

# ***STOCKPORT SAMARITANS***

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## ***ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING***

### ***14 JUNE 2007***



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## Chairman's Report – Sally 87

On behalf of the whole branch I would like to thank Stockport Metropolitan Borough Council for their continuing financial support, recently awarding us approximately £3,000 from their main grants scheme, after our successful application for the financial year 2007/08. We received the money as we have been successfully judged to be helping the Council in meeting its priorities in the community. Stockport MBC also continue to provide us with accommodation until such time as the Hopes Carr regeneration plan begins in earnest. Whilst the move creates uncertainty for us, we have been assured that the Council will assist us in the search for alternative premises, should that prove necessary, and I am pleased to say that a special branch meeting in September about a potential move, attended by most of our volunteers, was fairly unanimous in setting out and agreeing our future branch needs.



I would like to thank all the people who have been involved in raising funds and making donations to the branch. We still lack a fundraising coordinator but are pleased to have held several successful events this year including weekend tin collections at Tesco Stockport and Sainsburys Cheadle Royal, a sale of Christmas cards and various raffles, the 100 club and Justgiving.com donations. We have again covered our expenditure this year, making a small surplus for the 12 months to March 2007.

We have also made efforts to raise our profile in the community, both to raise funds and recruit new volunteers. Committee members attended Stockport College Freshers' Fair and we have placed advertisements in the Stockport County football magazine and a Council leaflet on sport development in the borough, which is sent to all homes in the area. Our special thanks go to Graeme 88 and his team for redeveloping our website, which contains contributions from many branch members and went live in record time. You can visit us at <http://www.samaritans.org/~stockport>

I would like to personally thank all the members of the committee for the help and support which they have given me during the year, particularly to Pat 57 for her work as Branch Treasurer and to Dave 25, who makes sure our building and facilities are maintained. A final thank you goes to Mary 4 who, as our Director for the past year, has done an outstanding job and has been a pleasure to work with. We are grateful for Mary's wisdom and experience and, after a successful working party earlier this year, we are pleased to welcome Mary 80 into the Director's job for the next 3 years.

## Director's Report – Mary 4

This past year as caretaker director of Stockport Samaritans has gone very quickly.

I have been helped in this process by a dedicated hard working group of deputies, who I have really enjoyed working with. Their support has been fantastic and has made my role a lot easier.

Recruitment of volunteers is becoming more and more difficult. Kathy 44 and her team have done an excellent job over the past year, having 2 selection days and passing the volunteers on to Mary 80 for Initial Training. This team has worked hard to integrate the new training package, which now has even more sessions. People do not realise how much preparation and planning goes into these roles. Well done to you all.

Volunteer care – this has been well looked after by Yvonne 36 who maintains contact with volunteers who are currently on leave, off ill or just need extra help

On-Going Training - this has been co-ordinated by Richard 83 and volunteers have had the opportunity to attend a range of interesting sessions. One of the most successful sessions also involved members of the Buxton branch.

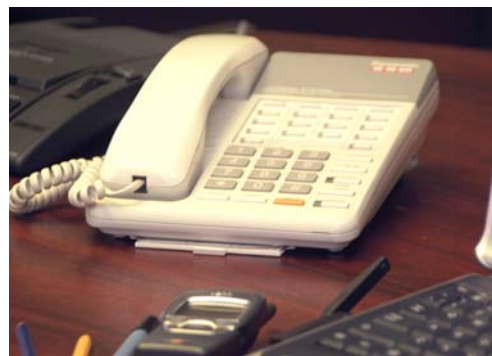
On Call Support – a very important part of ‘looking after’ our volunteers, keeping them safe and supported at all times. This was done by Pam 55 and her team – many thanks.

Caller Care – Peter 56 and his team have worked very hard this year, both regionally and nationally to ensure that our branch offers a consistent service to our callers.

Committee – Sally 87 and the committee have been busy this past year trying to sort out our situation, should it be necessary to move out of our present premises. They coordinate the fund raising and maintenance of the branch – lots to do!

Rota secretaries – Vicky 24 and Dave 25. My thanks to them for keeping the branch manned, some shifts being difficult to fill. They have done a great job, and have worked very hard.

