

What do we do  
about social media?  
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# 24/7

You help us be there  
round the clock

**Your Spring  
2019 newsletter**



Small Talk  
Saves Lives  
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# SAMARITANS

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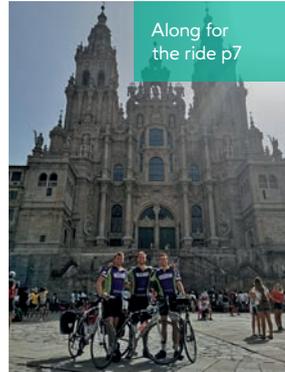
*If you'd like to share your story to help encourage others to talk and increase awareness of Samaritans' work, please get in touch with us:*

 03709 00 00 32

 [supportercare@samaritans.org](mailto:supportercare@samaritans.org)



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Saves Lives p4



Along for  
the ride p7



How a  
Samaritan  
changed my  
life p13

You may have noticed that this edition of the newsletter looks a little different. That's because we've recently updated our brand to make it warmer and more modern, and to help us reach as many people as possible.

The updated branding is warm, life affirming and hopeful. We hope it will help us reach more people who need us and inspire more people to support us.

Last spring, we invited you to fill in a survey all about your experience of being a Samaritans' supporter. Here's what you told us.



42% of you who responded to our survey said you've supported us for over 10 years, which is amazing. Thank you.



40% of you support Samaritans with a regular gift.



Half of you support us by answering our appeals.



Over 25% of you have used Samaritans' services, or know someone who has.



to everyone who chooses to donate to us.

Many of you were really interested in hearing human stories from volunteers and callers helped by our services.

We'd love to hear your views this year too – there are five quick questions you'll find on the back of the enclosed form. Your answers will help us provide the best experience for all our supporters.

Thank you – we couldn't do it without you.

# Small Talk Saves Lives

**You've probably spotted our Small Talk Saves Lives campaign while travelling on the trains – or seen it online. The campaign aims to reduce suicide on the railways by encouraging people to trust their instincts and strike up a conversation if they see someone they think needs help.**

National Rail advertised the campaign free of charge on the back of train tickets, helping us reach millions with this important message.

TV presenter Gaby Roslin also supported the campaign, sharing her own intervention story after stopping to talk to someone in a park when she noticed something wasn't right.

The campaign launched with Network Rail, British Transport Police and the wider rail industry back in 2017. To date, it's won 18 awards. Our latest burst of activity was in November 2018 and we're pleased to say



Small Talk Saves Lives has now reached more than 17 million people on social media.

Sarah's\* story – the video at the heart of the campaign – has been watched by 5.7 million.

Sarah says: "Someone showing they cared about me helped to interrupt my suicidal thoughts and that gave them time to subside. I hope the campaign will encourage people to start a conversation if they think someone could need help. You won't make things worse – and you could save a life."

Everyone has the skills to help save a life. The same small talk we use every day can be enough to interrupt someone's suicidal thoughts. Even a phrase as simple as "I can't believe the weather today" could take them out of themselves for a moment.

Read more about the campaign at [samaritans.org/STSL](https://www.samaritans.org/STSL)

\*Sarah's name has been changed to protect her identity.

STOP PRESS!

## Have you seen our Real People, Real Stories campaign?

We recently launched a new campaign called 'Real People, Real Stories', supported by National Rail. The campaign features real men sharing their stories and telling others that, when life gets tough, Samaritans is here to listen. In a partnership with talkSPORT radio, celebrities are sharing their stories about their tough times and how they came through. We hope this campaign will help more people stop, listen and know Samaritans is there for anyone who's finding life tough right now.

[samaritans.org/realpeoplerealstories](https://www.samaritans.org/realpeoplerealstories)

STOP PRESS!

# Our work in prisons

**People in prison are up to 10 times more likely than those outside to take their own lives. That's why Samaritans works closely with prison services across the UK and Ireland to try and reduce self-inflicted deaths and self-harm among prisoners.**

We've been running our Listener scheme in prisons since 1991. Samaritans volunteers select and train prisoners to become Listeners, who provide confidential emotional support to peers struggling to cope. Nearly every UK and Irish prison now has a Listener scheme.

The risk of suicide is higher when a prisoner enters or moves prison. In 2018, we piloted a Coping with Life in Prisons



project in two London prisons to help support new prisoners dealing with life inside. Facilitators who have previously experienced life in prison were trained to deliver emotional resilience sessions. Over 350 people attended 52 sessions, encouraging them to develop positive coping strategies.

Steve, who trained as a Listener in prison, worked with Samaritans to deliver the sessions. He says: "In prison I had felt depression and sadness and had been suicidal.

"While in prison, someone spoke to us and showed it is possible to break the cycle, which really influenced me. When I shared my own story, the prisoners asked me how I did it.

