

Lived Experience Advisor Information Pack

- 4 hours per month over an 8 month period (March-November)
- £500 stipend
- Home based – all activity will take place online
- Application deadline: 9am, 8th March 2021

Hello and thank you for your interest in being a Lived Experience Advisor for Samaritans. We are looking for a small group of people with lived experience of self-harm who live in England, to work alongside and advise the Research & Evaluation team on a new research project.

The project

We know from [our previous research](#) that peer support can be an important source of support for people who have self-harmed. However, not much is known about *how* peer support can help people who self-harm or the potential risks of this type of support. We are looking for people with lived experience of self-harm to work jointly with us on a research project to help answer these questions. No experience of peer support or research skills is needed.

The role

You'll be involved in designing the research and interpreting our findings. You'll also have the opportunity to co-lead the research workshops, if you'd like to do this. We'll provide the training you need to do this effectively and confidently.

You will provide valuable feedback and advice to the research team, based on your personal experiences. You will help to fill knowledge and experience gaps within our research team and share your valuable perspective, which we believe will lead to more insightful and relevant research. We also hope your input will improve the research experience for participants, making the study more accessible, ethical and enjoyable for those who give up their time to take part.

As one of our first projects with Lived Experience Advisors, this is an opportunity to help us learn and develop the way we involve people who've self-harmed in Samaritans' work.

What's involved?

- There will be 8 virtual meetings with the advisors and research team between March – November, taking place at key stages of the project. The meetings will take the format of an informal group discussion with no more than 8 people - we want the atmosphere to be relaxed, safe and enjoyable!
- In each meeting we will look at a different stage of the research process, and you will have an opportunity to provide feedback and advice on how you think things could be improved. For example:

- Reviewing research materials (consent forms, information sheets), checking the wording is clear, easy to understand, and minimises risk of being triggering to the research participants
- Designing workshop activities that help answer our research questions
- Interpreting findings and helping us come up with key messages from the project
- We will occasionally send you information and tasks to complete independently.
- Throughout the project we will invite you to keep reflective diaries and complete a few short surveys, so we can see how taking part has been for you and make any improvements for the way we work with Lived Experience Advisors in the future.
- In total, we'll ask you to spend approximately 4 hours per month contributing to the project, mostly through group meetings.
- Additionally, you'll have the opportunity to be trained to co-lead workshops with the research team, helping to create a safe space for participants, build trust and encourage discussions.

What skills do I need?

- **No previous experience or knowledge of research/lived experience advisory work is necessary.**
- Lived experience of self-harm is essential, as this is what the project is focusing on
 - Within the context of this project, *self-harm* is defined as any deliberate act of self-poisoning or self-injury *without* suicidal intent. This excludes accidents, substance misuse and eating disorders.
- Able to work well in a group
- Respectful and open to other people's ideas and experiences
- Willingness and ability to contribute to group discussions
- Able to be organised and effectively manage your time (e.g. remember meeting times, meeting agreed deadlines)
- Able to be reliable and complete agreed tasks, asking for help if needed
- Able to talk about your experiences of self-harm and emotional distress, in whatever way that feels safe and comfortable to you, and apply these to a project about peer support
- Able to think creatively and come up with ideas or suggestions
- Willing to provide feedback on the experience of taking part, and let us know if you are having any problems

What will we offer you?

Samaritans recognises the value of incorporating the voices of people with lived experience into our work and we strive to make your involvement engaging and rewarding. We will support you to gain experience in aspects of the research process that interest you and to develop relevant skills in research and team working. All Lived Experience Advisors will be offered the following:

1. Financial Package

- £500 stipend as financial recognition for your time and the work you conduct.

- Reimbursement of reasonable travel expenses in line with Samaritans Expenses Policy (please note that due to restrictions related to the Coronavirus Pandemic there will be no travel expectations linked to this project).

2. Well-being Support

- Access to emotional support from Samaritans' listening volunteers via our helpline, 116 123.
- Access to Mental Health First Aiders, if needed during or after meetings.
- Option to be involved in a buddy scheme with other Lived Experience Advisors working on similar Lived Experience programmes within Samaritans.

3. Continued Professional Development

- Letter of participation from Samaritans on completing the project.
- Invitation to attend events related to this project and other Samaritans research projects, for example 'Research Lunches' where recent Samaritans publications are presented and discussed.
- Opportunity to receive training and support to co-lead workshops as part of the project.

What is the selection process?

You can apply by completing [this application form](#).

Using a scoring matrix, we will assess all applications against the bullet points listed under '*What skills do I need?*'. We won't see your name or any demographic data (eg your ethnicity or address) during the selection process.

We encourage all candidates to use a STAR approach when answering questions in the application form. How to use the STAR technique:

1. describe the **Situation** and when did it take place
2. explain the **Task** and what was the objective
3. give details about the **Action** you took to achieve this
4. close with the **Result** of your action.

You will be notified about whether you have been successful or not by 19th March.

If you have been successful, you will be invited to an introduction meeting, where you can meet Ellie, the lead researcher, and ask any questions about the project. We'll also discuss any extra support or adjustments you might need to take part.

Additional information

- As a Lived Experience Advisor you will be contracted to provide advice and support to the Samaritans Research Team in a consultant capacity. This means you would be asked to sign a contract stating your responsibilities in relation to this project and that you will be paid for your contribution to the specific project.
- This project will involve discussions of sensitive topics around self-harm and experiences accessing support. Whilst there will be support systems put in place, if you think you may find this triggering or distressing, we recommend you do not apply for this project.



SAMARITANS

We support applicants to be able to participate, including offering reasonable adjustments where required.

Get in touch

If you have any questions or would like to hear more about the project, please contact Ellie Ball, the lead researcher, on research@samaritans.org.