

I FOUND THE SPACE TO SAY IT

Ireland Impact Report
2013/2014

SAMARITANS

IRELAND

VISION, MISSION AND VALUES

Samaritans' vision is that fewer people die by suicide

We work to achieve this vision by making it our mission to alleviate emotional distress and reduce the incidence of suicidal feelings and suicidal behaviour. We do this by:

- **Being available** round the clock to provide emotional support for people who are experiencing feelings of emotional distress or despair, including those which may lead to suicide.
- **Working in partnership** with other organisations, agencies and experts to achieve our Vision.
- **Influencing public policy** and raising awareness of the challenges of reducing suicide.
- **Reaching out** to high risk groups and communities to reduce the risk of suicide.

We are committed to the following values:

listening, confidentiality, people making their own decisions, being non-judgemental and offering people human contact.



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Robert McBride,
Regional Director

Samaritans supports people struggling to cope, helping them to make their own decisions and find a way through their problems. Everything we do is focused on giving people time and space to explore their feelings, whether they are suicidal or not.

This year, generous funding from the Telecommunications and Internet Federation means that for the first time we can offer our service free to callers, using the 116 123 number.

We know call charges can be a barrier that prevents many people from accessing our support. The introduction of our free to caller number means that our service is now available to everyone – and this can make a lifesaving difference. The number of calls for help we have received has increased significantly since the 116 123 number was launched; this highlights the need for our service. Samaritans' volunteers, all people who care passionately for the welfare of their fellow human beings, will have supported around half a million callers in Ireland by the end of 2014.

We need to continue recruiting and training more volunteers to help us to maintain our round the clock availability. The organisation has to be properly resourced to carry on delivering its quality service. We support people throughout the whole of Ireland but we operate from branches which are strongly rooted in their communities. This local focus, as well as our national structure, made us a natural partner for the GAA's (Gaelic Athletic Association) mental health initiative to encourage people to ask for help when times are tough. We have nurtured a relationship with one of the principal gate-keepers in nearly every parish in Ireland. We hope these relationships will change lives and be a model for other partnerships in the future.

I was absolutely delighted that we were able to extend our service into the counties of Wexford and Wicklow this year. Thirty volunteers have been trained and are already responding to callers from a new centre just off Arklow Main Street and we are continuing to recruit new volunteers.

Dublin and Waterford branches have invested a great deal of time and energy getting the service up and running. It is just one example of the dedication and enthusiasm which makes me proud to be a Samaritans volunteer and doubly proud of my fellow volunteers' achievements.

There are so many more achievements you'll read about in this report from our inspiring Regional Conference organised by Athlone branch, Cork branch's co-hosting of a day of high-profile seminars on Responding to Suicidal Crisis, and our regional outreach team's prize-winning 'You Talk, I'll Listen' garden at the Bloom Festival, where ten thousand visitors had the opportunity to talk to us about our service.

When looking at the progress we have made in 2014 – it is clear to see how closely related challenges and achievements can be. Our efforts to meet the challenges we face by offering support round the clock, every single day of the year, have led to some significant achievements. We respond well to all of the challenges we face, and the support of Irish institutions, businesses and communities will make sure that we continue to do so.



Catherine Brogan
Executive Director

The past twelve months have been a time of great activity and growth for Samaritans as we have worked to make sure that our support is as easy to access as possible.

Prebendary Dr Chad Varah CH CBE, founder of Samaritans, had a vision in 1953 that anyone struggling to cope would be able to access emotional support round the clock every single day of the year without barriers.

This year, we broke down a significant barrier with the launch of our new free to caller number – 116 123 – in March. A unique partnership between Samaritans, the telecommunications industry, Government and the National Office for Suicide Prevention (NOSP) made it possible for us to offer a space for people to talk at any time of the day or night, and at no cost to our callers.

Removing the barrier of cost has seen a dramatic increase in calls to the helpline. We have received 25% more calls than we did in the previous 12 month period and are on track to answer half a million calls for help this year. Samaritans volunteers have responded to this huge demand for our service by increasing the number of listening hours they provide by 38%. The dedication of our volunteers allows us to be there for people who are struggling to cope.

Reaching out to people who need us but may never have heard of us is crucial. New and existing partnerships, and the support we offer to groups,

have helped us raise awareness of Samaritans to people who may not have been familiar with us. Our partnership with the GAA has allowed us to reach out to communities across Ireland, and our collaboration with the Health Service Executive (HSE) has seen our number used on the new national mental health campaign, 'Little Things'. Branches across the country have raised awareness about Samaritans in the community, and at public events and festivals, throughout the year.

Our 'Connect' project has strengthened our relationships with other agencies and has shown positive results for everyone, most especially callers.

As awareness of our service increases, along with demand, we need to continue to grow as an organisation. In 2014, Samaritans Ireland launched its new Strategic Action Plan. This plan will guide the direction of Samaritans Ireland until 2016. Support from the HSE's National Office for Suicide Prevention has allowed us to expand our team to deliver the new free to caller number and develop the work of Samaritans.

The organisations who we partner with, as well as those who offer funding and support, are hugely important to our work. Finally, none of what Samaritans achieves in Ireland would be possible without the 1,500 plus volunteers whose dedication, professionalism and passion make our service possible.

THE WORK OF SAMARITANS IN IRELAND

Samaritans was founded in 1953. It is the central charity and coordinating body for the 201 Samaritans branches in the UK and Republic of Ireland, the Channel Islands and the Isle of Man.

Each branch is an independent, charitable organisation. Samaritans branches are organised and work together in 13 geographic regions to offer space to talk for anyone going through a difficult time. The 21 branches in Ireland comprise one region, with eight branches located in Northern Ireland and 12 in the Republic of Ireland – as well as our Festival branch. This report deals solely with the work of the branches in the Republic of Ireland.

The head office of Central Charity is based in Surrey and Samaritans Ireland is based in Dublin. Samaritans Ireland was established in December 2007 and began operating in April 2008. It is incorporated in the Republic of Ireland as a company limited by guarantee.

