



FOUR STEPS TO CHANGE LIVES



We can help those most at risk of suicide but we need to **ACT NOW**

[#supportfreecall](#)

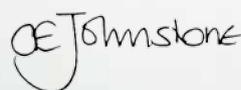
SAMARITANS

“ If you are less well off, if you are male – then you are much more likely to take your own life.

More than 6,000 people die by suicide every year in the UK.

Nearly 80% are men and male suicide rates are now at their highest level since 2001.

Deprivation is a major risk factor too, and people living in poorer areas of the UK are ten times more likely to die by suicide. To reduce these shocking figures, we need a comprehensive change from grassroots to Government starting with an approach which values mental wellbeing alongside physical wellbeing. Samaritans believes we need to work together, in communities and through the health and voluntary services, to give people the best chance to turn their lives around when they are struggling. That means Samaritans needs to be there, when and how they need us, and includes making sure our support is free to the people who call us. The purpose of Samaritans is to reduce the number of people who die by suicide and we are asking that the next Government stands with us so that we can turn the tide of rising suicide rates and find a way to help more people get the help they need. ”



Catherine Johnstone

Samaritans' Chief Executive
Catherine Johnstone



1

Mental and physical health are equally important

Good mental and physical health is a fundamental human need. Health policy should give both equal weight. To close the gap, more investment is needed in:

Better information about mental health services and swift diagnosis

Treatments and services, including talking therapies

Ensuring mental health research does not lag behind research into physical illness

Raising public awareness of good mental health and well-being.

2

Every area needs a suicide prevention plan

We need to act locally to make sure the most effective ways of preventing suicide are in place all over the UK. Measures which are proven to work include:

- Suicide prevention training
- Improved follow up support for people attending A&E after self-harm or a suicide attempt
- Safety measures at high-risk areas for suicide
- Local specialist suicide bereavement counselling/support groups.

The All Party Parliamentary Group on Suicide and Self-harm Prevention found last year that around a third of local authorities in England do not have a suicide prevention plan, and 40% do not have a multi-agency suicide prevention team. We support the recommendations of the APPG that local health trusts or public health teams must:

- Collect information about local suicides to understand who is at risk, where they are and how best to help them
- Set out clearly in Local Suicide Prevention Plans what will be done to reduce suicide risk
- Ensure multi-agency teams made up of the NHS, charities, addiction services and the police, work together to put the plan into practice locally.

It is also essential that co-ordinated Local Suicide Prevention Action Plans are in place throughout the UK. This means ensuring that there is clear, continuing commitment to support local action plans from the devolved administrations through:

- The national strategy and action plan to prevent suicide in Scotland, *Choose Life*
- The forthcoming suicide and self-harm prevention strategy and action plan for Wales, *Talk to Me 2*
- The suicide prevention strategy for Northern Ireland, *Protect Life*.

To discuss *Samaritans Four steps to change lives* please contact:
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3

Tackling alcohol misuse is crucial

Tackling alcohol misuse is a crucial part of suicide prevention because:

- ◉ Misuse of alcohol makes people, particularly men, eight times more likely to kill themselves.
- ◉ As many as 65 per cent of suicides are related to excessive drinking.
- ◉ Alcohol misuse reduces inhibitions and makes acting on suicidal thoughts more likely.
- ◉ Young people under 24 are particularly vulnerable to thoughts of suicide, suicide attempts and completed suicides under the influence of alcohol. Alcohol-related deaths are higher in deprived areas – where people are already at greater risk
- ◉ We urgently need to address individual behaviour and the UK's unhealthy drinking culture.
- ◉ Government strategies must link reducing alcohol misuse and preventing suicide.
- ◉ Addiction services locally need to tackle suicide risk associated with alcohol misuse. Staff should receive suicide prevention training, and alcohol treatment and mental health services should work closely together on suicide prevention.

65%

of suicides are related to excessive drinking

4

Help us make the Samaritans telephone service free

Samaritans receives more than 5 million calls from across the UK and Republic of Ireland every year. When you are struggling to cope, you need to know that someone will be there to help you when you need it most, without having to worry about the cost of the call.

Research shows that call costs deter some people from using our service, particularly those from lower income groups, who are more reliant on mobile phones and expensive pay-as-you-go tariffs. Suicide rates are often highest in socio-economically deprived communities, so this means that some people who really need our service cannot afford to access it.

It is Samaritans' long-standing ambition to have a free-to-caller telephone number. Samaritans has been awarded such a number for providing services of "extreme social value". However, while the number is free to callers, for Samaritans the cost implications are unsustainable. As a result, we cannot promote this number in the UK until we are certain that we will be able to sustain it, now and into the future.

We are working with major telecoms companies to find ways of making the number more affordable to Samaritans, with good progress. What we need now is a commitment from the next government to help us cover the remaining costs of making our free number available across the UK, so that everyone can afford to call us when they're going through a difficult time.



To stop suicide taking such a toll on our communities, we must:

1

Treat mental and physical health as equally important

2

Establish local suicide prevention plans in every area

3

Tackle alcohol misuse

4

Help to make Samaritans telephone support free.