"People were initially sceptical but, by the course's end, realised they could benefit from using the coping strategies they'd learned."

Learn more about our work in prisons at [samaritans.org/prisons](https://www.samaritans.org/prisons)

# Blue Monday becomes Brew Monday



**Blue Monday falls on the third Monday of every January and is widely considered one of the most difficult days of the year. This year, we turned Blue Monday into Brew Monday, banishing the January blues by encouraging people to spend time with friends, family, neighbours or workmates and lend a listening ear over a brew.**

Samaritans staff and volunteers were in 159 railway stations across Great Britain, inviting people to join them for a cuppa and handing out more than 100,000 Brew Monday teabags promoting our free helpline number.

All over the UK people put the kettle on, baked and chatted to raise funds to save lives. So far, over £30,000 has been raised, which means Brew Monday has raised enough money to fund 6,000 conversations between a Samaritans volunteer and someone struggling to cope. That's truly life saving.

Life can be tough all year round. And that's why Brew Monday isn't exclusive to January. Sharing a cuppa is a great excuse to take time to listen and – who knows – it might just save a life.

Swap the Monday blues for Monday brews and sign up at [samaritans.org/brewmonday](https://www.samaritans.org/brewmonday)





# Along for the ride

## **Ben Hubbard and brothers Luke and Ivo Gavin took on the Camino de Santiago by bike in July 2018 to raise funds in memory of Ben's uncle, Henry Nott.**

Henry sadly took his own life when Ben, now 26, was 11. His friends Luke and Ivo joined Ben in cycling 430 miles in 5.5 days, climbing a total of 38,000 feet. Starting in Biarritz, France the trio finished in Santiago de Compostela, northern Spain. Henry had walked the same route in two stints a year or so before he died.

Ben says: "I chose to follow in Henry's footsteps because it was a way to honour what he achieved. We decided to cycle

the northern route because it was the hardest, crossing several mountain ranges.

"Along the way, we had nine punctures, one chain snap, one crash and one exploding wheel. I think Henry would have admired our persistence to see it through. When we finally reached the cathedral at Compostela, it was a deeply satisfying moment. Our donations definitely helped spur us on when times were tough. We've raised £1,560 so far.

"Henry supported Samaritans but unfortunately didn't use the charity when he needed it most. We hope we've raised awareness about Samaritans' valuable work."



Feel inspired to fundraise for us? Find out more about organising your own event at [samaritans.org/DYOT](https://www.samaritans.org/DYOT)

# Join our summer Samarathon

Even gentle forms of exercise can benefit your mental wellness. So, this July, we're organising the Samarathon – a virtual marathon you can complete in your own time, at your own pace.

You simply need to walk, jog or run 26.2 miles, over the course of July whilst raising life-changing money for Samaritans. We'd love you to join us.

Register your interest at [samaritans.org/samarathon](https://samaritans.org/samarathon) or by scanning the code below with the camera on your phone:



For more information and any enquiries please email [events@samaritans.org](mailto:events@samaritans.org)



# Listening at university

**Diana Gibbon has been a listening volunteer at the York Samaritans Branch for five years and a branch education officer for the past three. She tells us about her work at the University of York.**



“ Representatives from York Samaritans Branch have been on the University of York campus supporting students on Monday and Wednesday evenings since January 2018. We also run information and training sessions for the university security team, who do an amazing job supporting vulnerable students.

Students face many pressures and struggle with being viewed differently by their peers and tutors if they open up. Adapting to an entirely new lifestyle and having to cope with new studies and forging friendships, as well as contending with daily living needs, are just some of the pressures they can face. Some students also live a long way from home and aren't able to get back as often as they'd like.

Last year, the university staff produced posters advertising the service we provide. These are displayed throughout the university, including on the display screens positioned at various points. We also feature on university social media.

Some students return more than once and say they find it useful because we're accessible, but not connected to the university.

We're now working across the Yorkshire and Humberside region, exploring ways of working with sixth-form students to help them prepare emotionally for university life.

Providing a wide variety of accessible support is essential, and to keep promoting the importance of seeing emotional health as being as important as physical health. ”



If you're interested in finding out more about volunteering for Samaritans, visit [samaritans.org/volunteer](https://www.samaritans.org/volunteer)

# Make suicide prevention a priority

**Samaritans CEO Ruth Sutherland addressed MPs at the Health and Social Care Select Committee about suicide prevention in January. Her message was: “We need to make suicide prevention a priority at the heart of government, with everyone working together to reduce deaths.”**

Ruth was one of a small number of stakeholders, including Jackie Doyle-Price, Minister for Suicide Prevention, who participated in the session.