Samaritans is governed by a Board of Trustees, which currently has the maximum 13 members, who are also Directors of the company. Two-thirds of the Board of Trustees must be Samaritans volunteers. The Board is advised by the Council of Samaritans, which is made up of a representative from each Samaritans branch, a representative from each of the 13 operational regions and the Chair.

The Chair of Samaritans, who is elected by the Council of Samaritans, is also the Chair of the Board of Trustees. The Regional Directors represent the Board of Trustees in the wider organisation and play a key role in supporting branches to bring in Samaritans' policies. In Ireland, the position of Regional Director is currently held by Robert McBride.

Overview of services

Samaritans offers a safe place for people to talk when things are getting to them. You do not have to be suicidal to use our service. We're always here and volunteers keep conversations private. People can speak to us by telephone, face-to-face, email, text message and via letter. We also reach out to people at festivals and other public events, in prisons, hospitals, schools, the workplace and with other groups in local communities, such as at homeless shelters.

People contact Samaritans about a wide range of issues, including depression, relationship and family issues, loneliness, physical and mental health issues, alcohol, drugs, self-harm, financial worries, illness and exam pressures, as well as suicidal thoughts and feelings. In 2014, financial pressures and their impact on relationships and families were recurring reasons people gave for contacting us.



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GAA partnership

In April 2014, the GAA and Samaritans teamed up to announce a new partnership to offer emotional support to GAA members who are struggling to cope.

The GAA have chosen Samaritans as their mental health partner, with both organisations working together to encourage people who are going through a hard time to access the support provided by Samaritans.

We are working together nationally and locally to raise awareness of our service. The GAA and Samaritans are an important part of community life in Ireland and want to support people to work through their problems.

Each Samaritans branch has appointed a GAA liaison representative to work with the committees in their area and respond to the growing desire of clubs to provide support locally. Samaritans are delivering a number of active listening workshops through the GAA's new county health and wellbeing committees.

This partnership has enabled Samaritans to raise awareness of our service among the GAA community. Posters have been issued to every GAA club in Ireland promoting our service and there are links on the GAA.ie website to our telephone and email details.

Samaritans had a visible presence at Provincial Championship games during the summer. Teams of volunteers were at the Leinster and Ulster Provincial Football Finals, the Munster Hurling Final and the Fan Zone Health Fair to let match-goers know about our service and to hand out publicity materials. Over the three matches our volunteers raised awareness of our service to 49,000 fans. Information appeared on the big screen during these matches and in the match programmes.



116 123

In March 2014, Samaritans launched a new free to caller number – 116 123 – for people who are struggling to cope. The number replaces Samaritans’ existing low cost number in the Republic of Ireland and makes it possible for people living there to access the service at any time of the day or night, free of charge.

Having a free to caller number will make it easier for people, particularly those in the most vulnerable groups, to call Samaritans. There has been an increase of more than 50% in calls to the helpline in Quarter two and three in 2014 compared to the same period in 2013. If the volume of calls received continues at this level for the rest of the year, Samaritans will answer half a million helpline calls in 2014.

The free to caller number came about following a decision from the European Commission to reserve a common telephone number for emotional support helplines in all EU member states. This followed the decision by the European Commission to designate other 116 numbers for services of extreme social value, such as those concerned with missing children or victims of crime.

In Ireland, ComReg managed the assignment of the 116 numbers. It gave the emotional support helpline to Samaritans, as it is the only organisation in Ireland (voluntary or statutory) already meeting – and exceeding – all of the European Commission’s minimum standards for a harmonised emotional support service, notably with our round the clock, seven-days-a week coverage.

Since the number was allocated, Samaritans has partnered with the six largest telecoms providers – BT Ireland, eircom Group, O2, Three, UPC and Vodafone Ireland – which are members of IBEC’s Telecommunications and Internet Federation (TIF).



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East Coast Service

They have committed to a two-year funding programme for the number. The support of the telecoms industry has allowed Samaritans to concentrate on developing the infrastructure required to operate the new free to caller number in the Republic of Ireland.

In September, the work of TIF and the telecommunication industry to support the number was recognised with a nomination for a Chambers Ireland Corporate Social Responsibility Award.

In 2013, Samaritans were asked to explore the possibility of opening a service by the local community in Arklow. 18 months later, the East Coast Service was launched. East Coast Samaritans is based in Arklow and serves communities in Wicklow and Wexford.

It would have been impossible to achieve this so quickly without the dedication and enthusiasm of the volunteers from Dublin, Waterford, Kilkenny, and the regional training team, who recruited and trained local volunteers. We began recruiting volunteers in January 2014 and by September thirty volunteers from Wicklow and Wexford had been recruited and trained.

The East Coast Service is managed by Dublin branch with support from the Waterford and Kilkenny branches. The service helps us provide support to the communities of Wicklow and Wexford and to raise awareness of our service.

We will continue recruiting and training more volunteers so that more calls can be answered on the East Coast. The response from the local community has been very supportive and we look forward to the service growing.



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Outreach and training services

Samaritans branches are rooted in their local communities. One of the services volunteers offer is skills training in local settings.

Each year, Samaritans receives many requests for training in 'active listening' skills, the core element of our service. Samaritans offers skills training in this area for a range of agencies, groups and other charities, including; Money Advice and Budgeting Service, GAA clubs, Dublin Fire Brigade and Raidió Teilifís Éireann. More than 475 participants from 20 organisations have received this training and further training is scheduled before the end of the year.

Interest in training from business, sports and representative groups has increased, as more people are beginning to appreciate the importance of listening, talking and building resilience within organisations.

Samaritans volunteers also work with schools, youth groups and third-level institutions in supporting the many initiatives that are undertaken to educate people about the importance of maintaining good mental health and techniques for improving coping skills.



© Ark Photography

Bloom festival

Samaritans teamed up with designer Andrew Christopher Dunne to create the 'You Talk, I'll Listen' garden at the Bord Bia Bloom Festival – Ireland's largest garden festival.

