



SAMARITANS Ireland

Listening today,
changing tomorrows

 A year of being here

Impact Report 2019

The year at a glance in Ireland



We responded in the way that suited our callers:



583,277
phone calls



66,479
texts

2,416

face-to-face
contacts



19,989

emails



We answered a call
for help every

49 seconds

We spent

15 minutes

on the phone to
each caller,
on average



Nearly

**4 out of
every 10 calls**

is in relation to
mental health/illness



Someone
dies by
suicide every

90 minutes

in the UK and Ireland

It costs

£5/€6

for a Samaritan
to be there for someone



**Thank you for
supporting
our vital work**



Samaritans Ireland Impact Report 2019

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Claire, Samaritans volunteer

Welcome from the Executive Director for Ireland and Regional Director for Ireland

We can all play a part in reducing suicide

Every 90 minutes, someone in Ireland or the UK takes their own life. Every single one of these deaths is a tragedy and everything we do at Samaritans is working towards our vision that fewer lives are lost to suicide.

We are a lifeline for those who have nowhere else to turn, supporting more and more people every year. We have more than 2,300 volunteers in 22 branches across Ireland.

Our volunteers also reached more people in places ranging from prisons to schools, workplaces, hospitals, festivals and train stations.

Of course, we can't always be there in person, and not everyone feels able to reach out when they're struggling to cope. That's why we work to reduce stigma, raise awareness, and break down the barriers to seeking help.

Key highlights for the year included our Festival volunteers celebrating 21 years of supporting thousands of people and, separately, marking five years of freephone 116 123 in the Republic of Ireland.

This year we also celebrated five years of being the mental health partner of the Gaelic Athletic Association (GAA), Ireland's largest sporting body, and attended major events to raise awareness of what we do. Elsewhere, we ran campaigns to reach those who need us most, including those suffering from loneliness and living in isolation and encouraging men, who are at higher risk of suicide than women, to ask for help before their troubles get too much.

Samaritans supports people to recognise signs of emotional distress in others, and to have the confidence to reach out to them, but we can all play a part in looking out for the people around us.

While each of us can help ourselves and others to manage feelings, we also need governments

and institutions to create an environment that supports wellbeing. That's why we collect high quality evidence through research into suicide, and we make our voice heard by decision-makers.

We've also been at the heart of the conversation surrounding the role that harmful online content can play in suicide and self-harm. We have been involved in consultations with both Government and social media platforms on how they should take action to make the internet safer for vulnerable people, based on our research in this area.

Whether you've made a donation to Samaritans, or volunteered your time and skills, thank you. Together, we've brought about positive changes that take us closer to our vision and we've made a real difference to people's lives.

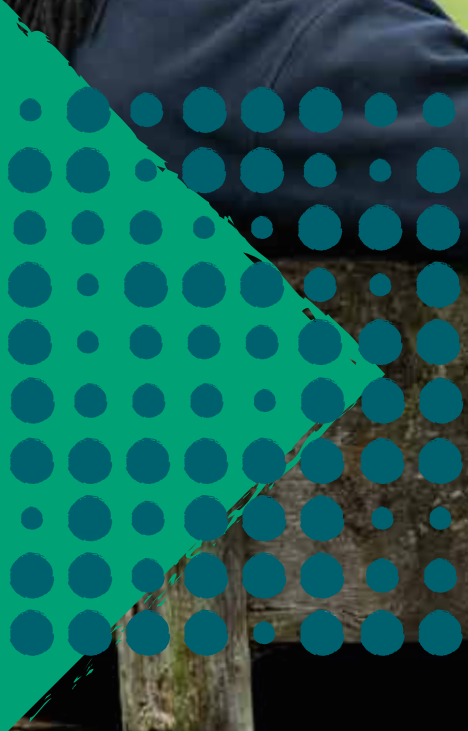
We also want to say thank you to the volunteers in every branch across Ireland. It is their time and dedication which ensures your calls and emails are answered 24 hours a day, seven days a week.



