

VISION, MISSION AND VALUES

Samaritans Ireland's vision is that fewer people die by suicide.

We work to achieve this 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

24 hours a day 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, because exploring feelings alleviates distress and helps people to reach a better understanding of their situation and the options open to them;

Confidentiality, because if people feel safe, they are more likely to be open about their feelings;

Being non-judgemental, because we want people to be able to talk to us without fear or prejudice or rejection;

Human contact, because giving people time, undivided attention and empathy meets a fundamental emotional need and reduces distress and despair;

People making their own decisions

wherever possible, because we believe that people have the right to find their own solution and telling people what to do takes responsibility away from them.

People talk to us any time they like, in their own way, about whatever's getting to them. They don't have to be suicidal.

For more information about our work go to www.samaritans.ie

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STATEMENT FROM REGIONAL DIRECTOR

Ireland's emotional health landscape continues to be pockmarked by challenges emanating from the economic environment and joblessness, emigration and hardship that people have experienced. Samaritans has responded to these challenges with a continuing commitment to provide a safe place where people can be themselves. We give anyone struggling to cope the time and space to talk about what's getting to them, and we will carry on making it a priority to work with partner organisations to make sure that people have access to the support they need. Our 2,000 volunteers are ordinary people that are available round the clock, every single day of the year. They don't just deliver our service, but manage every aspect of it and give their time for free so that people in trouble or experiencing difficult feelings have someone to talk to.

As Regional Director, Samaritans Ireland with responsibility for the service across the entire Ireland, I have been aware of the crucial role that Samaritans service plays in Irish life. We are sometimes seen as a fourth emergency service and for many people, it has been a lifeline. Samaritans celebrates 60 years this year, and we have been providing our service in Ireland since 1970. There is no doubt that the recession has had a taken a bite out of the confidence of Irish people and, in my opinion, resilience has never been needed like it is now. I take heart, however, from the commitment of organisations that are working hard to provide services to those in need of support. These are from both the statutory and voluntary sectors. Samaritans has made a sustained effort in the past year to increase the awareness of our service so that others in the sector can access our experience, and more importantly, so that anyone in trouble can be signposted to us when needed. This can be seen by the increase in calls, particularly in the "out-of-hours" times when our service is available and others aren't.

For me, Samaritans is most effective when it is seen as a first step, rather than a last resort. We always signpost our callers to other services that may be of further use. This tightening of a support network can only be a good thing for those struggling to cope and Samaritans is glad to play our part.

The emphasis on the value of talking has been positive but it may be hard to quantify the effect of this message in any measurable sense. However, we notice when people call us, many are calling for the first time – perhaps calling in response to a difficult day, some bad news or some other crisis. We are glad that

talking about a problem is being seen as a valid way of overcoming a difficulty. Our volunteers provide real humanity, compassion and empathy to our callers and those are just some of the foundation stones of our service. As we approach 2014, we are looking forward to providing hope to those who need to talk, and to continue working with other organisations to make sure as many as possible hear the message that talking helps and you can talk to us at any time.

Pio Fenton Regional Director, Samaritans Ireland



EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S REPORT

I have taken up my post as Executive Director of Samaritans at such a really exciting time. This year we are celebrating the 60th birthday of Samaritans. The longevity of Samaritans is based on us remaining faithful to our founding principle of providing a safe place for people struggling to cope with someone to talk to round the clock, every single day of the year.

Little did our founder Prebendary Dr Chad Varah CH CBE realise that his first act of providing a listening ear in 1953 would lead to such a dedicated legacy of volunteerism. Our vision has always remained the same, but in order to remain relevant, the way we listen has changed. We are now available by phone, face-to-face, SMS, email, and letter, plus we reach out to people in the local community at festivals, in prisons, in schools and beyond. We need to continue being accessible to people who desperately need our service and be where they are.

The past 12 months have been very busy and Samaritans Ireland has achieved so much. Our focus is always to reach out and to be accessible when and where people need us. We know money is an important issue, which is why we are so thrilled to have piloted our free-to-caller number this year.

We signed an agreement with Ireland's main telecom providers to put in place this free-to-caller number for people needing someone to turn to. The number, 116 123 has been piloted since June in Dublin 8 and 12, and more recently in Waterford, Limerick, Clare and North Tipperary. The excellent, long-term news is that early in 2014, we are hoping to make this number free-to-callers right across the country. We are so thankful to the telecom providers in allowing us to provide this vital link to people struggling to cope.

Partnership work, whether with telecom companies, or other agencies, is vitally important so that when people are having a difficult time, they have someone to talk to. Because we are here round the clock, we can help provide support to our partners when their service isn't available. Our partners either forward their calls when they close their helpline or transfer their callers to us if we can offer them support. This means that when a person takes that first step for help, they will get support. This will continue being a priority for us in 2014.