'You Talk, I'll Listen' was designed to mirror the room to breathe and think clearly that our service offers. The garden was awarded the Gold Medal for Best Medium Sized Garden and won the prestigious Designers' Choice Garden title.

More than 100,000 people visited the festival and the garden offered a wonderful opportunity for us to connect with the public in a peaceful place.

The garden's message was that in the midst of turmoil and busyness, Samaritans offers a safe and tranquil space in which people can talk in confidence — about their lives, concerns, hopes and fears.

Over the four days of the festival, Samaritans volunteers from branches across Ireland spoke to festivalgoers about the meaning behind the garden and the support we offer.

We handed out information about our service and how people can volunteer with Samaritans. It was a great opportunity for people to find out more about what Samaritans do in a relaxed and informal setting.

There was lots of other activity in the garden over the course of the festival. President Michael D. Higgins and his wife Sabina visited the garden and the Bealtaine Choir performed – they did a great job of singing in the rain!



Connect – getting support to those who need it

The Connect project was designed to improve the understanding of Samaritans' work, as well as encouraging cooperation and partnership in the mental health sector. Samaritans has been working since 2012 to build relationships with other organisations by sharing information and making our helpline services available, where appropriate.

This has been very positive and many organisations have been very willing to engage and work with us.

As part of the Connect project, we have introduced a direct divert system where organisations can forward their helpline to Samaritans when their own helpline is unavailable.

The caller will automatically be directed to Samaritans' helpline. The system is well established with LGBT Helpline and the charities Aware and Shine have recently set up a direct divert system with us. We plan to add further services next year.

Talk to Us 2014

Talk to Us is Samaritans' annual awareness campaign which is held in July each year to highlight the importance of talking, and to spread the word about our service.

Love/Hate's Peter Coonan, RTÉ's Six One news anchor, Bryan Dobson, Newstalk's Off the Ball presenter, Ger Gilroy, TG4's sports co-commentator, Deirdre Breathnach and Sarah Ryan from the Dublin Senior Camogie team all lent their support to the launch of the campaign this year. The launch also marked the unveiling of a specially commissioned 45x10ft Talk to Us mural, painted in bright green along the side of River House on Chancery Street, in Dublin's north inner city.

The launch kicked off a month of activity where Samaritans branches throughout the country took to the streets and held events in their communities to raise awareness.

A number of branches attended different sporting events. In Clare, volunteers from Ennis, Galway and Limerick Samaritans were at the Shannon Airport Run. Volunteers from Sligo Samaritans were at the Lough Gill Swim and Cork Samaritans were at the Lee Swim.

Waterford, Drogheda, Kerry, Galway and Limerick Samaritans all took part in awareness raising events for their local communities. Athlone and Carlow and Kilkenny branches held open days in their branches.

Volunteers from Newbridge and Kildare Samaritans held a Talk to Us event in the Whitewater Shopping Centre. Dublin Samaritans took to the streets of the city to get people talking and were on Pearse Street and in the Grand Canal area, Grafton Street and O'Connell Street.



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Our prison work

Samaritans reaches some of the people who need us the most through our prison outreach work. Prisoners are one of the groups in society most vulnerable to suicide, with research showing that men in prison are eight times more likely to take their lives than men in the general population. Women in prison are 20 times more likely to die by suicide than women in the outside world.

Samaritans support prisoners in a number of ways: round the clock access to our phone service within the prison, offering space to talk in the wings of prisons, and setting up and running our ground-breaking peer support scheme, the Listener scheme.

Listeners are prisoners who are selected, trained and supported by Samaritans. They help fellow prisoners who may be struggling to cope with their environment, including those who may be suicidal. There are 33 listeners in the Republic of Ireland and Samaritans trained 23 prisoners as part of the Listener scheme in the last year. Listeners have helped their fellow prisoners on more than 1,339 occasions over the past twelve months.

Currently, Samaritans runs eight Listener schemes in seven prisons in the Republic of Ireland. Dublin, supported by Drogheda branch, run seven schemes in Cloverhill, Wheatfield, Arbourhill, Mountjoy, Mountjoy West Prisons, the Training Centre and the Dochas Centre for women. Cork branch also succeeded in getting a new scheme up and running in Cork prison earlier this year, which has been very successful. Limerick branch offer a listening ear to the prisoners of Limerick, through weekly visits to the landings of the prison, and Dublin branch provide a similar service to the young offenders of St. Pats, in Mountjoy West.

As well as offering space to talk to prisoners, the branches also run suicide awareness sessions for prison staff through the Officer Awareness Programme. Emotional Awareness Training is also delivered to prisoners by Samaritans. This programme was devised for and delivered to the young offenders of St. Pats and Hydebank Young Offenders Centre. This has been expanded to include workshops on bullying, selfharm and mental illness and delivered to the women of the Dochas Centre.

Samaritans has developed a strong working relationship with the Irish Prison Service. Samaritans volunteers attend the suicide steering committees and safer custody committees of their local prisons, using their experience to influence policy and bring in new initiatives. This year, Wheatfield celebrated ten years of its Listener scheme with an anniversary celebration held for staff, Listeners and Samaritans.

We are looking forward to expanding our prison support over the coming year. Newbridge and Kilkenny branches are currently putting the framework in place to set up a Listener scheme in the Midlands prison this winter, and are hoping to extend to support Portlaoise prison over the next eighteen months. Meanwhile, work is in place to start developing the infrastructure needed to run a scheme in Castlerea prison, which we hope to start over the next year.