In Ruth’s statement to the Committee, she said: “Although significant progress has been made since March 2017, when the Committee published its recommendations, it has been too slow in key areas.

“Major improvements have been made. For instance, NHS England money is now starting to reach some of the highest-risk areas for suicide, we have a national cross-government delivery group and practically every area has a suicide prevention plan.

“However, suicide still needs to be tackled as a joined-up public health priority, with an ambitious and properly resourced workplan that includes all government departments, not just Health and Social Care, Education and Justice.

“Samaritans receives over five million requests for help every year from people who are overwhelmed emotionally. While important, it’s not enough to focus on the third of people who die by suicide who are in contact with mental health services. We also have to reach the two-thirds of people who aren’t. This means taking a whole-community approach.”



Read more about our campaigning work and find out how you can get involved at [samaritans.org/policy](https://www.samaritans.org/policy)

# What do we do about social media?

**With approximately 200 young people taking their lives every year, the role played by social media and the internet has dominated headlines.**

Suicide, as we know, is complex and rarely caused by one factor. Similarly, research around the role played by the internet and social media is mixed, telling us there can be both positive and negative outcomes for young people.

Online content about self-harm and suicide is not hard to find, and a person's vulnerability and the reasons they're looking for content like this will inform the impact it has on them. There's certainly evidence that suggests some imagery can glorify, sensationalise and normalise self-harm. But there's also evidence that people who share images or talk about self-harm on social media are doing so to communicate distress, share their journeys of recovery, and provide support and information.

We want harmful content to be harder to find, and supportive, helpful content to be better promoted.

That's why, recently, we met key decision-makers and social media companies to influence the changes that need to take place. Samaritans was also the only voluntary sector organisation to attend a summit on the issue, with Secretary of State for Health and Social Care Matt Hancock, Suicide Prevention Minister Jackie Doyle-Price and the large online providers.

Many platforms, such as Instagram, announced changes they'll make to restrict harmful content, but there's still a way to go. Samaritans will continue to advise social media platforms and government, and establish ways to formalise this support.



To read more about social media visit [samaritans.org/internet](https://www.samaritans.org/internet)

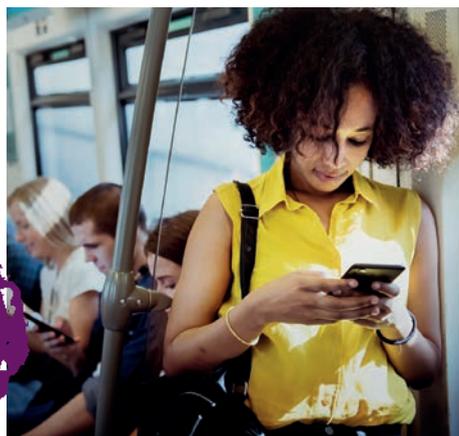


Image © shutterstock.com

# Loneliness, suicide and young people

**We recently published research we'd conducted with young people across England who've experienced thoughts of suicide. Most of them told us that their loneliness played a role in causing their suicidal thoughts.**

Worryingly, many of the young people we spoke to said they didn't feel able to ask for help with loneliness because of the stigma around it. And when they did ask for help, it often wasn't available or suitable to their needs. Our findings were supported by recent government statistics showing that young people report feeling lonely more often than older age groups.

We know there is rarely one reason for a person to feel suicidal. And, just as with suicide, loneliness is complex. It is a personal experience that is different for every person, but across the population we found there is an association between suicide and loneliness.

What's clear is that we need to listen to what young people are telling us. Many of them are struggling with loneliness, it can be a serious health issue and preventing it could be an important part of suicide prevention.

That's why we're calling on the government to:

- Set out ambitious targets across their plans to improve wellbeing in young people, including tackling loneliness.
- Roll out national campaigns to tackle stigma that young people are experiencing around loneliness.
- Increase public health funding for loneliness and ensure this is directed towards services that help young people connect with their communities.



Image © Shutterstock.com

Take part in our current campaign on youth loneliness – it only takes a few seconds to email the government via [samaritans.org/action](https://www.samaritans.org/action)

# How a Samaritan changed my life



**You may remember reading about Helen\* last Christmas. Helen hit rock bottom when, just before Christmas 2015, her husband of five months left her and her two children. She turned to Samaritans for support. We caught up with her recently.**

“Life is really good. I’ve an adorable puppy and I’ve just started a Bachelor of Science degree.

“I realised the evening I called Samaritans that my life wasn’t ruined. I somehow subconsciously embraced the fact I had a purpose – to be a mother to my amazing children and exceed my own apprehension of never being enough. Just having someone impartial and unassuming was key when I was unable to see through the fog.

