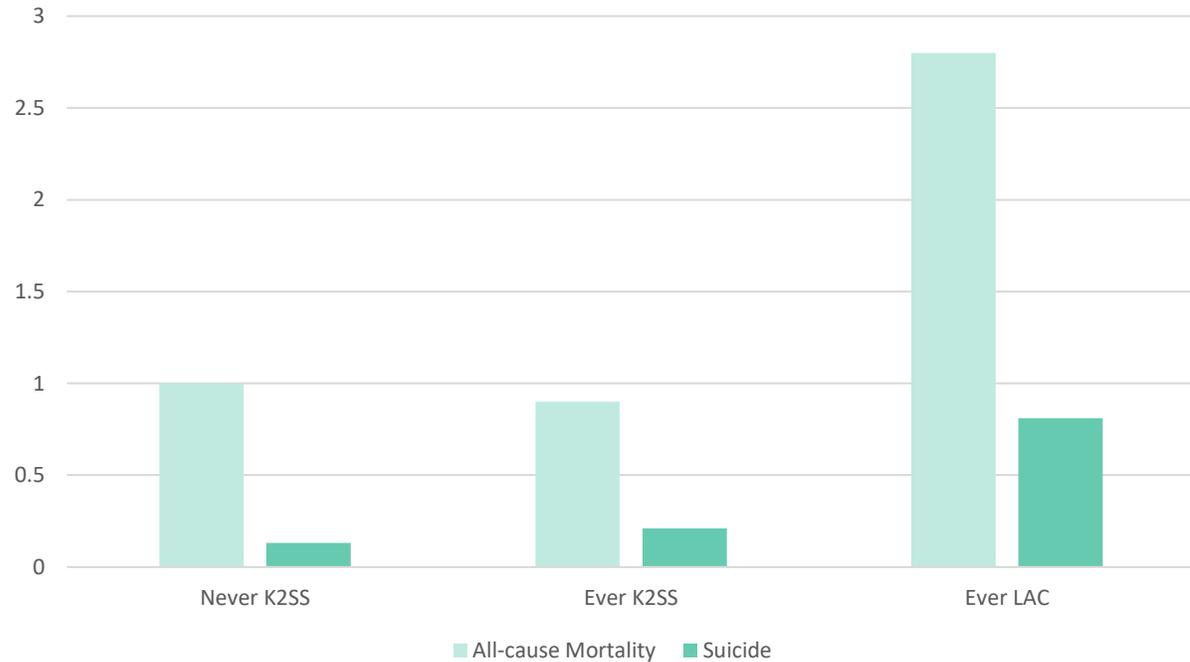


- Our cohort identified 1,508,850 individuals born between 1970 and 2015 followed up until end 2019
- Almost **1 in 10 (9.4%) individuals aged under 45 years in NI are or have been K2SS**
- Almost **1 in 120 (0.8%) individuals aged under 45 years in NI are or have been a LAC**

**Figure 3: Cohort description based on exposure to social services**

# The Results:

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



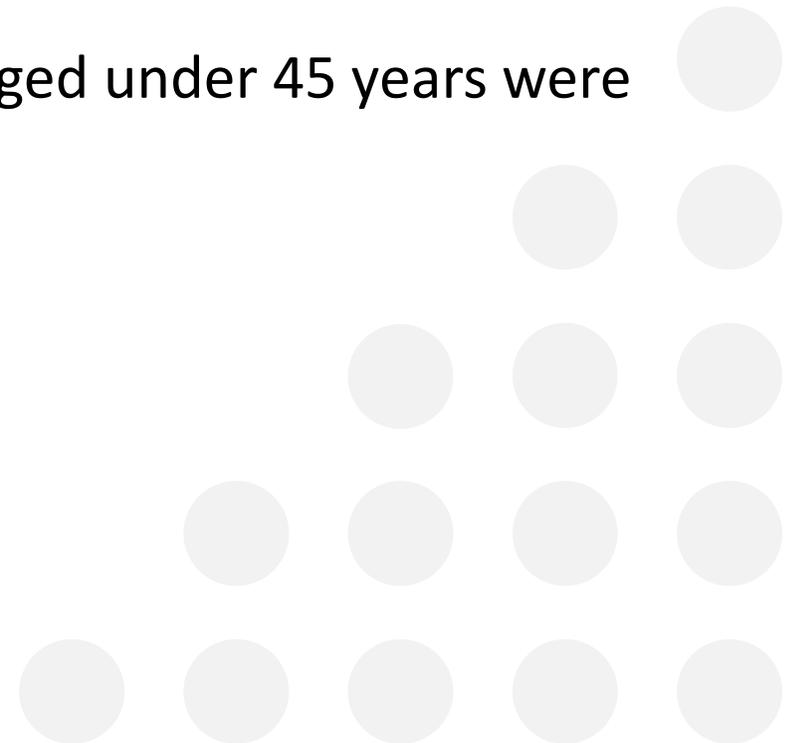
**Figure 4: Percentage of individuals <45years in NI who died according to previous exposure to social services**