It seems as the years go by it is always the same problems – volunteers and money. Keeping a branch running requires people working together – Beryl 59 looking after the post - Dawn 74 looking after supplies of tea, coffee, milk and biscuits - Dave 25 the branch statistics – Jack I our speaker secretary – Margaret 28 email coordinator – Tony 66 Sams Sam – Gill 89 conference secretary and directors support. I wish to thank all of these people. It is the way that all members have responded to the new shift times that I find most pleasing. Without your commitment it would not be possible to run this branch, my thanks to you all. I am delighted to be handing over the branch to Mary 80, our new Director; I know it will be in safe hands.



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## Treasurer's Report – Pat 57

The branch made a small profit this year

### Income

We continue to be grateful to SMBC for their grant which covers the majority of our rent and electricity and sincere thanks to all those organisations and individuals who have so kindly raised money for the branch or given donations. We do rely on these for all our other expenses.

### Fundraising

We had little fundraising for the majority of the year as no one would undertake this important role and only a small number of our members took part in fundraising events organised by the branch. Those that did take part were very pleased to have good amounts of money raised by their efforts.

### Expenditure

The branch functions without any paid staff and administration and housekeeping costs are low. The telephone bills have recently increased, mainly due to numerous reverse charge calls. This is unfortunately becoming a bigger problem as we divert to other branches and have no control over their adherence to the guidelines.



I would like to thank the committee and branch members for their help and support.

## On Call Support – Pam 55

The past 12 months have at times proved difficult for the OCS team, due to circumstances within the team.

Our numbers have been somewhat diminished and recruiting has proved to be a problem. However, I would like to thank most sincerely the members of the team who have fulfilled their commitment.

To enable O.C.S. to function properly and provide adequate support for all shifts we do need to swell our numbers.

On a personal level, serving on the O.C.S. team has been a rewarding experience for me – enabling me to feel more connected to the branch and speaking to volunteers I perhaps would not normally see.

## Caller Care Report – Peter 56

Over the past year we have routinely checked the Call Log and messages received (including those on the Whiteboard) to maintain a record of Frequent Callers, callers with Care Plans and new Callers of Concern. From this information and details exchanged with other branches we have been able to identify and track these callers and, when necessary, develop guidance for their support. This information together with more general advice and news of recent developments has been published in the *10 Bulletins* issued over the year.

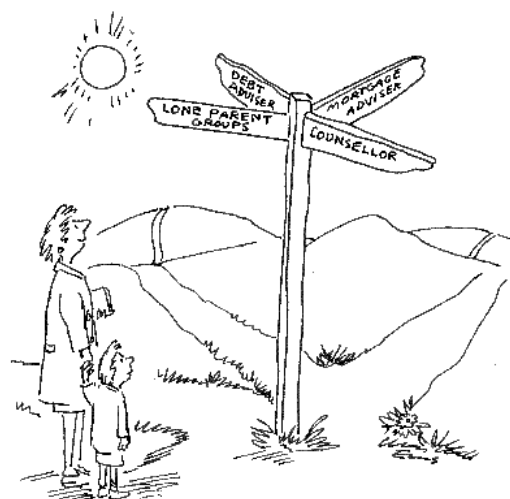
These Bulletins which form part of the new, reduced Caller Care Folder have generally been well received and the “*Sign In, Check The Board, Read The Bulletin*” stickers which appeared all over the Duty Room seem to have helped to establish this vital discipline.

The branch has been represented at every Regional Caller Care meeting over the year and hosted the meeting here in October. These meetings and the recently established intranet site for Caller Care Deputy Directors around the Region have ensured a full and prompt exchange of essential information.

In our own regular meetings, our team – Andrew 27, David 65, Liz 79 and Mary 80 – has checked on routine actions and discussed current Callers of Concern issues from the Regional meetings and the latest Bulletin. We have also occasionally reviewed current e-mails by applying the self-assessment tool to a random, anonymous sample. While pointing to some areas for improvement, these checks have generally indicated a high standard of replies. Full results have been posted in the Duty Room.

An additional issue at many of our meetings has been Signposting. Lengthy debate, the collection of information from potential organisations and the development of guidelines have resulted in its introduction on a trial basis. Folders in the Duty Room now provide full details of the selected agencies and a note on the intended use of Signposting has been circulated to every Volunteer and posted on the Notice Board.