Niall Mulligan
Executive Director
for Ireland



Joanna Emerson
Regional Director
for Ireland



“ We can all play a part in looking out for the people around us. Samaritans supports people to recognise signs of emotional distress in others, and to have the confidence to reach out to them. ”

Whatever you're facing, a Samaritan will face it with you

In the time it takes you to read this page, Samaritans volunteers will have answered five more calls from people struggling to cope with how they're feeling.

Samaritans volunteers in 22 branches are here day and night, 365 days a year, to listen and give people the space to share how they're really feeling.

In 2018, 352 people in the Republic of Ireland and 307 in Northern Ireland took their own lives – that's 659 across Ireland.

But we believe that suicide is preventable, and with your support we can help more people to avoid that crisis point.

We do this by being there for anyone who needs someone. By campaigning for changes that can save lives. And by equipping people with the skills to look after their mental health and emotional wellbeing as well as be there for others.

Samaritans is a charity working across Ireland and the UK. Your donations mean we can be here today, and work to change tomorrows.

“ Reaching out to people on the streets of Dublin is a very rewarding experience. People engage with us in many different ways – some telling us of their feelings of distress, others talk of volunteering, or sometimes it's a very simple hello and a thank you 'you were there for me one night – I won't forget it'. As we mark our 50th Anniversary in March 2020, we not only commend the dedication of our volunteers but also the courage of our callers. As long as we are needed, we will continue to be there for them. ”

Maggie, Dublin Samaritans

2,300 Samaritans volunteers
day and night, 365 days a year



Our work in local communities

“ In addition to our schools, youth work and many other areas outreach, we’ve teamed up with libraries across Northern Ireland as part of our Brew Monday campaign – inviting people to get together for a cuppa and a chat at their local library to help reduce loneliness. ”