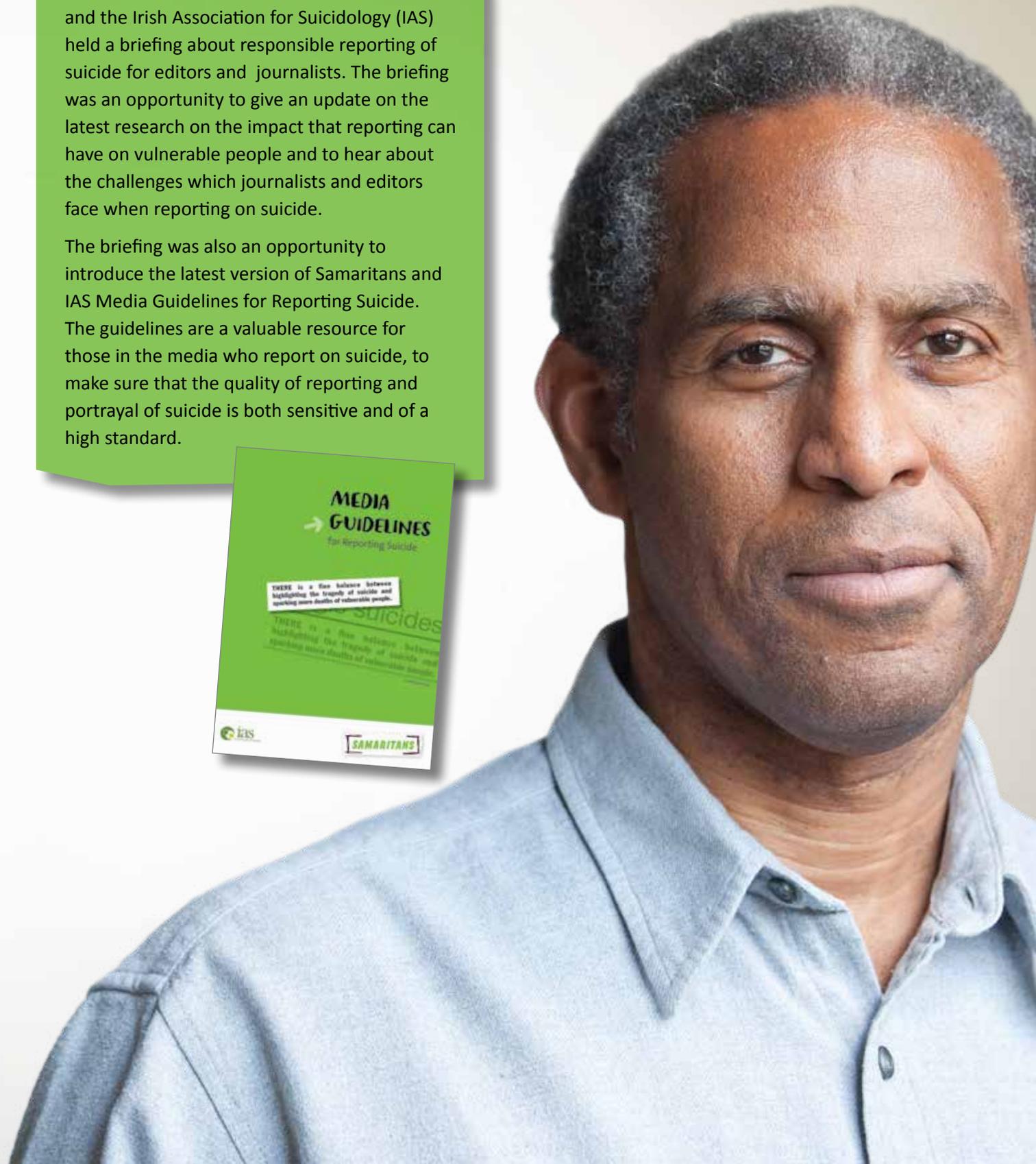
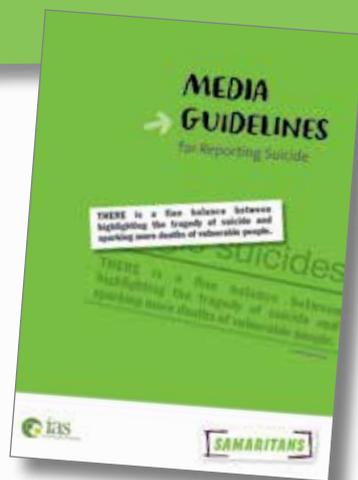
Gillian McNaul

Regional Prison Support Officer Ireland

Media guidelines for reporting suicide

In February 2014, Samaritans, the HSE's National Office for Suicide Prevention, Headline and the Irish Association for Suicidology (IAS) held a briefing about responsible reporting of suicide for editors and journalists. The briefing was an opportunity to give an update on the latest research on the impact that reporting can have on vulnerable people and to hear about the challenges which journalists and editors face when reporting on suicide.

The briefing was also an opportunity to introduce the latest version of Samaritans and IAS Media Guidelines for Reporting Suicide. The guidelines are a valuable resource for those in the media who report on suicide, to make sure that the quality of reporting and portrayal of suicide is both sensitive and of a high standard.



HELPLINE STATISTICS



Answered calls

During the 12 months from October 2013 to September 2014, a total of 478,222 calls were answered by Samaritans branches in Ireland. This represents an increase of 25% on the previous 12 month period.

The biggest growth in the volume of calls received took place in Quarter 2 and 3 of 2014. This growth is seen after our new free to caller number was launched at the end of Quarter 1.

In the UK and Ireland, Samaritans answers over 5 million calls for help every year. That is one call every six seconds.