As a suicide prevention charity, it is also important that we work with the media. For the past two decades Samaritans has done this to promote sensitive and appropriate reporting of suicide, and we make it our

priority to respond quickly and expertly to journalists' enquiries on how to portray death by suicide. Samaritans Ireland and the Irish Association of Suicidology (IAS) launched the latest version of our Media Guidelines for Reporting Suicide in October 2013. The updated guidelines come from widespread consultation with the media, regulators and experts. Samaritans will hold a briefing on the guidelines for news editors and journalists in early-2014. The guidelines include fact sheets that are useful in areas such as broadcast media, drama portrayal of suicide, digital media, working with bereaved families in the aftermath of suicide, rail-suicide and murder suicide.

Recently, we consulted with all 21 branches of Samaritans in both the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland as well as other our other partner agencies. This has resulted in the development of a Samaritans Ireland Strategic Action Plan 2014 - 2016. This important road-map for the next three years, with support from the National Office for Suicide Prevention, will give Samaritans some extra capacity to deliver the new strategy in the defined time frame.



THE WORK OF SAMARITANS IRELAND

Organisational structure

Samaritans, a charitable company limited by guarantee, 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 emotional support services. The 21 branches on the island of Ireland comprise one region, with eight branches located in Northern Ireland and 13 in the Republic of Ireland.

This report deals solely with the work of the 13 branches in the Republic of Ireland. The head office of Central Charity is in London and Samaritans' national office and Executive Director for Ireland is based in Dublin. Samaritans Ireland was established in December 2007 and became operational 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 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 the Council is also the Chair of the Board of Trustees and is elected by the Council. The Regional Directors represent the Board of Trustees in the wider organisation and play a vital role in supporting branches and ensuring the implementation of Samaritans' policies. In Ireland, the position of Regional Director is currently held by Pio Fenton.

We increasingly rely on legacies to make our work possible

Overview of services

Samaritans provides a safe place for people to talk when things are getting to them. They do not have to be suicidal. We're always here and volunteers keep conversations private. People can be themselves and 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 homeless people. The majority of contacts to Samaritans are by telephone; however, in 2013 we have seen a sharp increase in SMS / text contacts. 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 2013, financial pressures and the impact of austerity on relationships and families have been recurring issues.

At present, it costs callers just six cent to phone Samaritans from an Irish landline or 33 cent from a mobile phone, irrespective of how long the call lasts. Currently, Samaritans does not offer a free-to-caller service, but for those who cannot afford the cost of a call, the organisation accepts reverse-charge calls and will make call-backs on request. No referral is required for Samaritans. People can choose to call a local branch number or the national number at rates set by the callers' telecoms provider. Details of the call charges involved are regularly updated on Samaritans' website www.samaritans.ie.

In September 2012, Samaritans Ireland announced a ground-breaking agreement with the six largest telecoms companies: BT Ireland, eircom/Meteor, O₂, Three, UPC and Vodafone on the provision of a new free-to-caller helpline number. This number – 116 123 – is being implemented as part of an EU initiative aimed at providing essential helplines with uniform telephone numbers across EU member states. 116 123 will be used across the EU as an emotional support helpline number. The free-to-caller number is due to be implemented nationwide by Samaritans Ireland in early 2014



The free-to-caller number 116 123 came about following a decision by the European Commission to reserve a common telephone number for emotional support helplines in all EU member states. In Ireland, ComReg was charged with managing the assignment of the 116 numbers. It assigned the emotional support helpline to Samaritans Ireland, as it is the only organisation in Ireland already meeting - and exceeding - all of the European Commission's minimum standards for the harmonised emotional support service, notably its 24 hours a day coverage.

Since the number was allocated, Samaritans has partnered with the six largest telecoms providers (BT Ireland; eircom/Meteor; O₂; Three; UPC; and Vodafone), which are members of IBEC's Telecommunications and Internet Federation (TIF). They have committed to a two-year funding programme for the number.

Under the partnership agreement, calls to 116 123 will be free to the customers of each of the six participating telecoms companies. The annual value of the arrangement is expected to be in excess of €400,000. The support from the six largest telecoms providers really demonstrates the need for a consistently accessible helpline for people struggling to cope.



Launch of 116 123 pilot in Waterford. (Photo: John Power)

In May 2013, Samaritans selected a number of areas nationwide to pilot the number including Dublin 8, Waterford, Limerick, North Tipperary and Clare. In order for the pilot to be effective, it needed to be contained to a relatively small area so that caller trends could be established. Critical to the pilot was engagement with people who play leadership roles in the pilot areas. As such, Samaritans met with religious leaders, local and national politicians and community groups to help promote the number. It is expected that the project will be rolled out nationwide in early-2014.

Outreach and training services

Samaritans branches are rooted in their local communities and are committed to proactive awareness raising and skills training in local settings. Each year, Samaritans receives many requests for training in 'active listening' skills, the core element of our service. Samaritans provides skills training in this area for a range of agencies, groups and other charities, including the Irish Cancer Society and Living Links. Samaritans volunteers also work with schools,

youth groups and third-level institutions in supporting the many initiatives that are undertaken to educate young people about the importance of maintaining good mental health and techniques for improving coping skills. Interest in training from business, sports and representative groups has increased, as more people begin to appreciate the importance of listening, talking and building resilience in dealing with challenging times.