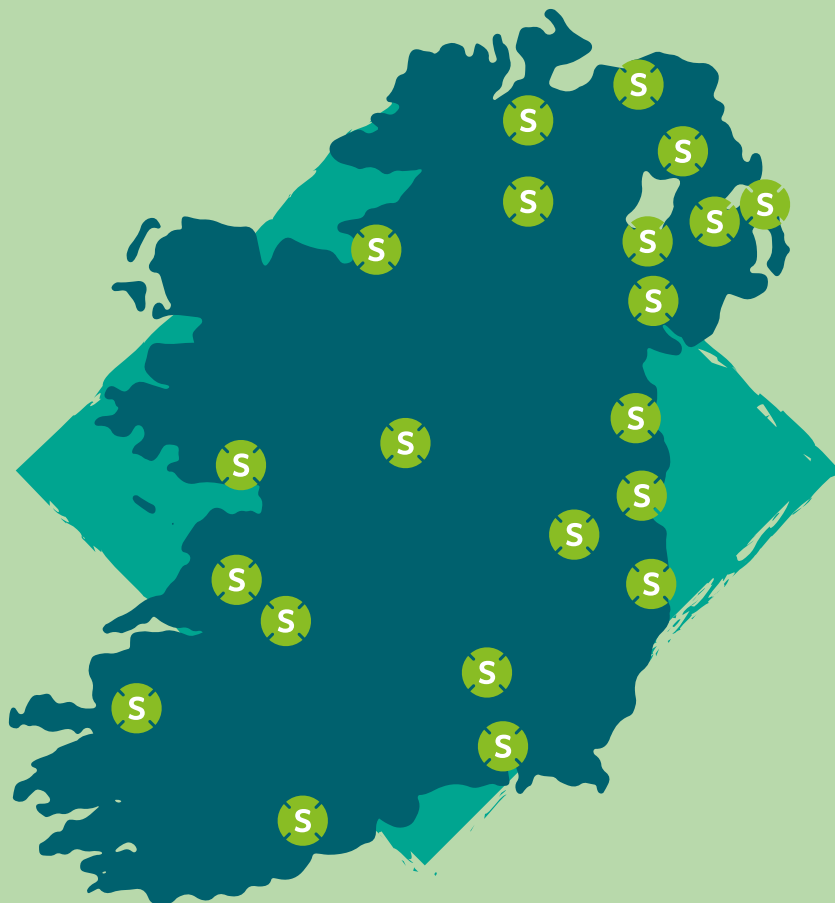
Ken, Belfast Samaritans

“ Being part of the Festival team is one of the most rewarding aspects of being a Samaritan. Someone can be surrounded by thousands of other revellers but may feel completely lost and alone in the crowd and it’s very special to be there for that person in their time of need. As a Samaritan volunteer people share their most personal stories and it is a privilege to provide them with active listening, encouragement and support. ”

Theresa, Samaritans Irish Festival branch

“ I became a volunteer to help spread awareness of how Samaritans is here for anyone who needs us. We work in partnership with the GAA, in particular to reach communities across the island of Ireland and urge members to reach out at times when they may be going through a hard time. ”

Majella, Cork Samaritans



“ There’s a unique way of life in rural Ireland. Having branches in towns across the country, and working in communities nationwide, shows people we understand them and that we’re there for them, 24 hours a day, 365 days a year, however and whenever they need us. ”

Teresa, Athlone Samaritans

“ We have a wonderful team of friendly volunteers. Our branch has a range of different outreach services, supporting our wider communities, Listeners in prison, peer listeners in the University of Limerick and the Gaelic Athletic Association. ”

Noreen, Samaritans of Limerick & Tipperary

S Samaritans branches in Ireland

(Festival branch not shown on the map)





Our priorities

We're more than halfway through our 2015-2021 strategic period. In this report you'll see how, in 2019, we worked harder than ever to meet our pledges in the four priority areas set out in our strategy:

Service we will improve the quality and consistency of our service.

Access we will improve access to Samaritans' services.

Influence we will have stronger and more effective external influence and connections with partners.

Evidence we will improve collection and application of evidence.

To deliver all of this, we are making significant improvements across three key areas: volunteering, learning and development, and how we use digital technology.



Our values

These are Samaritans' shared values, which shape everything we do:

Listening

Exploring feelings alleviates distress and helps people to reach a better understanding of their situation and the options open to them.

Confidentiality

If people feel safe, they are more likely to be open about their feelings.

Non-judgemental

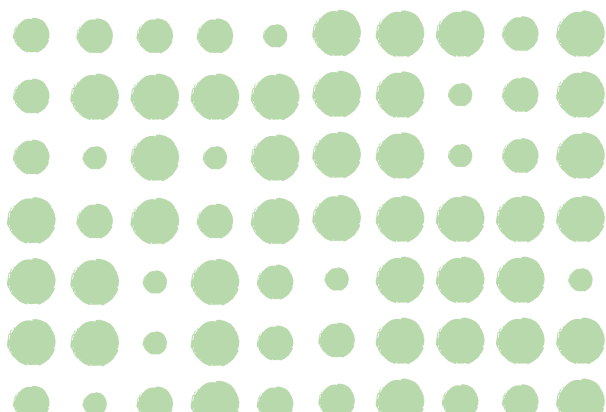
We want people to be able to talk to us without fear of prejudice or rejection.

People making their own decisions wherever possible

We believe that people have the right to find their own solution and that telling people what to do takes responsibility away from them.

Human contact

Giving people time, undivided attention and empathy meets a fundamental emotional need and reduces distress and despair.



The best we can be, for every caller

We aim to provide a high standard of service every time someone calls. That means having the right people, with the right skills, supported in their roles as Samaritans.

The best training

In-depth training is essential for our volunteers to develop their listening skills and resilience. But the demands of the training schedule can be difficult to meet alongside work or family commitments.