2013
381,128

2014
478,222

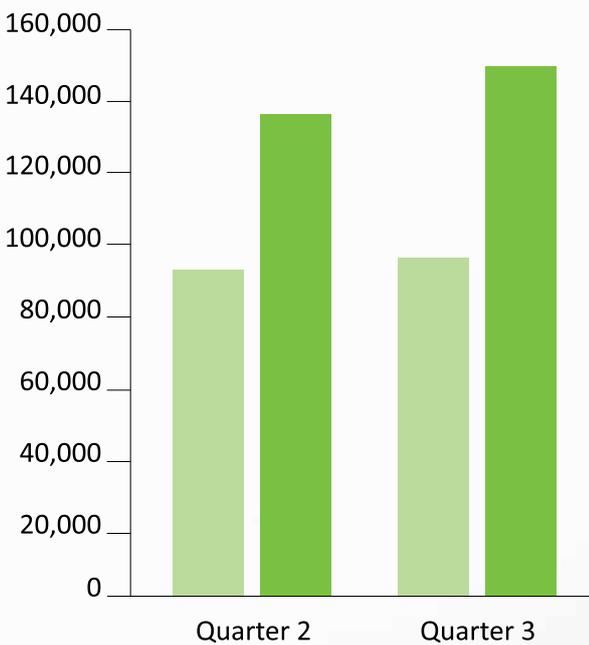
The impact of 116 123

On 25 March 2014, Samaritans introduced a new free to caller number — 116 123. Previously, we had operated a low cost 1850 number in the Republic of Ireland. The 1850 number remains operational but in time will be phased out.

There has been a significant increase in calls since the new number has been introduced. Removing the barrier of cost has made it easier for people to access the helpline.

There was a 46% increase in the number of calls answered in Quarter 2 of 2014 – just after the number was introduced – compared with Quarter 2 of the previous year. There has been a 58% increase in calls answered in Quarter 3 of 2014 compared to 2013. If the number of calls answered continues at this level, Samaritans will have answered 500,000 calls in 2014.

The increase in calls to the new 116 123 number has seen a decrease in calls to the 1850 number.



■ Year 1
■ Year 2



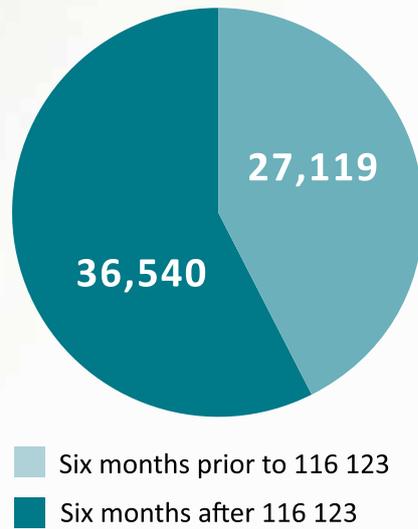
■ 116
■ 1850

Listening hours

Samaritans volunteers in Ireland gave 63,659 hours or 3,819,540 minutes in listening time to the organisation’s helpline during the 12 month period from October 2013 to September 2014. This is an increase of 6,832 hours since last year.

Samaritans volunteers have responded to the increase in calls with an increase in listening hours. In the six months before the introduction of the free to caller number, volunteers provided 27,119 hours of listening. In the six months after the number was introduced, they gave 36,540 hours. This represents a 38% increase in listening hours.

The average length of call to the helpline is 12 minutes – however, calls can go for significantly longer.



Nature of calls

Samaritans regularly examines the nature of the calls to the service.

During 2014, the five main issues that arose were:

- Family/relationship problems
- Depression and mental health issues
- Loneliness
- Stress/anxiety
- Abuse

When we answer calls

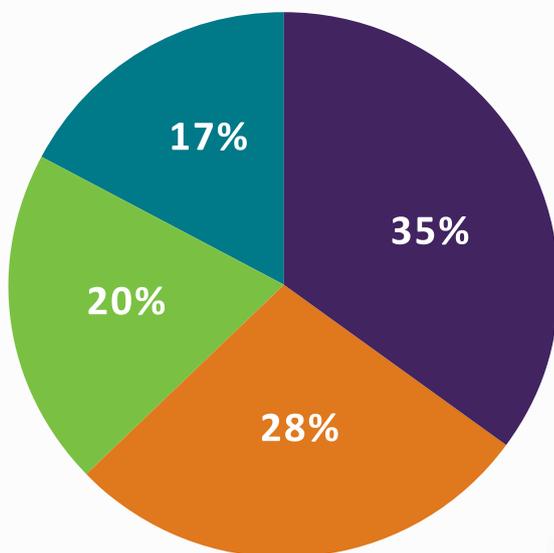
We received an average of 1,310 contacts a day in the 12 months from October 2013 to September 2014. This is an increase of 266 calls a day on average compared to the previous year.

The busiest hours for our helpline from October 2013 to September 2014 were on average:

- 🕒 Monday, 9pm to 10pm
- 🕒 Saturday, midnight to 1am
- 🕒 Friday, 11pm to midnight

The quietest time, on average, for calls was on Monday from 5am to 6pm.

55% of calls to the helpline are received from 6pm to 6am.



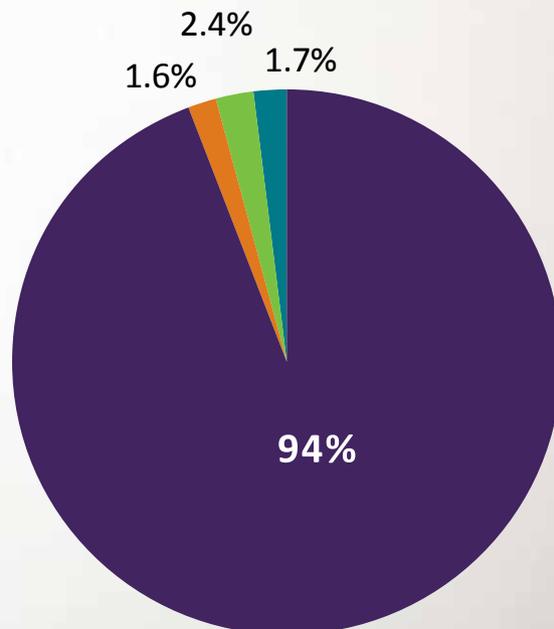
- Evening – 6pm to midnight
- Afternoon – noon to 6pm
- Night – midnight to 6am
- Morning – 6am to noon

Mode of contact

While the majority of contacts to Samaritans are by telephone, our service is also available by email, letter, SMS texts and through face to face support in our branches throughout the country.