Connect - Getting support to those who need it

Connect aims to improve the understanding of Samaritans Ireland's work, as well as encouraging cooperation and partnership working in the mental health sector. Samaritans has been working since 2012 to build relationships with other organisations by sharing information and making our helpline service available, where appropriate. This has been very positive and many organisations have been very willing to engage and work with us.

Working with the HSE and their resource officers for suicide prevention has been the key to the success of Connect. Resource officers work to reduce suicide by supporting, informing and educating the local community. Before meeting local organisations, Samaritans meet with the HSE resource officer to better understand any issues facing the community. Samaritans includes local branch volunteers in these meetings in an effort to build effective, long terms relationships.

Phase two of Connect is being developed and was piloted throughout 2013. This phase uses a direct divert system where organisations can forward their



Samaritans volunteer (Photo: Derek Speirs)

helpline to Samaritans when their own helpline is unavailable. The caller will be automatically be directed to Samaritans' helpline. This system is well established with LGBT organisations and will soon be available through AWARE. It is planned to add further services next year.

Prison work

Samaritans has an established and well-regarded association with prison support work, most notably in the form of our Listener Scheme, the largest and best-established peer support scheme in prisons. Listeners are prisoners who are selected, trained and supported by Samaritans, using the same guidelines that apply to all Samaritans volunteers. They listen in complete confidence to fellow prisoners, who may be experiencing feelings of distress or despair, including those which may be suicidal.

In 2013, the Listener Scheme celebrated its eleventh anniversary in Ireland. Currently, Samaritans provides

Listener Schemes and direct prison support in eight prisons. Listener Schemes are provided at Arbour Hill, Cloverhill, Mountjoy, Wheatfield, Dochas Centre and Mountjoy Training Unit. Direct support is provided at St Patrick's Institution and Limerick Prison. Samaritans has trained 24 prisoners as part of the Listeners Scheme in 2013.

Samaritans Listeners in prisons had approximately 1,551 calls from their fellow inmates over the past 12 months, an increase of 41 per cent on the previous year.

FOCUS ON Talk to us

Samaritans holds an annual awareness campaign called 'Talk to Us' in July each year. Normally this takes place on or around the 24th July to highlight the fact that the organisation's volunteers are available to listen 24 hours a day.

Well-known men from the worlds of sports, media and entertainment joined Samaritans Ireland at the launch of the campaign including RTÉ's 'SixOne' news anchor Bryan Dobson; 2FM presenter Paddy McKenna; Eamon Fennell, Dublin footballer and DJ with Phantom 105.2; Newstalk's 'Off the Ball' presenter Ger Gilroy; and John Evoy, Director of the Irish Men's Sheds Association.

As part of the 'Talk to Us' campaign, Samaritans volunteers throughout the country took to the streets to roll out a programme of public engagement and awareness-raising activities. In Ennis, volunteers staged a static cycle and local DJ Ger Sweeney broadcast from the location and checked in with other branches around Ireland while in Cork, actress Rachel Sarah Murphy and hurler Seán Óg ÓhAilpín lent their support as volunteers encouraged members of the public to have a chat on their sofa in Bishop Lucey Park.

At midnight on 24th July in Dublin, volunteers were joined on the couch on O'Connell Street by singer Gavin Friday. At midday the couches were moved to



Launch of 'Talk to Us' campaign in Dublin (Photo: Maxwell Photography)

Grafton Street and volunteers continued to promote the campaign until midnight.

In Drogheda, there was an energetic Zumba dance display and Samba band while in Galway volunteers participated in a calming Tai Chi display. Volunteers from Athlone, Waterford, Limerick, Tralee, Newbridge and Sligo were available in busy shopping centres encouraging members of the public to stop and have a chat if something that was getting them down.

Media guidelines for reporting suicide and self-harm

The importance of responsible reporting of suicide and self-harm cannot be overestimated. There is a proven link between suicide reporting and copycat suicides. Samaritans Ireland and the Irish Association of Suicidology (IAS) produce media guidelines as a resource to support responsible reporting of suicide and self-harm. These guidelines provide a valuable resource for those in the media who have any involvement with the reporting or portrayal of suicide, and represent an important

source of information to help ensure that the quality of reporting and portrayal on this important and sensitive topic is of a high standard.

Publication of the all-island document was postponed to incorporate the recommendations of the Leveson Inquiry in the UK. An updated edition of the media guidelines was launched in October 2013. Samaritans is planning a briefing on the guidelines for news editors and journalists in early-2014.

HELPLINE STATISTICS

How Samaritans' helpline statistics are recorded

In analysing data around calls to helplines, it is useful to understand the behaviour of callers to a helpline. For anyone in distress, it can be enormously difficult to ask for help. Many people will ring several times before they feel comfortable enough to speak. In our experience, these 'silent' calls can represent a number of things, for example:

These silent calls are recorded as calls to Samaritans' service, and Samaritans volunteers will not end a silent call; they remain on the line until the person at the other end hangs up.

All calls that involve conversation between Samaritans volunteers and callers (i.e. all calls other than silent calls or those lasting less than 10 seconds) are known

as 'dialogue contacts'.

During the 12 months from November 2012 to October 2013, a total of 381,128 calls were answered by Samaritans. Of the total calls answered, 135,618 were silent calls and/or calls that lasted less than 10 seconds. There were 245,510 dialogue contacts over this period.