During 2019, we began to test a new approach designed to suit those people who struggle to attend our usual programme of evening or weekend sessions. Instead, we introduced some online training modules which we hope will boost numbers and diversity of our volunteer base.

We rolled out our mentoring scheme for written contacts across all our branches in 2018. It provides oversight and coaching to ensure that we respond at a consistently high standard to callers who reach out via the written word.

We also continued to implement our safeguarding procedures, so that every Samaritan knows what to do if they believe a child or vulnerable adult is at serious risk of harm, abuse or neglect.

The best use of tech

After significant upgrades in 2019, the telephone system was bedded down with two additional Direct Dial Inwards (DDIs) into the Republic of Ireland phone system and the replacement of equipment in a number of branches.

Samaritans Ireland has offered a DDI facility for six partner agencies since 2014, allowing calls to be diverted into us from these agencies when their helplines are closed. We are delighted to have extended this facility to the Department of Foreign Affairs & Trade. Working together, we introduced freephone access to Samaritans in Ireland for Irish people in a number of countries abroad, giving an Irish-based emotional support resource to the Irish Diaspora abroad.

Following a nationwide audit, we started the process of upgrading IT equipment in branches in line with the rest of the organisation. As well as three branches re-fitting, we had one branch move to a new location and we also upgraded wiring and broadband across the network. All of this was achieved with very minimal downtime thanks to the support of the volunteers in each branch.

An extensive upgrade to our reporting systems saw the development of **samaritanstech.ie** which provides real-time reports and is integrated with organisation-wide statistics. The near real time reports are now available showing how busy each of our channels is. This resulted in the deployment of a Republic of Ireland dashboard to branches in early 2020.



“ I emailed Samaritans because I wanted to explain my feelings to someone who had no pre-conceived idea about me. I wanted to get everything off my chest and Samaritans provided me with reassurance and the confidence to do something about how I was feeling. ”

Emily

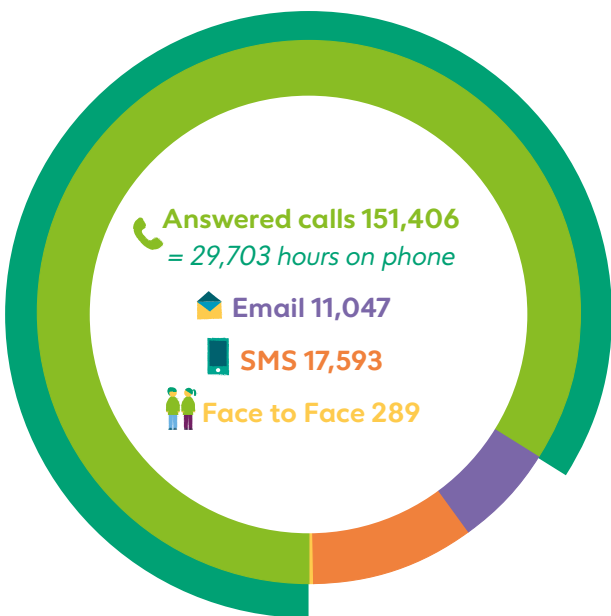


Ensuring anyone who needs us, can reach us

Our helpline services are free, and we embrace technology so callers can get in touch how they like. Beyond our branches, we provide a human presence in the places and at the times we can help the most.

