

HIPS/20/02 – Suicide attempts and deaths in people with autism in Scotland: secondary data analysis and data linkage of administrative and health records

Despite the overall decrease in the suicide rates in the UK in the past 10 years, the rates increased markedly by 15% in Scotland last year. Living with or developing an impairment or long-term condition is known to contribute to higher suicide risk. Existing evidence shows that suicide attempts and deaths are more common in people with autism than in the general population⁶ but studies of whole-country populations are lacking, with none yet conducted in the UK. The recent policy brief of the International Society for Autism Research and Autistica on autism community priorities for suicide prevention emphasises that there is little research into why suicide is more common in autism, how it could be prevented or what risk and protective factors and barriers in seeking help autistic people experience. The top ten research priorities for autism developed by James Lind Alliance and Autistica also both strongly emphasise the importance of research into mental health of adults with autism. This study will bring together routinely collected data from different sources to investigate the incidence of suicide attempts and deaths and explore the extent to which mental health comorbidities (e.g. anxiety, depression, substance use disorders), contact with healthcare services and socioeconomic factors mitigate or compound the risk of suicide in people with autism in Scotland.