During the 12 months from October 2013 to September 2014, a total of 8,646 people received face to face support from Samaritans. Within the same reporting period, 11,987 emails and 8,057 SMS contacts were supported. This means that in total, Samaritans answered 506,912 calls for help in Ireland in the last 12 months.

70% of contacts made to our helpline are now by mobile phone, rather than landline. This is an increase of 7% from last year. The introduction of the new free to caller number has made it easier for people to contact the service by mobile phone.



- Telephone
- Email
- SMS
- Face-to-face

FOCUS ON VOLUNTEERS

There are currently 1,567 volunteers in Samaritans branches in Ireland, an average of 120 volunteers per branch. The largest branch is Dublin with 312 volunteers and the smallest is Festival with 44. All Festival branch volunteers also volunteer with their local branch.



Samaritans invests heavily in initial and ongoing training for volunteers. The introductory training programme lasts 16 weeks with between three and eight hours of training per week – and only after this is completed are volunteers allowed to answer calls alone. This initial training is followed by a six-month mentoring programme for new volunteers, while experienced volunteers participate in compulsory, additional training on an ongoing basis.

Volunteers are the heart of the organisation, delivering the core support service, running all branches, raising much-needed funds, and raising awareness of the work Samaritans does. The growing demands on volunteer time are considerable and Samaritans is working to expand the volunteer base. Samaritans benefits from both a national network and strong local branches.

In 2014, Samaritans opened a new service in Arklow to serve the communities of Wicklow and North Wexford. There has been huge local support for the new service and 30 volunteers have been trained to date.

Volunteer profile



© Marc O'Sullivan

“ My name is Majella Canty and I’m 33 years old. I’m married to Jim and have two boys aged 12 and 7. I grew up in Cork City but have lived in Cobh for 10 years. Besides my family, my two greatest passions in life are my work with Samaritans and sport. ”

I have been a listening volunteer with Cork Samaritans since September 2011 and in February 2013, I took on the role of Regional Marketing Officer for Samaritans Ireland.

My volunteer work with Samaritans is really important to me – I believe it contributes in a big way to my own health and wellbeing.

In my role as Regional Marketing Officer I talk to the public and other organisations about the round the clock service Samaritans offers. My listening role is quite personal and I generally don’t discuss that role publicly. I am there to offer empathy and support to anyone who needs to talk and for the duration of that call, it is their feelings and thoughts that count. I am currently working on Samaritans partnership with the GAA and it really is the ultimate project for me – my two greatest passions combined.

I love sport and it is a huge part of our family life. I coach the under-eight boys hurling team in Cobh and my two boys are keen hurlers and Gaelic footballers.

They also play soccer and we love to watch soccer together as a family. I love coaching as it gives me the opportunity to help a player develop skills and most important of all – confidence. I love to see a player progress and believe encouragement and positivity can help anybody reach their potential. ”

BRANCH HIGHLIGHTS

A branch at the heart of the city

Dublin branch has always had a great relationship with the people of the city of Dublin. We have our Centre in 112 Marlborough Street in the heart of Dublin and we have a membership of about 300 full volunteers and around 50-60 new volunteers following their introductory training. We are open to callers to the door from 10am to 10pm and we support our callers by phone, text and email. Our branch also visits about 80 schools in the three county councils in the greater Dublin area, as well as supporting the Listeners in the seven Dublin prisons.

In July, we held another 24 hour awareness initiative, to re-introduce ourselves to the people of Dublin. We engaged local and national media to reach out to the city and county, highlighting Talk To Us and publicising our message that it's good to talk – preferably before a person starts to actively think about taking their own life. We were also interviewed on a national commercial radio station about the support that we offer.

Samaritans on the move

On 24 July, a group of ten volunteers set off in a minibus to drive around our North East area to reach out to people who may never have heard of us before. Our first stop was the main street in Ardee, where we draped banners and balloons on the bus. We were easy to spot in our green tabards and engaged with local people, explaining our service to them. We also handed out leaflets, cards and lollipops. Our next stop was Carrickmacross, then on towards Monaghan, Cavan and finally to our last stop in Navan where we handed out leaflets and other materials to raise awareness of what we do. We were happy we had succeeded in bringing the Talk to Us message to a great number of people.



The Deputy Lord Mayor Chris Andrews visited the branch for our press event and we also invited some national celebrities, including Dickie Rock, the well-known singer and recording artist, along with Shane Jennings and Isaac Boss, members of the Leinster Rugby team and great supporters of what we do.

**Brendan Gallagher, Director
Dublin**



Luckily, the accompanying photo shows us in the first town when we still had lots of energy!

**Brianne McHugh, Director
Drogheda**

Increasing awareness in Kerry

The focus for the Kerry branch for 2014 was raising awareness of Samaritans. Our main activities were making our volunteers visible at various public events, together with a series of talks in schools. We were able to reach out to those who may be in need of our services, either now or in the future.

The highlight of the year was our very successful Talk to Us campaign which we launched in Tralee on 24 July. We wanted to let people know that Samaritans is a safe place for anyone facing difficulties to explore their feelings.

Elma Walsh, whose son Donal Walsh helped to change the nation's attitude towards mental health with his suicide prevention message, joined the launch. Mícheál Ó Muireartaigh, the well-known broadcaster, also took part, as well as local councillors and a large number of Samaritans volunteers.



Following the campaign, the branch received a message from a person who said that speaking to one of our volunteers on that day has changed their life forever. The number of calls to the Kerry branch has also increased considerably since the introduction of the free to caller number.

Pat O'Connor, Director
Tralee and Kerry

Galway launch of 116 123

Following the national launch of the new 116 123 number, the Galway launch of the free to caller number started with a meeting in Dáil Éireann, where Harry, Chair of Galway branch and Sean, Branch Publicity Officer, met with Dáil deputies and Senators from Galway to share the importance of the 116 123 number and the history of its development.

The meeting in the Dáil was followed by the local launch in Galway on 6 June where the city manager, the HSE, and local politicians attended. Photographs and articles were published in all the local papers and announced on Galway Bay FM, I Radio and Connemara Community radio.