- All-cause mortality is highest in those with a history of being LAC  
**Almost 3 times that Never/Ever K2SS**
- Suicide rate increases across the categories and is highest in those with a history of being LAC
- **Over 6 times higher than those Never K2SS**

# The Results:

## 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



# The Hurdles:



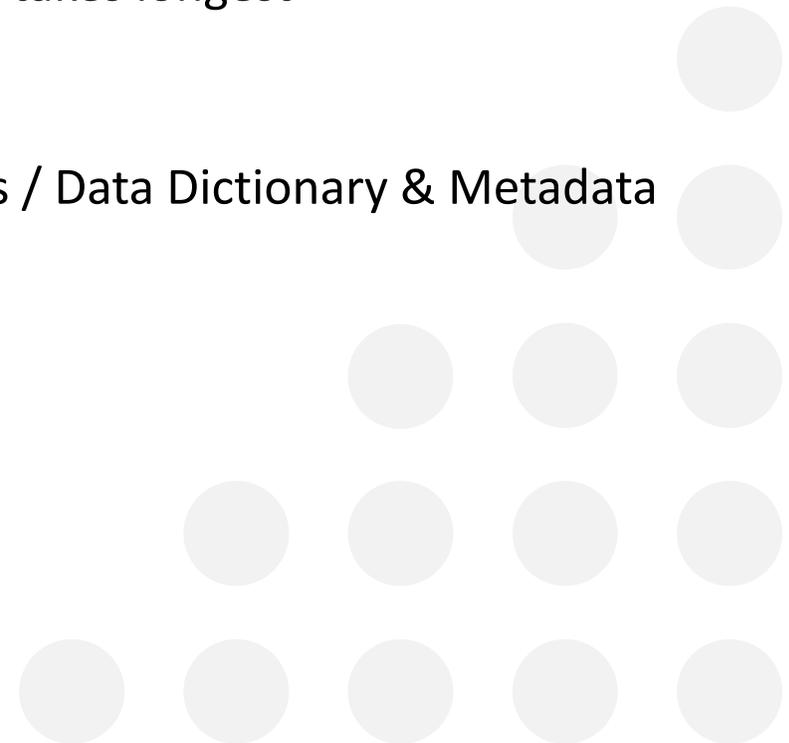
- Data Quality
- Timeliness
- Capacity
- COVID



# The Hurdles:



- **Data Quality** – DoH pushing data quality agenda
- **Timeliness** – First always takes longest
- **Capacity** – Future projects / Data Dictionary & Metadata
- **COVID** – ??



# The added value:

- Explore whole populations
- Compare across the UK
- More accurate comparators – Children in Need / Children Deemed Not in Need / Never Known
- Follow-up individuals after they leave care
- Available now *(-ish)*



## Acknowledgements

Sarah McKenna who completed the analysis for the cross-sectional work

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**More details on results can be found:**

[https://www.adruk.org/fileadmin/uploads/adruk/Documents/Data\\_Insights-Children s mental health and social care in Northern Ireland- Feb 2020 01.pdf](https://www.adruk.org/fileadmin/uploads/adruk/Documents/Data_Insights-Children_s_mental_health_and_social_care_in_Northern_Ireland- Feb_2020_01.pdf)

[https://www.adruk.org/fileadmin/uploads/adruk/Documents/Data\\_Insights-Mortality amongst young adults with a care history in Northern Ireland-  
Feb 2020.pdf](https://www.adruk.org/fileadmin/uploads/adruk/Documents/Data_Insights-Mortality_amongst_young_adults_with_a_care_history_in_Northern_Ireland-Feb_2020.pdf)





# QUESTIONS?



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