

Evaluation of Samaritans Emotional Support Services January 2008-January 2010

Background

This project has been funded by Samaritans and is a two year project to evaluate the impact of Samaritans confidential helpline, e-mail and SMS text emotional support services. The evaluation was commissioned by Samaritans in order to develop evidence around the benefits of the services provided, and to better understand the impact Samaritans services have on callers. Ultimately, through evaluation Samaritans will be able to find out what is the most effective way to offer emotional support, and be able to develop their services and further establish best practice.

Research aims

The study will explore the following;

- 1) Examine the nature of the support offered by Samaritans services and describe the current caller centred approach taken in relation to best practice across the service.
- 2) Explore the views and experiences of Samaritans volunteers in delivering services.
- 3) Identify and explore callers' in depth experiences of making contact with Samaritans services.
- 4) Investigate the needs and expectations callers have of contacting Samaritans.

Stage 1: Study design and recruitment (Jan 2008 – June 2008)

Before developing the research methodology, Samaritans carried out a consultation with their volunteers and callers, to develop an understanding of the possible impact of data collection methods on services provided to callers. The University of Nottingham evaluation team developed a website for the evaluation (<http://www.nottingham.ac.uk/nursing/shelp/>), the online questionnaire survey, and the qualitative interview guides. The University evaluation team also recruited Samaritan branches, volunteers and callers via Samaritans website and events and external advertising.

Stage 2: Data collection and analysis (April 2008 – November 2009)

The evaluation is being conducted across the UK and through a variety of data collection methods:

- 1) Online questionnaire survey to be completed by Samaritans callers
- 2) Observations of Samaritans branches
- 3) Semi-structured interviews with Samaritan volunteers and callers
- 4) Analysis of text and email messages from callers (*caller consent required*)

Stage 3: Report writing (October 2009 – Jan 2010)

The final report will be produced and submitted to Samaritans in January 2010.

Stage 4: Dissemination of research findings- January 2010

The findings from the evaluation will be disseminated within Samaritans and externally during 2010. This will include publications and attendance at events and conferences. Reports and publications will also be disseminated via the project website at <http://www.nottingham.ac.uk/nursing/shelp/>

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