“Although the road to recovery has been slow, since that call I’ve done many things I didn’t think I ever would. I went to Thailand for two weeks on my own. While there, I realised I wasn’t scared of being alone and liked who I was. I decided I wanted more from life. I’ve retaken my English and Maths GCSEs, passing each. And I completed an access course – a qualification enabling me to go on to higher education – one of the hardest things I’ve ever undertaken.

“To the incredible volunteer who listened to me, you were not only a lifesaver – you’ve been part of my life changing. I’d encourage anyone who’s struggling to reach out and make the call. ”

Thank you to everyone who supported our Christmas appeal. We can’t be there for people without you. Know someone who needs help? They can reach us on **116 123** or at **jo@samaritans.org**

\*Helen’s name has been changed to protect her identity.



# Suicide – the situation now

Latest data released by the Office for National Statistics demonstrates there is still much work to do around preventing suicide.

There were **6,213**  
suicides in the UK and Republic of Ireland in 2017.

In the UK, the number of suicides decreased for the  
**3rd year in a row**

In men aged **45-49**  
however, the rates are rising.

In England, Scotland and the Republic of Ireland, the  
suicide rate fell between

**2016** and **2017**.

But in Northern Ireland and Wales it  
**increased**

To find out more  
about suicide, visit  
[samaritans.org/facts](https://www.samaritans.org/facts)

# Working with compassion – a toolkit for Wales

**We designed the Samaritans Working with Compassion toolkit to help people develop compassionate approaches at work – and improve interaction between staff, customers and service users.**

Many sectors, services and workplaces in Wales interact with people experiencing emotional distress. Samaritans wants to encourage a culture where people are confident to ask for and give help. As part of the process, we consulted representatives from a diverse range of organisations – many of them frontline staff – from the police service to jobcentres to third-sector organisations.

The toolkit includes tips and actions to use in our working lives, for example how to deal with difficult conversations, spot the signs of emotional distress and become a better listener. There's a comprehensive

list of useful organisations and helplines too, if staff need to signpost a customer to further help.

The toolkit's not just for the workplace though – it's been designed to encourage us all to act more compassionately towards ourselves and others in general.

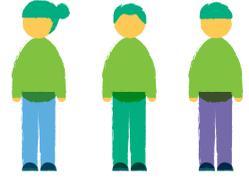
Since launching our toolkit for World Suicide Prevention Day 2018 in September, it's been distributed widely, including among all Assembly Members, and endorsed by many organisations across Wales.

For your Working with Compassion toolkit, go to [samaritans.org/toolkit](https://samaritans.org/toolkit)

***"I'm delighted to see this excellent Working with Compassion toolkit, launched by Samaritans Cymru. I'm going to talk to organisations in my constituency about how we can use this kit. Compassion can change and save lives."***

Lynne Neagle, Assembly Member and Chair of the Children, Young People and Education Committee

# Join our Supporter Panel



What's the first thing you think of when you hear the word Samaritans? Your answers to simple questions like this could help shape our future. If you have opinions about Samaritans, we'd love to hear them. As a member of the Supporter Panel, you'll get to:

- Help shape the future of Samaritans.
- Help us reach more people who are struggling to cope.

- Make a difference to us in a way that's easy for you.

You choose your level of involvement (whatever suits you) and the results will help us improve. Add your voice at [bit.ly/supporterpanel](https://bit.ly/supporterpanel)

## Thank you

Please also take a moment to complete our short survey on the enclosed form. Thank you!

## Supporter survey

Your feedback will help us improve future editions of this newsletter. Thank you.

**SAMARITANS**

### Supporter survey

Help us improve future newsletters by taking a few minutes to share your feedback.

1 How do you support Samaritans?  
 I make regular donations  
 I'm a volunteer  
 I have taken part in raising awareness  
 Other - please specify: \_\_\_\_\_

I've taken part in (an) event(s) to raise money for Samaritans  
 I have made a donation  
 I've raised money in memory of someone

2 Overall, how satisfied are you with this newsletter as a Samaritans' supporter?  
Very satisfied  
0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10  
Very unsatisfied

Please tell us why?  
\_\_\_\_\_

3 Which articles do you enjoy reading about?  
Stories from people who have used our service  
Volunteer stories (eg Diane's volunteering at University of York)  
Research information (eg Research into the effects of social media)  
Campaigning stories (Working with the government)  
The work we do in the community (eg Steve's work in prisons)

No interest Little interest Some interest Moderate interest Complete interest

4 Have we inspired you about the impact of your donation as a Samaritans' supporter?  
 Yes  No Can you please tell us more? \_\_\_\_\_

5 How can we improve this newsletter in the future?  
\_\_\_\_\_

**SAMARITANS**

Samaritans is a charity registered in England and Wales (219432) and in Scotland (SC040604). Samaritans, The Upper Mill, Kingston Road, Ewell KT17 2AF.