2019 stats

Northern Ireland

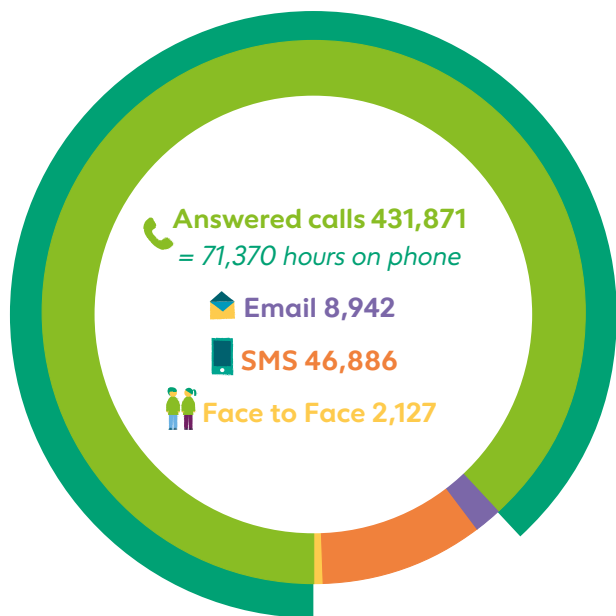


Caller gender



2019 stats

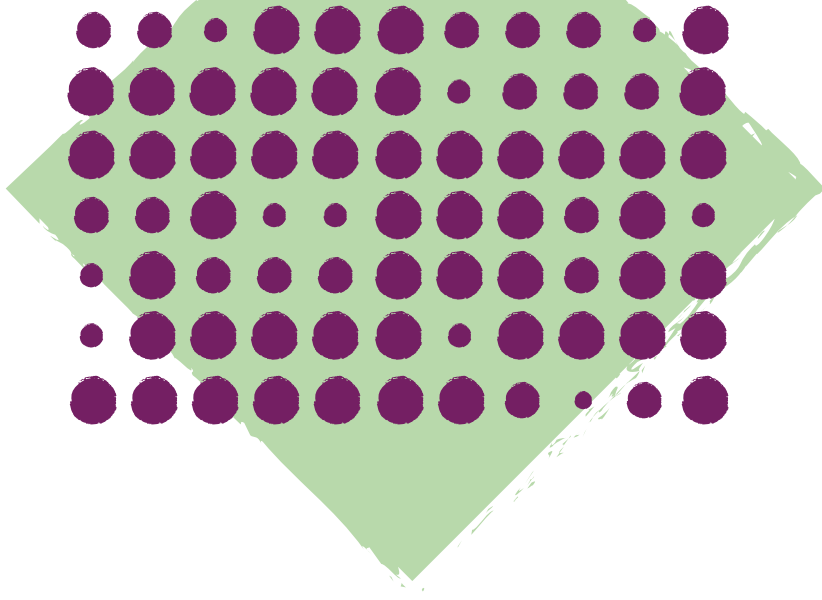
Republic of Ireland



Caller gender



When people contact Samaritans for emotional support, they often mention several concerns. In 2019, some of the primary concerns raised related to isolation and loneliness, family, mental health or illness, physical health or illness, and relationship problems.



Volunteers in Northern Ireland with the Northern Ireland fire service.

Five years of freephone

While Samaritans have been supporting people in Ireland since 1961, the introduction of freephone 116 123 in the Republic of Ireland in March 2014 and in

Northern Ireland in September 2015 made a huge impact on the service, in particular how people could contact the helpline, free of charge, 24 hours a day.

In March 2019, Samaritans celebrated five years of free to call in the Republic of Ireland, with figures showing volunteers answered almost 3 million calls since its launch – an incredible achievement.

Samaritans was also delighted to announce that six major telecom providers – BT Ireland, eir, Sky Ireland, Three Ireland, Virgin Media Ireland and Vodafone Ireland – all extended their partnership and agreed to support the helpline until 2024. The six telecom providers are members of IBEC's Telecommunications Industry Ireland (TII)

The event was supported by Richard Bruton TD, Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment.

Statistics for Five Years Free to Call

March 2014 – March 2019

Republic of Ireland only



2.9 million
calls were answered
by volunteers



376,500
listening hours
on the phone.



6pm–midnight
Busiest time of day
with 35% of all calls



8pm–9pm
Busiest hour with
185,000 calls answered



Being there, where and when people need to talk

We reached more people through our work in communities in 2019, focusing particularly on the locations and times we know people struggle to cope.