In early May, an Ongoing Training session was held to explain how Caller Care operated and provide some insight into the development of Care Plans. More information is provided in the excellent organisation-wide *Guide to Caller Care* which was issued earlier this year. A copy is held in the Duty Room.



I would like to thank those Samaritans who have provided feedback through the year, both positive and negative, and to acknowledge the efforts of our Caller Care Team who have endeavoured to provide appropriate and consistent support for both our callers and volunteers.

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## Selection and Recruitment Report – Kathy 44

Recruiting for a voluntary organisation such as the Samaritans is a continual process. In today's society, with all its pressures, it's often difficult for people to commit to regular periods of time away from home and work. The best of intentions can be defeated by the unexpected demands or changes of circumstance, and so the number of Samaritan volunteers in our branch is constantly being challenged.



Central to our work therefore is the need to maintain steady recruitment to the cause. Since June 2006 we have held two successful selection days, and have welcomed eight new volunteers into the branch.

I would like to thank all the members of my team, Doreen 14, Sally 87 and John 10, for their enthusiasm and hard work during the year. We worked together as a very effective team and I am grateful to them for their support and advice.

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## Initial Training – Mary 80

This year we have run two very successful training courses which have given us 8 new Samaritans. The new training material is now well established within the branch and runs very smoothly, with a few tweaks here and there.

The Initial Training Course has become even longer with the introduction of Initial Training Part 2, an additional four modules to complete once Prep Sams have begun taking calls. This has increased the workload for the training team even further, but has been tried at Stockport this year with success, despite some expected teething problems.

My thanks go to Graeme 88, Joan 82, Sue 34 and Helen 60 for the hours and days of their time that it has taken to help deliver this training.



Thanks also to Margaret 28 who again delivered the E-mail module, and to everyone who has supported us with skills practice or by agreeing to be a Tutor.

These are all essential roles in delivering the training successfully.

Training new Samaritans has been a great experience and allowed myself and the training team to get to know the newer members of the branch well. Feedback from the Trainees has been excellent and all seem to have found it a rewarding and enjoyable experience.

## On-going Training – Richard 83

During the year, we have had sessions open to all branch members on:

- Ending calls and emails
- Listening to adult callers who were abused as children and
- Caring for our callers

Most members of the branch have attended at least one of the training sessions, although there are a few volunteers who unfortunately have not been able to attend any. Many thanks and well done to those volunteers who have managed to achieve the training commitment this year.

For the first time this year, we invited members of Buxton branch to join our training and it is hoped that the sharing of training between branches might become something which is done regularly in future.

I'd like to say a big thank you to those branch members and the external speaker who have helped to deliver the training during the year. Finally, a reminder that we are all committed to 5 hours training a year, so I will hope to see you at the next session.

## Volunteer Care – Yvonne 36

I have been Deputy Director for Volunteer Care for 12 months, whilst Mary 4 has been the caretaker Director. Volunteer Care is in place to support our volunteers on many levels. I hope that during my time in this role any volunteer, whether on leave or not, would have felt able to contact me, at any time, for additional support if needed.

During the last 12 months, a total of 10 volunteers have been on leave. Of these, 2 have left the branch and 5 have, very pleasingly, now returned to the Centre. At the present time, 3 remain on leave and of these, 2 are on a long term basis.

I would like to thank all of our volunteers for their efforts and kindness, and to those who have made my time as Deputy Director such a pleasant experience. A special thanks goes to Mary 4 for her tremendous commitment to all of the Samaritans and her support for myself.

## Branch Email – Margaret 28

The Samaritans receive more than 130,000 contacts by email a year – a growth of some 24% between 2004 and 2005. Answering these email messages is part of our work at Stockport.

Samaritans are widely associated with the telephone but email is an increasingly important part of our service. After starting in a very small way in 1992 in one branch, the need to respond to distressed people by email became so great that more and more branches were taking part and in December 2002 the email service was launched nationally.

By the end of 2006 Samaritans were receiving around 500 messages each day and this number is still growing. Response times vary but the average time for a reply is approximately 10 hours.