Galway branch had an immediate and noticeable increase in the number of calls to the centre following the launch.

William Browne, Director
Galway

Song and dance in Newbridge

Newbridge and Kildare's Talk to Us event on 25 July attracted hundreds of shoppers at Whitewater Shopping Centre in Newbridge. This was boosted by two hours of powerful song and dance performed by All Ireland Variety Champions 2014 – Stage Academy, Newbridge. These talented young entertainers reinforced our Talk to Us message in a moving piece of dialogue during one of their performances encouraging anyone who is struggling to phone Samaritans on our new free to caller number.

Fiona O'Loughlin, the Kildare Mayor, attended along with a group of volunteers from the branch and photographers from our local print media. Throughout the event, volunteers handed out pens and materials with the new free to caller number and chatted to shoppers.

Feedback from the public was extremely positive with a strong recognition of the work done by Samaritans.

A week long promotion of the Talk to Us event on Kildare FM ended with an outside broadcasting at Whitewater where live interviews with Samaritans volunteers and supporters were regularly broadcast during the day.

Coverage by local print and broadcasting media leading up to and following the event shared our message that Samaritans are available round the clock for anyone struggling to cope.

**Carmel Hedderman, Director
Newbridge and Kildare**



World Suicide Prevention Day conference



On 11 September, Cork Samaritans held a very successful conference with the National Suicide Research Foundation (NSRF) for World Suicide Prevention Day. More than 130 people attended the afternoon session in Cork County Hall with a further 50 attending the evening session in UCC, which focused on developing ideas for community-based responses to suicide clusters. A number of high profile people attended from key mental health and community agencies, reflecting the need for conversation about how to respond to suicides in Ireland.

Samaritans were well represented by volunteers from the Cork branch and we were delighted that Catherine Brogan, Executive Director for Samaritans Ireland, attended and presented on the day. Robert McBride and Tom Ryan also attended and we are so grateful to all of them for their support. Cork branch were delighted to work with the NSRF to mark this important International Day. Cork Director, Cindy O'Shea, stressed that the importance of connected thinking and shared expertise cannot be underestimated – and that only by working together can we truly address suicide as a cross-community issue.

We were honoured to have Minister Kathleen Lynch open the conference. She is a consistent and loyal supporter of the principles and values of Samaritans. The keynote speaker was Professor Nav Kapoor, who is an internationally respected researcher in the area of mental health as well as Head of Research at the Centre for Suicide Prevention at the University of Manchester. The seminar also marked the launch of the SSIS – ACE case control study being run by the NSRF and the Department of Epidemiology and Public Health, UCC, aimed at identifying psycho-social, psychiatric, and work related factors associated with suicide in Ireland.

Cork branch were delighted with the success of this event which marked the first collaboration with the NSRF. These collaborations will benefit all agencies, contribute to community responses to suicide prevention and heighten awareness of the role each agency can play both locally and in partnership with each other.

**Cindy O'Shea, Director
Cork**

Electric Picnic



Electric Picnic, a music and arts festival, was a late entry onto our Festival list and the volunteers who attended found it worthwhile.

There was a great appreciation from the Picnickers of our service. Festival Republic, the new organisers, were delighted that we applied to be there and we had a great base at St Colmans Primary School in Stradbally village.

The site we chose was at the end of the camp site, in front of the entrance to the arena. The posters advertising our service were up before the shift started, which was helpful as the callers already knew who we were before we began our shifts.

We had 86 callers, 63 male and 23 female, with 115 acknowledgements. The biggest age group was 25-34. A lot of the callers were bereaved by suicide and some were supporting someone going through in crisis.

Relationships and family was the greatest concern followed jointly by drug and alcohol use, then depression and mental health.

**Catherine Slater, Director
Festival**

Working in partnership

It has been a busy year for Sligo branch. As well as our work within our local community, there have been some exciting involvements with other groups in the North West region.

We have become partners with Renafix, a group of highly active young people who reach out to young people with mental health issues through social gatherings and social media. We developed a partnership with Pieta House and participated in their Darkness into Light event which attracted a lot of attention and raised awareness of our work.

We carry out street patrols where volunteers have a presence in local towns at busy times, such when there's a special event on. Volunteers wear high visibility vests so they can be easily identified and are there to talk with people as they pass by, as well as leaving publicity materials in clubs and pubs.

We have given talks to many groups promoting positive mental health programmes and we were invited to address the County Board of Donegal GAA, where we were warmly received. There was enthusiasm on both sides to further develop our partnership.

**Dan Scannell, Director
Sligo**



Working with Waterford University Hospital



When I started as Director I asked volunteers what areas they would like to see us tackle. Many volunteers suggested it would be a good idea to approach the local hospital so that we could provide information and support there.

We now attend the local Day Services in Brooke House and the sub-acute ward in the hospital. We visit on a regular basis, telling clients about Samaritans and the services we offer.

At our initial meeting we met 25 regular clients, to explain what we do and ask what kind of support they needed. This intervention is ongoing and we have been invited at regular intervals when they have information events. We also attended their Tea and Talk event on 10 October to mark Mental Health Day.

We attend the sub-acute ward in the Department of Psychiatry in Waterford University Hospital every six weeks. Our visits last an hour and we get the opportunity to talk to the patients in a group setting. This timeframe works well as we tend to meet a new group of people every time.

Groups are made up of 5-11 people, of mixed age and gender. The volunteers who attend are also mixed gender. We hope to expand this service in 2015 to extend to the Accident and Emergency department, and then to the patients in the acute section in the future.

**Ann Barron, Director
Waterford and South East**

Mickey McMillan Cup

Limerick and Tipperary branch have been part of – and supported by – the local community for the past 39 years. It is this sense of goodwill and the generosity of local people that has helped us to sustain the branch over the years.

Community-organised events play an important role in increasing awareness of our service and work well alongside the branch’s own awareness campaigns and outreach work. One of the groups supporting Samaritans play in a hurling match, competing for The Mickey McMillan Perpetual Trophy.

