

# Sevenoaks Samaritans Newsletter

January-March 2023

## A great start to 2023

We've had a busy and fun start to the year trialling different sorts of shifts and new forms of outreach.

### Shifting about...

To help give night callers the support they need, we've created two new mid-week 1am-4am shifts following a successful trial during the Samaritans' Lighten the Nights pilot.



On weekday nights as few as one in ten branches may be listening. During the Hours of Need, 1am-6am, callers are most likely to express suicidal thoughts, have the longest wait times, and are least likely to have their calls answered.

The trial run for these new shifts in March reported meaningful conversations, short wait times for callers and a great sense of camaraderie.

At 105 we already meet the national target, ensuring 10% of our listening hours take place during these critical times. But we're always looking to do more.



*l to r Lucinda Fletcher, Lizzi Burns, Jenny Craig*

We also created a 24-hour shift in February where some 28 volunteers and shift leaders ensured that we listened to callers throughout an entire day. To create a team-building spirit we asked volunteers to come in wearing fabulous hats.

Volunteer Jenny Craig (*pictured top right*) trialled back-to-back shifts during the 24/7 event to clock up a double shift, covering 11.30pm-2.30am and 3am-6am. As we ask volunteers to do one night shift a month, this cleared two months of nights in one go: we'll see if this remains a popular choice.

### ... and reaching out



For this year's Brew Monday, the national campaign showing how a chat over a cup of tea can

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help people who might be struggling, we visited places taking part in the Warm Spaces initiative.



We made contacts and delivered our message at Bat & Ball booking hall, Seal Church Hall and the Bridges Community Centre Café in Edenbridge.

*(picture, left, shows Mike Bossick and Mary Dermanis;*

*overleaf shows Elizabeth Hayball and Anne Betts)*

We returned to Edenbridge Food Bank in January, where volunteer Lindsay Sommer said she was hugely impressed by the food bank's organisation and 'the kindness of the volunteers. I'd really recommend it to other volunteers who are trained for this sort of outreach'.

We're looking to increase this sort of in-person contact this year.

## Football focus

We turned out to Sevenoaks Town Football Club's home match against Ramsgate in February, a fun and vibrant day *(pictured below)* where we deepened our relationship, raised our profile and supported Town's Football v Homophobia message. The club generously donated a portion of the takings to our running costs.



*Above: Dave Hickson, Wendy Gardner, Elizabeth Hayball and Karen Gibbons; below, Jane Rigney, Dave, Sue Lansdale, Karen, Gail Davis and the team*



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## Further outreach

We also ran recruitment and profile raising stands in March at Sevenoaks Library and the Tunbridge Wells volunteer fair, and gave a presentation on our work to regular donors Sevenoaks Town Council.



*Roy Affleck, Catherine Furnish and Karen Gibbons pictured above, at the library*

Volunteer Tom Briody secured long term display space at Bat & Ball, Otford and Dunton Green Stations where you can now see our recruitment and awareness banners.



## 105 News

Lots of activities to report for our hub at 105 St John's Hill, including:

- New Voice over Internet Protocol (VOIP) phones installed (clearer lines, more stable service)
- New TV screen celebrating what we've achieved as a service
- Deep clean of the building – thanks to the volunteers who got their Marigolds on! (including Jane Rigney, right)
- Successful Health & Safety Audit for our building
- Best Practice Email training completed by all listening volunteers – well done, everyone!
- First 'Let's Listen' forum for volunteers to chat over with the Leadership Team how we can improve the service



*Picture above shows service director Kay Turner and volunteers at the Let's Listen event*

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- New Callback form to guide volunteers through all the steps in the process
- Forums to feed volunteers' points of view into our Quality Framework Review – a required audit from the central charity to check how our service is working.

## Our recruitment drive

We're growing our volunteer numbers rapidly, with some five new training groups entering their next stage of their Samaritans journey in the last three months.

It takes a huge effort to onboard everybdo – 100 volunteer hours for each new volunteer!

However, we need to keep recruiting at this rate as life events (house, job, family and health changes) mean many volunteers step back each year for a time.

To keep our numbers up, and to reach our desired target of 150 full listening volunteers, we need to recruit and train around 50 people each year.



Picture shows Alex Bryant, Olivia Bowers and Karen Baynam at the Tunbridge Wells recruitment fair

## Samaritans campaigns



Visit <https://www.samaritans.org/support-us/campaign/small-talk-saves-lives/> for a lovely short film showing how Small Talk Saves Lives, our campaign encouraging people to act to prevent suicide in public settings.



We're celebrating our 70th birthday this year by creating the Samaritans Listening Garden at the RHS Chelsea Flower Show in May (pictured above) – look out for it in the news.



## Next time...

...read about our plans to celebrate Samaritans' 70<sup>th</sup> birthday, and what we'll be doing to raise funds in 2023.

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