Someone calling to check the service is available if they feel they want to talk.



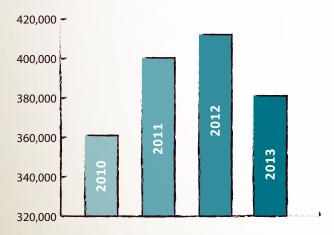
Someone calling and yet feeling unable to speak; perhaps building up confidence to speak.



Someone calling and waiting for the 'right' voice to answer – someone they feel comfortable opening up to.

Answered calls

month period.



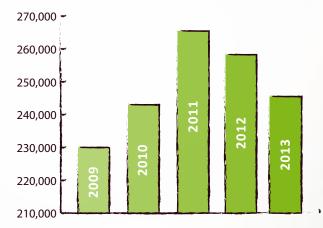
Samaritans received a total of 381,128 calls in the last year. The number of calls represents a 7.5 per cent decrease – or 31,039 calls – on the previous 12

A significant amount of calls do not turn into a dialogue contact. Callers will often dial multiple times until they build up the courage to talk or until they hear the right voice at the end of the line that they can respond to.

A Samaritans Ireland phone rings every 82 seconds.



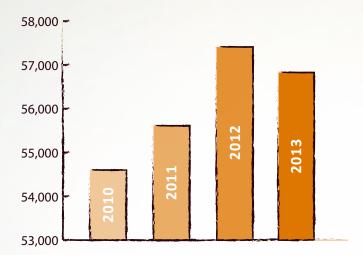
Dialogue contacts



In order to provide a clearer representation of actual incidences of emotional support given to people calling Samaritans, only dialogue contacts have been included in the figures below (i.e. calls lasting less than 10 seconds and/or silent calls have been excluded). In the graphs and texts in the following sections, the generic term 'calls' is used to refer to dialogue contacts.

Samaritans recorded 245,510 dialogue contacts on its telephone system in the Republic of Ireland between November 2012 and October 2013. This is the equivalent of receiving three calls from everyone in the crowd in Croke Park on All-Ireland final day. The number of dialogue contacts represents a 4.9 per cent decrease – or 12,735 calls - on the previous 12 month period.

Listening hours

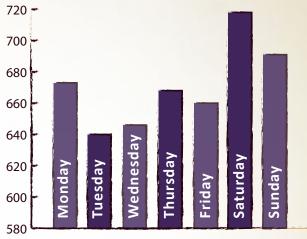


Samaritans volunteers in Ireland gave 56,827 hours or 3.4 million minutes in listening time on the organisation's helpline on the 12-month period from November 2012 – to October 2013. On average calls are four per cent longer than last year, at 14 minutes. The duration of night time calls have increased by over six per cent to 16 minutes. These are averages – calls can go on significantly longer.

On average last year, there were six people taking to Samaritans at any time, round the clock, every single day. A Samaritan volunteer listens to a new call every two minutes.

The majority of Samaritans listening occurs from 6pm to 6am. There was a two per cent increase in the amount of listening between midnight and 6am in the past year. These are considered high dependency hours when other services are closed or unavailable.

Breakdown of calls by day



The average number of calls received by Samaritans Ireland's helpline during the 12-month period from November 2012 – October 2013 was 672.

As in 2012, Saturday was consistently the busiest day for the Samaritans over the past 12 months, with an average of 718 dialogue calls being received by Samaritans' volunteers each Saturday. Tuesday was the least busy day, with an average of 640 calls to the helpline.

The average number of calls made for each day of the weeks was a follows:

Monday: **673** Tuesday: **640** Wednesday: **646** Friday: **660** Saturday: **718** Sunday: **691**

Thursday: 668

Samaritans received the highest number of calls in the last 12 months on Tuesday, 18th December (a week before Christmas Day) when 820 calls were answered. A high number of calls were also received on Saturday, 11th May (819) and Saturday, 17th November (817). The quietest day of the year was Friday, 1st March when 503 calls were answered.

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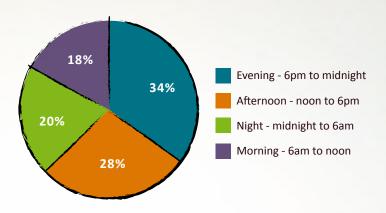


When we answer calls

The busiest hours for Samaritans' helpline in the 12 months from November 2012 to October 2013 were on average:



The quietest time, on average, for calls was on Tuesday mornings from 5am to 6am, with an average of eight dialogue calls per hour.

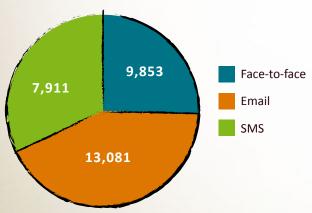


68 per cent of our dialogue contacts were at nighttime or weekends. This is outside the time when traditional services are available. This is an increase of 9 per cent from 59 per cent last year.

Mode of contact

Services are available by telephone, email, letter, SMS texts and through face-to-face support in Samaritans' 13 branches throughout the Republic of Ireland.