This group of young sportsmen have been supporters of Samaritans throughout their school years in Crescent Comprehensive College and have continued to support us since then. We consider them to be ‘Official Samaritans Supporters’.

This event ties in nicely with our partnership with the GAA this year. The Mickey McMillan cup contributes to Samaritans both financially and with the increased awareness from the publicity it creates.

**Mairead Sweeney, Director
Limerick and Tipperary**



Reaching out to the community

As part of the Ennis and Clare outreach programme, we visited many schools in the county to talk to young people about taking care of their emotional health, looking out for the wellbeing of others, as well as raising awareness of what Samaritans does. We also visited local youth centres and youth training programmes.

From these visits, we were invited to attend the local youth training centre. Two volunteers from the outreach team go into the centre once a month. We go at lunchtime and then stay on during their break to hang out with the students.

The ages ranged from 17-23 and for many, mainstream education has been problematic. Many of the students had already attended one of our talks and told us that they had enjoyed building SAM, the fictitious character we use to look at the pressures young people may be under and how they can seek help, and could relate to his/her problems. By seeing us there on an informal and regular basis – and also experiencing joy at thrashing our volunteers at table tennis! They became more relaxed and prepared to talk about their own lives and the various problems they faced.

This is a very worthwhile exercise, giving young people the opportunity to talk informally to Samaritans. By putting a human face to our volunteers, students might feel more comfortable contacting Samaritans in future, or suggesting that their friends contact us if they were struggling. It also allowed us to get to know some of the staff and talk about our work, and some expressed interest in volunteering themselves.

**Angharad Harding, Director
Ennis and Clare**

A busy year for Athlone

Our volunteers are central to the service and they continue to squeeze even more time into their lives for Samaritans. Athlone Midlands branch welcomed volunteers from across the country to the Irish Region Conference in March 2014. Stephen Hoddell, Chair of Samaritans, also attended and while organising the conference was a big job, the willingness of our volunteers made it light work and a huge success.

The Teen Aware music festival, held in Kilbeggan, was a great opportunity for us to engage on a large scale with second level students about our Talk to Us campaign. Athlone volunteers needed their wellies for the Tullamore Show this year and although conditions were damp, we publicised the 116 123 number and the benefits of talking to us to the thousands of people who attended.

The introduction of our free to caller number in March 2014 meant that, like all branches, we experienced a rapid increase in the amount of people contacting us. This upsurge in phone contacts brought home to us once again the importance of our telephone contacts – a crucial element of our service for those who need us.

**Teresa Bell, Director
Athlone**



Reaching out to Carlow

On 18 September, seven Samaritans from the Kilkenny-Carlow branch arrived at the Volunteer Fair in Fair Green Shopping Centre, Carlow town, wearing Samaritans green T-shirts and armed with pens, leaflets and smiles.

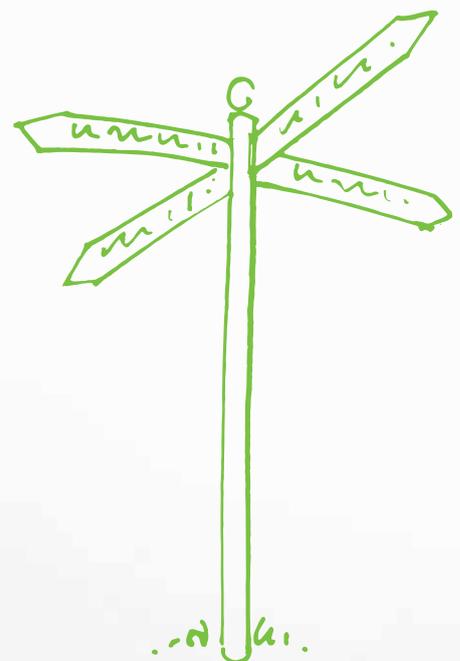
There was a fantastic turnout from other volunteer organisations from around the county and lots of visitors to our stand throughout the day. The Fair offered a great opportunity to get acquainted with fellow voluntary organisations and to meet the public, create awareness of Samaritans and tempt in new recruits.

We spoke with various age groups of people and it was evident that most were familiar with our Samaritans brand. However, others who recognised the logo were uncertain of what services we offered, so volunteers explained who we are and what we do.

Having seven Samaritan volunteers gave the opportunity for the public to see the variety of volunteers who join the Samaritans, while also allowing the volunteers to share their own personal experiences of being Samaritans volunteers.

Earlier this year we began our outreach in schools and at the GAA, as well as attending other events around Kilkenny. We will be expanding our service in the community in the coming months, this will create awareness of what we do and make us a more open and approachable branch for those in need of our service.

Ivan Kennedy, Director
Kilkenny and Carlow



Map of branches and festivals





CONTACT US

- Athlone** 3 Court Devenish, Athlone, Co Westmeath
- Cork** Coach Street, Cork
- Drogheda** 3 Leyland Place, Stockwell Street, Drogheda
- Dublin** 112 Marlborough Street, Dublin 1
- Ennis** Sunville, Kilrush Road, Ennis, Co Clare
- Galway** 14 Nun's Island, Galway
- Kilkenny** 2 Abbeybridge, Deanstreet, Kilkenny
- Limerick** 20 Barrington Street, Limerick
- Newbridge** 3 McElwaine Terrace, Newbridge, Co Kildare
- Sligo** 3 The Mall, Sligo
- Tralee** 43-44 Moyderwell, Tralee, Co Kerry
- Waterford** 16 Beau Street, Waterford

See our website for individual opening hours



116 123



jo@samaritans.org



www.samaritans.ie



Visit us – at any of our branches above

Someone to talk to – people contact us when things are getting to them. They don't have to be suicidal.

We're always here – round the clock, every single day of the year.

A safe place – as volunteers we're ordinary people, and keep all our conversations private.

People can be themselves – whoever they are, however they feel, whatever life's done to them.

We're a charity – it's the public's kind donations that keep our helpline open.



116 123 ←



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