## Speakers – Jack 1

Not as many invitations to speak this year as previously but still spoken to 8 groups over the last 12 months. Once again, groups varied in size and in backgrounds but all showed considerable interest in the work we do and, without exception, had some misconceptions about what we seek to achieve.

For me one of the highlights of the year was a talk I gave after a dinner at Bredbury Hall. This was arranged by Hazel Grove Conservative Ladies Dining Club and was attended by over 80 ladies. The food was excellent, the conversation over dinner was interesting and the audience asked lots of questions when I had finished speaking: all in all a great evening.



A few weeks later I spoke at a Wine Club one evening in Cheadle. Some 20 to 30 people attended and, after a few (small) glasses of wine sat back to listen to my talk. Despite the wine nobody fell asleep whilst I was speaking and the questions asked later were interesting and varied. To my surprise nobody asked what I thought would have been the obvious question ie “ Does a regular intake of alcohol, in moderation, help avoid depression?” What do **you** think?

In complete contrast was the talk I gave to a Girl Guide group: or should that be “troop”? There I was faced with about 20 girls aged, I would guess, between 10 and 14. When I arrived they were in the midst of some game, the object of which seemed to be to create as much noise as possible and very good at it they were. However they settled down when instructed, sat on the floor, listened intently until I finished and then launched into questions until the Guide Leader called time. On balance I think I found them more intimidating than 80 Conservative Ladies!

I am still looking for more audiences and more Sams willing to be speakers. At least one of our members has given, or is about to give, her first talk. This will be to a group at her church and I think is the perfect way to put your foot in the water. So if you can help in this way please let me know and I'll give you any support you may need. Once again, I look forward to hearing from you.

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## Rota Secretary Report – Vicky 24

As with most people, Samaritans are not immune from difficult times and changes to their own circumstances. This is probably why there are endless problems in filling the gaps within our weekly rotas. We have a good core of volunteers who ‘bend over backwards’ to do above their commitment in order to fill these gaps. Due to the new system of diverts and change of shift times, we have a greater commitment to the region to always ‘do our bit’.

It is also down to the great support and understanding of volunteer’s families, who frequently have their lives disturbed by Dave 25 and myself. We are truly thankful for the sacrifice of their ‘family times’ and their understanding of the disruption this can cause.

Thank you to everyone for doing their bit to keep Stockport Samaritans up and running.



## Branch Statistics — Dave 25

The reduction in the number of telephone contacts has been less this year than in recent years, and accompanied by an increase in snap calls. We increased our number of face-to-face contacts. It should be noted that 2006 was our first full year for emails.

The change in the ratio of male to female contacts is interesting and this trend has become more marked in 2007. For emails, women outnumber men by a factor of 3. There is also a reduction in the proportion of contacts expressing suicidal feelings, although for email contacts almost half have suicidal feelings. We have halved the number of occasions on which we offer follow up calls.

		2006	2005	Change
Total Contacts		15603	15538	0.4%
Snap Calls		7657	7289	5.0%
Samaritan Contacts		7946	8249	-3.7%
	By Telephone	7701	8076	-4.6%
	Face to Face	24	15	60.0%
	By Email	221	158	
Male Contacts		4351	4745	-8.3%
Female Contacts		3461	3379	2.4%
Uncertain		134	125	7.2%
Suicidal Feelings				
	Not Explored	1305	1325	-1.5%
	Explored but no response	181	219	-17.4%
	Suicidal feelings expressed	1295	1507	-14.1%
	No Suicidal Thoughts	6651	6742	-1.3%
Follow Up				
	Offered	43	103	-58.3%
	Accepted	19	44	-56.8%

## The Samaritans Mission

Samaritans is available 24 hours a day to provide confidential emotional support for people who are experiencing feelings of distress or despair, including those which may lead to suicide.

## Our Vision

Samaritans' vision is for a society in which fewer people die by suicide, people are able to explore their feelings and people are able to acknowledge and respect the feelings of others.

## Our Values

Samaritans' values are based on these beliefs:

- The importance of having the opportunity to explore difficult feelings
- That being listened to, in confidence, and accepted without prejudice, can alleviate despair and suicidal feelings
- That everyone has the right to make fundamental decisions about their own life, including the decision to die by suicide.