During the 12 months from November 2012 to October 2013, a total of 7,911 people received face-to-face support from Samaritans. The face-to-face support provided by Samaritans represents an increase of 14 per cent on the previous 12 month period. Within the same reporting period, 13,081 emails (12 per cent increase on 2012) and 9,853 SMS contacts (32 per cent increase on 2012) were supported.



Over 63% per cent of contacts made to Samaritans' helpline in Ireland are now by mobile phone, rather than landline. Increasingly, Samaritans has observed this shift away from landline calls to mobile calls, and the organisation is, therefore, concerned that vulnerable people who rely on pay-as-you-go mobiles may find contacting Samaritans' 1850 number expensive, which is why we have been piloting a free-to-caller number during 2013 and are working hard to roll out country-wide in early 2014.

Nature of calls

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, issues around sexuality, as well as suicidal thoughts and feelings.

Samaritans regularly examines the nature of the calls to the service. During 2013, the five main issues that arose were:



In the past 12 months, calls to Samaritans continued to increase, both in duration and intensity. Concerns regarding finance were reflected in many calls.

It is important to note that although the increase in the duration of calls reflects a level of stress and anxiety, it also reflects a willingness among people to talk about their problems. This may be linked to the impact of the ongoing work to reduce the stigma around mental health issues. This willingness to talk is seen in the increase in listening hours by Samaritans' volunteers and in the level of face-to-face support accessed through the branches.



(Photo: Derek Speirs)

VOLUNTEERS

There are currently over 2,000 volunteers in Samaritans' 13 branches in Ireland, an average of 154 volunteers per branch. It is estimated that each volunteer spends on average 15 hours a month as a listener. The largest branch is Dublin, which has 363 volunteers, while the smallest is Athlone, with 76 volunteers.

Samaritans invests heavily in initial and on-going 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 permitted to answer

There are currently over 2,000 volunteers in 13 Samaritans branches in Ireland, an average of 217 volunteers per branch.

calls. This initial training is followed by a six-month mentoring programme for new volunteers, while experienced volunteers participate in compulsory, additional training on an on-going basis.

Volunteers are the heart of the organisation, delivering the core support service, running all branches, raising vital funds, and raising awareness of the work Samaritans does. In recent years, there has been an increase in the number of male volunteers. The growing demands on volunteer time are considerable and Samaritans will be looking to expand the volunteer base over the coming three years. Samaritans benefits from both a national network and strong local bases.

In 2013, Samaritans examined the feasibility of opening a new branch in Arklow to service Co Wicklow and North Wexford. Samaritans has received strong local support and the priority for 2014 is to secure a suitable premises.

Patricia Hynes

Galway Samaritans

"I've been volunteering with the Samaritans in Galway for the last six years. I felt that by volunteering with Samaritans I could help those in distress and be there for them. I wanted to support someone if they were feeling vulnerable. I'm originally from Thurles in Co Tipperary but I live in Galway now with my husband Kevin, and my daughter who is doing her Leaving Certificate next year.

I work at the Department of Social Protection and have responsibility for liaising with employers and meeting with jobseekers. I love spending time with my family and my favourite thing is to dance the night away on a night out.

I'm the Public Relations Officer for Samaritans in Galway. My favourite thing about volunteering is



having the opportunity to raise the profile of our organisation so people will know that, no matter who you are or what your situation is, if you reach a difficult point in your life, Samaritans will be there for you to offer emotional support. I dedicate about eight hours a week to Samaritans as PRO including organising events, attending meetings, making contact with other organisations and distributing material."

Michael Murphy Waterford Samaritans

"I started with Samaritans in Waterford in 2009 because I thought I could do some good. I'm originally from Kilmuckridge in Co Wexford and have been farming for 35 years. I'm married to Libby and we have four children: two girls and two boys.

As well as Samaritans, I'm very involved with the local GAA club, my local drama group and I'm chairman of the local amateur drama festival. Every year, we organise an eight-night festival of drama in our local theatre and groups from all over Ireland attend.

As I'm involved in lots of social activities, good time management is crucial for me. I do two overnight duties per month instead of weekly duties, but Samaritans are flexible.



Sometimes, when I put down the phone, I realise that I have made a difference. I find it rewarding to help someone to talk through a problem that was causing them a lot of pain."

BRANCH HIGHLIGHTS

Re-introducing Dublin Samaritans to Dublin City

Dublin Samaritans has been at the heart of Dublin City for over 40 years. This year, the branch has been reaching out to reintroduce itself to the people of Dublin. The branch has extended its opening hours for door callers. Anyone can now call in between 10am and 10pm to speak in confidence to a Samaritan volunteer, any day of the week.

Earlier in the year, the branch held a bumper awareness week which took place in the south inner city. Over the week, volunteers spoke at masses, gave talks to a number of local groups and had a 'Feet on the Street' presence in the Liberties area of Dublin.

Another way in which the Dublin branch has been seeking to reintroduce itself to the city is by holding a series of talks designed to explain to Dubliners what we do including a talk by Dr Tony Bates, Director of Headstrong, on the art of listening. In addition to existing volunteers, the audience also included former volunteers, volunteers from other helpline agencies and charities, frontline staff from organisations that Samaritans deals with and interested members of the public.