For instance, we launched our Step by Step service which offers practical support and advice to schools, colleges, sports clubs and communities which have been affected by a suspected suicide or attempted suicide. Our service aims to reach out to high risk communities to reduce the risk of further suicide; to enable the community to be prepared for, respond to and recover from a suspected or attempted suicide and to prevent stigma and isolation within the community.

Samaritans has an established and well-regarded association with prison support work, most notably in the form of our Listener scheme. In the Republic of Ireland, the Listener scheme is a well-established peer support scheme in prisons. Listeners are prisoners who are selected, trained and supported by Samaritans, applying the same guidelines used by Samaritans volunteers. They are available to listen in complete confidence to fellow prisoners, who may be experiencing feelings of distress or despair, including those who may be suicidal.

The Listener scheme is now available in all prisons in the Republic of Ireland. In 2019, Dublin Samaritan volunteers worked in six prisons, training 52 prisoners, who are now part of the Listener scheme. The Listeners had approximately 820 calls from fellow inmates during 2019.

In Northern Ireland, we have two Listener schemes in Maghaberry and Magilligan prisons. Volunteers

from the prison support team at Belfast branch also provide direct emotional support at Hydebank Wood College. Volunteers visit weekly to provide face-to-face support to residents there (the population is too small for a Listener scheme).

In Maghaberry prison, there were 130 Listener scheme contacts (estimated hours of support: 137 hours) between 1 Jan–31 Dec 2019. In Magilligan prison, there were 39 Listener scheme contacts (estimated hours of support: 33 hours) between 1 Jan–31 Dec 2019.

In Hydebank Wood College, volunteers provided emotional support 39 times (estimated hours of support: 16 hours)

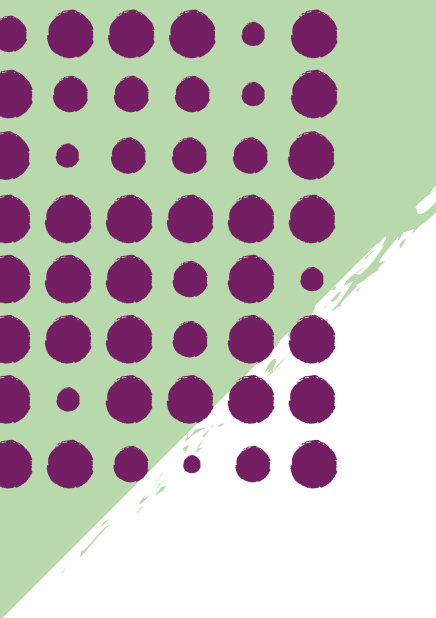
In Maghaberry, there were eight Listeners at the end of the year. In Magilligan, there were seven Listeners at the end of the year.

Samaritans volunteers continue to meet the Listeners once a week to support them in their listening role.

The Listener scheme has a very positive impact in the prisons due to the commitment from the Listeners and support to the scheme from prison staff.

Our work with the rail industry continued, with Irish Rail and Translink both supporting initiatives and campaigns which targeted commuters and helped spread the word that Samaritans are available for anyone who needs us, 24/7.

On World Mental Health Day 2019, Northern Ireland Fire & Rescue Service (NIFRS) and Samaritans announced a partnership agreement to allow them to work together to protect those most at risk in our community. It means that NIFRS and Samaritans will work collaboratively



to ensure that the people they come into contact with are aware of both partner's services.

Elsewhere, a new social media campaign was launched in Northern Ireland with the support of Ardmore Advertising to reach out to those in need of emotional support. The first campaign ran on three main platforms Facebook, Instagram and Snapchat and used Samaritans advertisements and video clips. The advertisements were such that allowed those viewing them to click through to get help.

The first campaign reached 87,000. The links were clicked through for help by 5,000 people. The video clips were watched by 9,000 people.

The second campaign followed the same format and reached 1.1 million people. There were 9,665 people who clicked through for more help. The videos were watched by 947,637 people.

The social media platforms reached people from all age groups. Facebook reached both

sexes from an older age group whilst Snapchat reached both sexes but a younger audience.

