**Press release**

**UNDER EMBARGO UNTIL: 00:01 Wednesday 1 December 2021**

**FAMILY CONCERNS ON THE RISE, NEW SAMARITANS DATA REVEALS**

* *Samaritans are today launching 'Be A Samaritans Christmas Star' campaign, helping listening volunteers be there for people who need support*
* Stats show for some people, the Christmas period can be a particularly challenging time

Christmas may be a time for festive cheer and spending time with loved ones but new figures from Samaritans reveal that caller concerns about family have risen for the fifth year in a row.

So far throughout 2021\* family worries have made up 34% of emotional support contacts with the charity across the UK and Republic of Ireland – a 26% increase (7 percentage points) over the past five years.\*\*

Mental health/illness is holding steady as the top overall concern at 46%, with isolation and loneliness ranking third at 28%, and relationship problems follows on 24%.

Today, Samaritans is launching it’s Christmas campaign to ensure listening volunteers are on-hand to respond to more than 250,000 calls for help expected during the festive season.

Now, one previous Christmas caller who credits Samaritans with saving her life, has been chosen as the face of the charity’s latest festive campaign.

Stephanie, 33 from Kent, phoned Samaritans regularly just after Christmas 2015 when she was really struggling.

“Christmas always felt like a particularly difficult time. One year on Christmas Eve, it all got too much and I tried to take my life. I woke up the next day feeling very unwell, but I got dressed and went to visit my family for Christmas. I became good at putting on a front.”

Stephanie, a celebrity manicurist to the stars, who works with Little Mix, Leona Lewis and Disney continued: “I look back at the pictures and I’m smiling, but I wasn’t ok at all. That feeling built up and spilled over into the New Year. I didn’t know who to speak to, so one night I called Samaritans and let everything out. I remember feeling embarrassed and it took me a long time to get everything out. I am so thankful to that volunteer. He saved my life that night. I realised I didn’t want to die. I just didn’t want to hurt anymore.”

Stephanie is now calling on the public to ‘Be A Samaritans Christmas Star’ this season by [making a donation](https://www.samaritans.org/donate-christmas/) or helping Samaritans volunteers be there for others like her by fundraising for the charity. Supporting Samaritans will help bring light to someone on their darkest day, ensuring trained volunteers are there to respond to calls at a time of year when Samaritans is a lifeline to those who are struggling to cope. By making a donation for as little as £5, it will help Samaritans keep their helpline running 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

**Julie Bentley, Samaritans’ CEO**, said: “Whilst many look forward to the Christmas period, at Samaritans we know this time of year can actually be a huge challenge for some people.   

 “Our amazing volunteers will, as they do every hour of every day, be giving their time this Christmas to anyone who needs support. I think that is a pretty special gift to give.  I’m so proud of the work Samaritans does, and I know what a huge difference the service makes to people’s lives.   So, for anyone who is struggling this Christmas time, Samaritans is here for them, for free, 24 hours a day, 365 days a year.”

To help Samaritans listening volunteers be there for people in their darkest times, please visit [samaritans.org/donate-christmas.](https://www.samaritans.org/donate-christmas/)

**ENDS**

\* Figures to November 2021, all figures in the release taken from Samaritans eLog data. which is collected anonymously

\*\* up from 27% in 2017

For more information and interviews, please contact press@samaritans.org or 020 8394 8300. A full press pack including images is available here - <https://www.samaritans.org/christmas-press-pack>    

**Notes to Editor**

* Every day, Samaritans volunteers respond to around **10,000** calls for help.
* Samaritans has **201** local branches across the UK and Ireland.
* In 2020 Samaritans volunteers spent over **one million** hours responding to calls for help.
* It’s the public’s kind donations and more than 20,000 volunteers than mean Samaritans is always there offering non-judgemental support for anyone struggling to cope.
* We work in communities, prisons, schools, hospitals, at festivals, and with partners to support people.
* Anyone can contact Samaritans FREE any time from any phone on 116 123, even a mobile without credit. This number won’t show up on your phone bill. Or you can email [jo@samaritans.org](mailto:jo@samaritans.org) or visit [www.samaritans.org](http://www.samaritans.org/)