These are just some of the ways in which the branch is making a concentrated effort to let people know about the care and support that Samaritans can offer to people in emotional distress.

Brendan Gallagher, Director, Dublin

Turning twenty one

Athlone and Midlands Samaritans is 21 years old this year, having opened in February 1992. Central to our service is a team of committed volunteers without whom our work would be impossible. In fact, 11 of the original volunteers continue to serve with the branch today.

We are working to expand on the success of the 'Talk to Us' campaign in Athlone and Longford by expanding our awareness-raising into Roscommon and Offaly over the next 12 months. As part of awareness raising work, our schools outreach team commenced their visits to second level schools to emphasise the importance of talking about how we feel as well as listening to each other. We have

also made presentations to community-based organisations such as the ICA, Soroptimist International, and Rotary Club as well as writing articles for community free-sheets and newspapers with county-wide circulation. This work has helped us to raise the profile of our service which resulted in an increase in personal callers to our branch.

Throughout 2013, we have been involved in a number of events including Teen Aware at Kilbeggan Race Course were our volunteers worked alongside Festival. In August, Athlone volunteers made their debut at the Tullamore Show which had an attendance in excess of 60,000 people and we look forward to extending our presence



there in 2014. The willingness of our volunteers to expand their engagement with the work at Athlone Midlands Samaritans ensures that our branch will maintain the current level of service and continue to grow in the years to come.

Teresa Bell, Director, Athlone and Midlands

Cork Samaritans urge the public to 'call us'

On Saturday, 6th April, Cork Samaritans held an unusual awareness campaign on Patrick's Street. In conjunction with Sinead Shepherd's School of Dance, Samaritans staged a 'Flashmob' style event where over 50 people danced to Carly Rae Jepsons song 'Call Me Maybe' with a catchy dance routine that saw passers by tapping their feet and clapping along. The fine weather made for a great atmosphere and the bright purple and green t-shirts stood out among the gathered crowds. Colourful balloons were released into the air and Brazilian music, and acrobats contributed to the positive carnival atmosphere on the street.

The focus of the event was to encourage people to think of Samaritans if they need to talk and to highlight the message to 'Call Us'. The street presence involving over 40 volunteers and supporters also focussed on Samaritans as real people who callers can relate to and our new approach to being more visible as a human service.

The Cork branch is a well-established Cork institution for over 40 years and can be found on Coach Street, near the Mercy Hospital. The branch operates with 203 willing volunteers, many of whom could be seen dancing on Patrick Street or giving



out information, wrist bands and pens at the event. The purpose of the event was to highlight the Samaritan service in Cork, but also to highlight the service as approachable, positive and available to all. Cindy O'Shea, Director, Cork

Reaching out in Sligo

Sligo Samaritans is open 129 hours per week. During this time, we are available to callers who may wish to contact us by telephone, in person or by email. In addition to this availability, we also visit schools, community groups, and many organisations. We have expanded our service this year and we are currently in discussion with our local hospital to have presence there.

We have also commenced an extra outreach programme by having a presence in the streets at late hours. We have found that this particular activity increases the awareness of our service and also removes some of the myth and mystery of Samaritans by having volunteers, real people, in contact with the public.

Three volunteers did our first 'Street Patrol' which happened on 24th October. We wore our Samaritans bibs and parked our van in a strategic spot in town. We walked around the town and gave out leaflets to everyone we met. We went into takeaways and pubs, and also left leaflets on the tables which were outside the pubs.

During the last month we have also visited two womens' groups and had a stand in Sligo IT during their mental health awareness week. We have written letters to a number of community groups and offered to visit them to talk about our work. We plan to keep busy in the coming months and have an outreach visit approximately



every two weeks. It is planned to extend our service to two local prisons in the coming year and to frequently engage with some other voluntary groups and statutory agencies in an effort to coordinate our work to vulnerable and needy people.

Dan Scannell, Director, Sligo

The National Ploughing Championship

On 24th September, volunteers from Newbridge Samaritans, Kilkenny Carlow Samaritans and Waterford Samaritans arrived in Ratheniska for the National Ploughing Championship clad in wellingtons and walking sticks but thankfully neither were needed over the three days as the sun shone brightly. Our objective was to generate awareness about Samaritans services and charity work in Ireland, with particular focus on rural dwellers and men.

Over 15,000 people visited the stand over the three days and the profile of people was very mixed. Many local schools were given leave to attend. Whilst a lot of school children were attracted to the stand by the "freebies", it presented an opportunity to engage and interact with them. The majority of second level students were familiar with Samaritans and were already aware of the work carried out and how to contact us.

Older people were forthcoming and engaged with the team of volunteers. A significant number were male and all received some item of merchandise as a keepsake or reminder and, more importantly, a prompt to act. In fact 10,000 Samaritans pens were handed out over the three days. The tag-line "Don't plough on – Life is worth talking about" was very



apt for the venue.

Mary Maguire from Newbridge Branch was interviewed by George Hook on Newstalk which helped to get the Samaritans message out. All in all, it was a worthwhile trip and enjoyable and rewarding in every way.