Samaritans Irish Festival Group also marked 21 years of reaching out and supporting people across Ireland.

Several original Festival volunteers, including then Director Mary Barry, are still volunteers with Samaritans and celebrated with current Festival Director Theresa Potter at an event in November.

Mary said the support from volunteers and the Regional Director at the time were key to getting Festival from the planning stage to an all-Ireland service on the streets of so many towns and cities.

Each summer, Festival volunteers attend approximately eight major events and festivals across Ireland, from Pride Dublin & Belfast to Lisdoonvarna Matchmaking Festival and Fleadh Cheoil na hÉireann, as well as the North West 200.

An estimated 25,000 men and women have been supported to date.

Irish Festival Samaritans in numbers:

21 years in operation

On average we support **200 people** at each festival event



We aim to be available **24 hours a day** over a festival weekend



We attend **8 festivals** on average each year



We have supported an estimated **25,000 people** to date

Working with others to make a bigger impact

We forge links with other organisations to find and reach the people who need us most today. And we position ourselves at the heart of policy-making to make change for a hopeful tomorrow.

Working with the media

Our media advisory service encourages responsible reporting and portrayal of suicide. In Northern Ireland, we are working in partnership with the Public Health Agency (PHA) to deliver information sessions to media groups, students, clergy, local councils and other interested groups. These sessions combine the expertise within the PHA on media monitoring as well as our own skills and best practice on how to appropriately and sensitively report suicide as outlined in our Media Guidelines. We have also developed packs for Editors featuring a poster to be displayed in newsrooms highlighting key messages from our Media Guidelines to reinforce the importance of appropriate reporting.

In the Republic of Ireland, we work closely with the National Office of Suicide Prevention (NOSP) and Headline to monitor and advise the media on the reporting of suicide and self-harm.

Working on pressing issues

In a year when there was significant attention on the role that online content may have played in suicides among young people, we made a submission to a public consultation on harmful online content set by the Department of Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Republic of Ireland). We called for an independent regulator to be established to monitor the online environment and removal of harmful online content, and a robust code of conduct for online platforms.

We've also been working with agencies, including the Loneliness Taskforce, to address the chronic loneliness outlined by our callers, including young people.

In September, we welcomed the publication of Protect Life 2, the Northern Ireland Suicide Prevention Strategy. The strategy sets out what the Department of Health will do to reduce suicide and self-harm over the next five years and looks at the importance of everyone working together on prevention. The challenge for Protect Life 2 will be to substantially reduce suicide rates by 10% by 2024, in line with World Health Organization's advice. One of the aims is to deliver suicide prevention services and support, with a particular focus on deprived areas where self-harm rates are highest and suicide rates are over 3.5 times higher than those in the least deprived areas.

Each year we attend the political party conferences in Northern Ireland to raise awareness of our service and engage with policy makers and elected representatives. We also participate and contribute to key policy consultations in the



areas of mental health and suicide prevention. We recently took part in the PHA consultation on building community capacity to address health inequalities across Northern Ireland as well as the draft Mental and Emotional Health and Wellbeing and Suicide Prevention Training Framework.

Samaritans Ireland continued to deliver training to corporate, community and voluntary organisations and deliver workshops on Active Listening Skills and Conversations with Vulnerable Adults. Organisations have included members of the Irish National Organisation for the Unemployed, Mental Health Ireland, Care after Prison and Primary Health Care workers in the Traveller Community and other organisations supporting distressed/vulnerable people as requested.

We celebrated five years of teaming up with the GAA to tackle the stigma of mental health and urge young players and members who are

struggling to cope to seek help. The organisations marked World Suicide Prevention Day by committing to continue their winning partnership to reach across Ireland for another five years.

Samaritans offers centralised training workshops on active listening skills to GAA coaches and managers, with plans underway for Samaritans volunteers to visit clubs across the country for a 'Huddle', a post training talk emphasising the importance of mental and physical fitness to players and their management team.

