**UNDER EMBARGO UNTIL 00:01 TUESDAY 21 FEBRUARY 2023**
 **Images & video available to download here:** [www.samaritans.org/stslpress](http://www.samaritans.org/stslpress)

**GAIL PORTER AND CORRIE STAR TEAM UP WITH SAMARITANS TO REMIND PUBLIC THAT SMALL TALK CAN BE LIFESAVING**

* **New Samaritans survey shows only half of the nation feel confident approaching someone they are concerned about in public.**
* **To boost public confidence and help them brush up on conversation starters, mental health advocate Gail Porter and Corrie newcomer and Samaritans volunteer, Channique Sterling-Brown, open Samaritans’ *No Filter Café* in Manchester Piccadilly station, as part of Samaritans’ latest *Small Talk Saves Lives* campaign in partnership with Network Rail, British Transport Police and the wider rail industry.**

Samaritans’ Ambassador Gail Porter and Coronation Street newcomer and Samaritans volunteer Channique Sterling-Brown are reminding the public that we all have the potential to be lifesavers by simply striking up a conversation, as part of Samaritans’ latest *Small Talk Saves Lives* campaign.

Both Gail and Channique are speaking out after new Samaritans research revealed that only 50% of UK adults said they would feel confident approaching and speaking to someone they don’t know if they were concerned about them in public. The survey also suggested that we’re more comfortable behind a screen as a nation, as people would much prefer chatting to someone they don’t know on the phone (33%) or by email (18%), compared to face-to-face (9%).

The top reasons holding back those who said they wouldn’t feel confident were ‘worrying the person wouldn’t welcome their approach’ (44%) and ‘worrying they’d make things worse’ (29%), whilst a quarter said ‘not knowing what to say’ was also a concern.

So, Samaritans is relaunching its *Small Talk Saves Lives* campaign today, in partnership with Network Rail, British Transport Police and the wider rail industry, to empower the public to trust their instincts and start a conversation if they think someone needs help at railway stations and other public settings. The campaign reassures the public that a little small talk like ‘where can I get a coffee?’ can be all it takes to interrupt someone’s suicidal thoughts and help set them on a path to recovery.

Both Gail and Channique know how powerful talking can be. Gail has reached out to Samaritans’ helpline before and attributes talking helping her through tough times, whilst Channique, who plays Dee-Dee Bailey in Coronation Street has been a Samaritans listening volunteer for four years.

Today (21 February) Gail and Channique will open Samaritans’ *No Filter Café,* in Manchester Piccadilly rail station, the first ever coffee shop powered by a good chat. Open to the public for one day only, the café with a twist will ask rail users to pay for their morning macchiato or lunchtime latte by simply practising their small talk skills – aiming to highlight the power of human connection and conversation which could save a life.

Recently, Channique put her skills into practice when she noticed someone that she thought needed help on her drive home from a Samaritans shift. She said: “I could see him in my rear-view mirror, and I just knew I had to double back and check if he was okay. Especially as I’d just finished a Samaritans shift – I thought ‘this is why we do it’. I got out the car and simply said ‘hey, are you okay?’. He said he was fine, but I asked again and said I wanted to check as it was super cold and dark, but he reassured me he was fine and thanked me for asking.

“Even though it was no more than that, I am so glad I made that decision and trusted my gut, because maybe it did interrupt a thought process and showed him that a random person cares. This campaign is so powerful as it’s about a basic understanding that as human beings a bit of compassion and connection can go so far, and you don’t need training for that. It’s about showing others that they’re not alone.”

**Julie Bentley, Samaritans** **CEO** said: “It’s normal to feel anxious about starting a conversation with someone you don’t know in person, but at Samaritans we know first-hand how life-changing that conversation could be. Suicidal thoughts are often temporary and there’s no evidence to suggest that you will make the situation worse – it’s about trusting your instincts, starting a conversation, and showing you care. We know it’s been a really challenging time for people’s mental health over the last few years, so we hope the *Small Talk Saves Lives* campaign and *No Filter Café* helps to build that confidence and remind the public of the difference they can make. Let’s continue to look out for one another – it could save a life.”

**Andrew Haines, Network Rail chief executive, said:** “Everybody who uses the railway, passengers or staff, has the skills to be a life saver. *Small Talk Saves Lives* is about reminding us all that a little conversation can go a long way to help someone in crisis and divert their thoughts from suicide. I am ever so proud of our relationship with Samaritans and British Transport Police, and hope this next stage of the campaign helps educate more people on how they can potentially save a life.”

**British Transport Police ACC Charlie Doyle, national strategic policing lead for suicide prevention, said:** “Together with rail staff and members of the public, our officers continue to look out for vulnerable people and save lives. We know from experience that when someone is in distress, engaging them in conversation can make all the difference in that moment. If people don’t feel comfortable or safe to intervene, they can always tell a member of rail staff or a police officer, text British Transport Police on 61016 or call 999.”

For more information and tips, visit [Samaritans.org/smalltalksaveslives](http://www.samaritans.org/smalltalksaveslives) or join the conversation on social media using #SmallTalkSavesLives

**-ENDS-**

**A press pack is available at** [**http://www.samaritans.org/stslpress.**](http://www.samaritans.org/stslpress) **For press enquiries or interviews with Gail or Channique, please contact Ed Walton -** **ed.walton@premiercomms.com** **(07714 396318)**

**Notes to Editors**

**About the research:**

The research was conducted by Censuswide with 2,004 Nationally Representative UK General Consumers (16+) between 03.01.2023 - 05.01.2023. Censuswide abide by and employ members of the Market Research Society which is based on the ESOMAR principles and are members of The British Polling Council.

**Samaritans and Small Talk Saves Lives:**

* A brand-new campaign film launches today (21 February) across digital and social media, showing the difference people could make if they listen to their instincts and overcome their initial worries that may come to mind if they see someone who needs help.
* Over the next few weeks Samaritans volunteers will also be hosting outreach events at local stations across the network and in the communities, speaking to people about the importance of small talk.
* Launched in 2017, *Small Talk Saves Lives* was developed after research from Middlesex University showed the positive part the public could play in suicide prevention. The campaign is supported by suicide prevention expert Dr Lisa Marzano from Middlesex University.
* Due to the proven link between certain types of media reporting of suicide and increases in suicide rates, please be mindful of Samaritans’ [*Media Guidelines for Reporting Suicid*e](https://www.samaritans.org/about-samaritans/media-guidelines/guidance-reporting-rail-suicides/) and [*Rail Suicide*](https://media.samaritans.org/documents/Media_guidelines_-_Rail_suicides_factsheet_UK_Final.pdf).
* In partnership with Network Rail, Samaritans has trained over 27,000 rail staff and British Transport Police in suicide prevention, enabling them to identify and support vulnerable people to safety. This is part of the charity’s long-standing partnership with the rail industry to reduce suicides and support those affected by them.
* 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 visit [www.samaritans.org](http://www.samaritans.org/)