Carmel Hedderman, Director, Newbridge and Kildare

Dynamic partnership with rugby club

Earlier this year, Drogheda Samaritans was delighted to launch a partnership with Boyne Rugby Club which has over 200 adult members and over 400 junior members, most of whom are male. The launch took place at a well-attended lunch before an important match. A Samaritan volunteer had the opportunity to address the gathering and explain more about emotional support and the importance of good mental health. During the subsequent match versus Skerries, which was played in driving rain and strong wind, Samaritan volunteers were seen in their bright green bibs handing out lollipops and mingling with spectators. They certainly did us proud displaying qualities of endurance and good humour.

The partnership is beneficial to both Samaritans and Boyne Rugby Club. The club enhances its image by being associated with a highly-regarded charity and shows it cares about the mental well-being of the members, both young and old. Samaritans has the opportunity to raise awareness of the service it provides and hopefully to help 600 men and boys value their own mental health! Alerting coaches to recognise any signs of mental stress in their young charges is also a very important first step towards getting the right help in time.



A large banner with the Samaritans message Talk to Us is prominent in the club car park. Seen by players, members, visitors and those who socialise in the club we are proud to have this Samaritan message so visible in the community. Brianne McHugh, Director, Drogheda

Celebrity soccer match

Galway Samaritans joined forces with ACT for Meningitis (Galway) to host a celebrity soccer match at Deacy Park, Terryland, Galway. As well as fund raising for both charities, the aim of the event was to create awareness and raise the profiles of both organisations. Galway Football Association was on board and offered free rein of their football pitch on the night and were very helpful in steering the event.

Playing their part on the night were: Hector; Packie Bonner; Paul "ski" Mc Gee; Ollie Canning; Eric Elwood; John O'Dowd; and Fair City actors Sean Doyle and Dave O'Sullivan.

We know that our callers originate

from all walks of life and we used this event to reach out to as many people as we possibly could. Enlisting the support of local and national celebrities helped us generate much public interest, thereby encouraging people to talk about us and to us.

A lot of work went into planning and organising the event but we certainly got our message out there. We were lucky enough to get free advertising from IRadio. Nikki Hayes and Ryan Phillips from SpinHits 103.8 promoted and tweeted the event for us on their show, and a local printer designed and produced signs for us which we placed at strategic points around Galway city and county. All three of our



main local newspapers published photographs and editorials about the event. It was a super occasion with every attendee on the night being issued with Samaritans information and contact details.

Tom Ryan, Director, Galway

Kilkenny People of the Year Awards 2013

Unsung heroes from all walks of life were recognised at this year's 2013 Kilkenny People of the Year awards. Category award recipients featured local representatives from arts & culture, youth work, rural development, sport, health and welfare, the

environment, volunteerism and courage.

Our local Kilkenny/Carlow branch was honoured to have won the volunteerism category. The award acknowledges how our community values the service we provide and more importantly recognises the huge voluntary commitment that our current and past volunteers have given to the organisation.

We were really surprised and honoured on the night of the awards

ceremony to have then been chosen as the overall "Kilkenny Person of the Year". Donal Fennelly (Chairperson) and Gill Leo (Branch Director) gratefully accepted the award on behalf of all the volunteers past and present not just in our own branch but throughout the entire organisation.

The branch is a dynamic one with over 70 listening volunteers and 26 support volunteers working together to provide a much needed service in the Carlow and Kilkenny area. The charity shop in Kieran Street, Kilkenny provides a welcome revenue stream as well as maintaining a high-profile in a busy pedestrian area. The fund raising team have been very active with flag days, working lunches, bridge nights, sponsored walks and runs,



concerts and raffles throughout the year. The public and local businesses continue to show great generosity in their support for our branch. All this activity enables the listening volunteers to focus on what is really important to our branch, reducing the number of suicides in our community by providing emotional support to those who are vulnerable and distressed.

Gill Leo, Director, Kilkenny and Carlow

Increasing awareness

Increased awareness of Samaritans was the focus of the Limerick/Tipperary branch for 2013. Visibility of volunteers on the streets at various public events together with a series of outreach talks to local organisations were our primary activities in an effort to reach those who may be in need of our service, now or in the future.

The highlight of the year was a very successful Riverfest Festival held in Limerick on the sun-drenched May bank holiday weekend. A team of volunteers from Samaritans participated in the Saturday cook-off barbecue competition, culminated in winning the award for the best presented team and stand.

This was followed on Sunday by the Great Limerick Run with the starting line

just around the corner from our branch at 20 Barrington Street. With an excess of 10,000 participants, it presented a wonderful opportunity to make sure that we did not go unnoticed as it was the greatest footfall that Barrington Street had seen in quite some time.

Many participants proudly sported Samaritans t-shirts and undertook the journey through the streets of the city ensuring that the Samaritan name was much in evidence promoting the message 'Talk to Lis'

Supporters together with friends and families joined us in the centre afterwards for refreshments and a well-deserved rest for weary legs. This served to bring the community into the centre in a very



natural and relaxed way. Our hope is that these experiences can be repeated into the future and thus ensuring that Samaritans is seen as an ever available and obvious place to call or visit if in need.