Over the last five years, the GAA distributed almost 12,000 Samaritans posters to every club in the country, with tens of thousands of wristbands, pens and cards handed out at Provisional Football Finals and county matches. Ulster GAA, in conjunction with the Public Health Agency (PHA), has also produced pitch side signs including Samaritans helpline as a source of support for those in distress.



RITANS

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here
life
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Here for
the farming
community
Talk to us,
we'll listen
116 123

Here for
the farming
community
Talk to us,
we'll listen
116 123

RITANS
our co
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ure

Two women in green jackets standing on the left side of the table, one is looking at a bowl of green beans.

A woman in a green jacket is focused on preparing green beans in a clear bowl.

A man in a green jacket stands in the center, smiling at the camera with his hands clasped.

A woman in a green jacket stands on the right, holding a small green packet and looking towards the camera.

Several green seed packets are laid out on the white tablecloth in the foreground.

A clear bowl filled with green beans sits on the table to the right.

The more we know, the more we can help

We're constantly improving the way we collect and use evidence. It informs the way we shape and develop our services and helps us keep track of how we're doing.

Understanding suicide

Last summer we conducted an online survey to understand men and their mental health among 201 adult men aged 18+ in Northern Ireland and 501 in the Republic of Ireland.

Among the key findings were:

One in five men (19%) in Northern Ireland who had suicidal thoughts in the last 12 months did not reach out for help due to feeling like they had no one to trust, with 47% feeling like a burden.

Some of the main reasons why these men find life tough and struggle, include:

- debt or financial worries (39%)
- job loss/employment issues (35%)
- relationship or family problems (33%).

In the Republic of Ireland, one in four men (25%) who had suicidal thoughts in the last 12 months did not reach out for help due to feeling like they had no one to trust, with 37% feeling like a burden.

Also, the main reasons why these men find life tough and struggle, include:

- job loss/employment issues (38%)
- relationship or family problems (38%)
- debt or financial worries (37%).

These findings help us to shape our service and identify who in our communities are most at risk and struggling to cope.

In late 2019 we conducted a survey on self-harm. Results from this survey will be available in 2020 and will help inform how we provide help and services to those at risk of self harm.

Understanding our callers

This year we continued to develop understanding of our callers through the use of our eLog system, which allows us to collect anonymous data. The most common areas of concern to callers are mental health, family, relationship problems, isolation/loneliness and physical health/illness.

The eLog is also building a much clearer picture of the use of our service.

For instance, we now know that the average length of an emotional support call is 20 minutes, rising to 30 minutes where suicidal feelings are expressed. We are more likely to get calls from people expressing suicidal feelings in the early hours of the morning, and particularly on Sundays. We've also learned that more men express feelings of isolation and loneliness than women, and that feelings of isolation and loneliness are expressed more at Christmas. These insights are essential for matching our volunteer workforce to the high demand times, ensuring that we can be there for anyone who needs someone.

Elsewhere, our big data analysis partnership with Ulster University also progressed with funding secured and contracts signed for a second stage of the partnership. The innovative project was highlighted at the International Association of Suicide Prevention Conference in Derry in September when it was included in a seminar selected for the conference. The project had earlier been shortlisted for an award by the University for the impact of research.

SAMARITANS

Contact Samaritans free –
day or night, 365 days a year

Call free on

116 123

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Samaritans Ireland is a charity registered in the Republic of Ireland (20033668) and incorporated as a company limited by guarantee (450409). Samaritans Ireland's registered office is located at 4-5 Usher's Court, Usher's Quay, Dublin 8, D08Y223. CHY number: CHY11880. The directors/trustees of Samaritans Ireland are as follows: J Finch (United Kingdom), B Rojack, D O'Críodan, C Skelly, D Murray, K Flood, P James (United Kingdom), C O'Shea, D Walsh (United Kingdom), A Woodworth.