Mairead Sweeney, Director, Limerick and Tipperary

Feet on the street

One of the highlights of the Ennis and Clare branch this year has been the implementation of 'Feet on the Street' in Co Clare. We made our debut appearance in August at 'The Outing' in Lisdoonvarna. Lisdoonvarna is well-known for its annual matchmaking festival but this time the town played host to the first gay and lesbian matchmaking weekend.

Four of our team of volunteers are part of Festival and had experience in working in this way, but for the other eight members of the team, working in the open and being proactive, was a completely new experience. We worked in teams of four from 1pm until

1am. This was a very long day for volunteers, but the team excelled in their hard work, diligence, sensitivity, empathy and support of each other. Thankfully, the headmaster of the local school had agreed to some of us using the school as our base for briefing/debriefing, completing log sheets, resting between shifts and most importantly, coffee making.

We worked around the town square for the first part of the day and moved to the hotel where the event was being held. This allowed us to meet with a variety of people, both locals and visitors to Clare. The team soon overcame initial apprehension and



were just amazing as our contact figures show: we had a total of 127 contacts (81 male and 46 female), over 40 acknowledgements and one follow-up call.

Angharad Harding, Director, Ennis and Clare

Northwest 200

Northwest 200 is Ireland's largest outdoor sporting event and one of the world's fastest road races. It was our first festival of the season and we arrived in Portrush on a beautiful sunny Friday evening and headed to our base in Kelly's Hall, a fully heated hall, a big kitchen and an upstairs eating/briefing area.

Coleraine Samaritans organised a delicious reception for Festival volunteers, members of the organising committee of Northwest 200, the PSNI, and local dignitaries. Samaritans sponsored the race starting clock which was a fantastic publicity tool, but unfortunately bad weather resulted in the races being called off,

and the clock was only used for a few races.

The site was not the coldest spot in Ireland, but probably the wettest for most of us on Saturday, but our intrepid volunteers did what Festival volunteers do best, wrapped up well, got on with it and did a great job. The town was noticeably quieter but this did not affect the quality of the calls.

We had 162 callers and had a ratio of 3:1 male to female. We had 265 acknowledgements, which range from "great to see you" to hands being shook and being thanked for saving their lives. We had two callers who were in great distress. The



majority of callers were over the age of 35. Relationship and family problems were the issues raised most often, followed closely by depression / mental health issues, alcohol and drug use and financial and employment issues.

Catherine Slater, Director, Festival

St Patrick's Day Parade

On St. Patrick's Day 2013, Kerry Samaritans volunteers met in the branch in Tralee to take part in the St Patrick's Day parade. Family and friends were present and there was great excitement as a result of dressing up in costumes including two our volunteers in mobile phone costumes.

Excitement was building as we walked together to the start point on John Joe Sheehy Road where we met the other organisations. We had loads of sweets and lollypops and gave them to young and

old along the streets of Boherbee, Castle Street, Upper Mall and finally Denny Street. One of our volunteer's young son was wielding a large foam mobile phone. Our group was led by two volunteers carrying a Samaritans banner which took up half the width of the streets as we marched.

The most striking response was from the general public: men and women of all ages shouted "well done", "ye are great" and "Samaritans is a fantastic organisation".



Chris O'Donoghue, Director, Tralee and Kerry

Carrauntouhill Challenge

Samaritans like a challenge and in 2013 we decided we would like to get outside our comfort zone and do something different to raise awareness of our service, and much-needed funds. We decided to climb Carrauntouhill - not any old mountain, but the highest in Ireland which seemed like a very good idea at the time!

On Saturday, 4th May, 19 volunteers and friends set out, some in fear and trepidation, to complete that challenge.

The climb was an incredible achievement for those who took part, the majority of whom had no previous climbing experience. The route taken was up O'Shea's Gully,

which is very steep in parts and involves some rock climbing, and down the infamous Devils Ladder. The entire route took nine hours to complete.

The day started off bright and calm but by the time we reached the summit conditions had deteriorated significantly. Visibility was down to a few meters, temperatures had dropped to 3c and wind speeds had reached 70kph. We still managed to pose for a quick summit photo. We arrived back at base exhausted, stiff, sore and minus a few toenails but filled with an overwhelming sense of achievement. It is safe to say, we all



slept very well for a few days.

In 2013, we in Waterford took calls from over 17,000 people. Our mountain challenge was nothing compared to the challenges faced by the people that contact us every day.

Ann Barron, Director,

Waterford and South East

Map of branches and festivals



Festivals

- Northwest 200 Portrush
- World Street Dublin
- Gay Pride Belfast
- Galway Arts Festival

- Oxegen
- Puck Fair Kerry
- Fleadh Cheoil Derry
- Lisdoonvarna Matchmaking Festival



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.



1850 60 90 90*(ROI) 08457 90 90 90*(UK)



jo@samaritans.org







Registered charity no. 11880 Registered Office 4-5 Usher's Court, Usher's Quay, Dublin 8 **T** 01 6710071 F 01 6710043



^{*} Please see our website for latest call charges.