

# 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 including feelings that 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 of 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 solutions and telling people what to do takes responsibility away from them.

Further information about the work of Samaritans is available at www.samaritans.ie.

Samaritans' 24-hour helpline number is 1850 60 90 90.

# A MESSAGE FROM OUR NATIONAL CHAIR

The story behind the statistics that you will see in this report is too complicated to neatly sum up in a few hundred words. We live in unprecedented times. The number of calls we take is symptomatic of the unease in society at the moment and the discomfort that many people are experiencing. However, this report also highlights an untold story – that of the exceptional level of volunteerism that supports people who are experiencing crisis.

Pio Fenton

I am proud to begin my three-year period as National Chair of Samaritans in Ireland and look forward to working to ensure that our service suits the needs of the times we live in. I am a Samaritans volunteer since 2004 and in the intervening years the nature of the calls we receive has evolved. In 2004, there was a greater number of calls where a single issue was the focus of the interaction. The issues that were important then are important now: bullying, family problems, self-esteem, sexual abuse, depression, sexuality and many more. However, recently money is an issue which seems to be causing more and more difficulty, and the nature of calls we receive reflects that. However, the most notable difference is that the issues people contact us about now are much more interlinked. Life seems more complicated. The clarity, albeit in difficult circumstances, that was there previously is something we see less often now. There is a real hardening of despair. The economic crisis has exacerbated the troughs of the emotional health landscape of this country and the effect of this is something we see each day as Samaritans volunteers.

The response of this organisation is to work harder than ever. As a volunteer-led organisation with 1,400 people working around the country to provide support, we are well placed to deliver a service to those in need. We are looking at the ways in which we can reach people in distress and build on our work with schools, prisons, community and youth groups. We are testing new collaborations to ensure that anyone who needs help knows what options are available. It is perhaps a consequence of the severity of the economic crisis that people suspect there is no help there if they need it. However, there is a wide range of options available for people who are distressed or struggling to cope. We work closely with a number of organisations to ensure that people are aware of

the support that is offered by other organisations and services. Samaritans is a service which is best seen as a first step as much as a last resort.

The message that talking is a sign of strength has yet to fully take hold in this country. Nonetheless people who practise that belief benefit from doing so. We see this every day with the volunteers who sustain the service. It is the simple idea: that we can help one another as ordinary but well-trained and supported people that sets our service apart. It is the belief that we can continue to contribute to supporting people who are struggling to cope in this country that will underpin the work we do in the coming year.



## **EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S REPORT**

The past 12 months have been extremely active for Samaritans: we have worked hard to ensure that people in distress are supported in as comprehensive a way as possible.

Much of the work to improve our support is based on partnership with other organisations. One of the biggest developments over the past year has been the signing of an agreement between Samaritans and Ireland's main telecoms providers to put in place a free-call, short-code number. This number – 116 123 – will be operational in 2013, and will ensure that the cost of a call will no longer act as a barrier to anyone requiring emotional support. It will also provide a memorable number, which will improve accessibility to the service.

Another development over the past year has been the 'Connect' signposting project. This project centres on creating a system whereby callers who may need to access other support services can be linked to those services. For many of our callers, this will be the first time they have experienced the need to reach out for support: callers aren't always aware of the services and supports that are out there.

To date, the 'Connect' project has been well received by our colleagues in other agencies and we are already seeing some positive results for everyone involved, most especially for callers.

It is evident to Samaritans that reaching out proactively to people who are vulnerable and distressed is critical. We have prioritised our outreach work over the past year by extending our presence at major public gatherings. The level and ease of engagement with which people appear to react to Samaritans volunteers is encouraging. This points to an easing of the stigma around emotional issues, and we plan to increase our visibility next year to ensure that our face-to-face engagement with the public continues.

While young male suicide remains a huge concern in Ireland, the rates among men in the 35-54 age group are also of significance. Research commissioned by Samaritans, *Men and Suicide — Why it's a social issue*, published this year, shone a light on the views of this age group. It attempted to identify some of the reasons why this group are slow to seek help and it highlighted how economic deprivation can have a devastating impact on these men and lead to a significant loss of self-esteem. As the impact of the recession deepens in Ireland, and long-term unemployment takes a firmer hold on the lives of people of working age, the impact that it can have on men in particular should be considered in a policy context.

For Samaritans, this type of research helps us to understand better how to reach out to high-risk groups and how to encourage and facilitate them in securing support.

Media coverage of the issue and incidences of suicide continues to be be widespread. The media play a critical role in improving understanding of the complex issue of suicide and, in particular, the protective factors and the risk-reduction steps that can be taken. There is evidence that people who may be struggling are influenced positively by best practice in media reporting.

Samaritans continues to work with individual media outlets, and over the past year we have strengthened contacts with those responsible for promoting robust media standards and regulation.

As Samaritans looks ahead to 2013, we are cognisant of the fact that many people are worried and distressed by more issues than ever before. When callers makes contact with Samaritans, they are spending more time talking through their feelings and their struggles, which in turn reflects the complexity of their lives.

Our objective in delivering our support is that we are there on a 24-hour basis, every day of the year, for those who need to call. We will continue to develop our service so that all needs are met, as far as possible.



# 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, the Republic of Ireland, the Channel Islands and the Isle of Man; each of these branches 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 Samaritans is in London. The organisation's 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 15 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 Regional Director is known as the National Chair and this position is currently held by Pio Fenton.



We increasingly rely on legacies to make our life-saving work possible

#### **Overview of services**

Samaritans provides confidential emotional support, 24 hours a day, by telephone, personal visits, email, text message and letter, through its branch network. It is also involved in outreach activities 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 2012 we have seen a sharp increase in face-to-face 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 2012, financial pressures and the impact of austerity on relationships and families have been recurring issues.

There is no charge for the listening service provided by Samaritans' volunteers and no referral is required. 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 <a href="https://www.samaritans.ie">www.samaritans.ie</a> 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. However, in September 2012 Samaritans Ireland announced a groundbreaking agreement with the six largest telecoms companies: BT Ireland, eircom/Meteor, O2, Three, UPC and Vodafone on the provision of a new freephone 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. A free-to-caller number is due to be implemented by Samaritans in early 2013.

In addition to providing emotional support by telephone, email, text, letter and one-to-one interaction, Samaritans also works in other settings and on a range of issues relating to emotional health.



## Freephone helpline 116 123

Samaritans Ireland announced a groundbreaking agreement with the six largest telecoms companies in Ireland on the provision of a new freephone helpline number in September 2012. Samaritans' helpline provides support for anyone struggling to cope, including those with feelings that could lead to suicide.

It is expected that the new helpline number will be operational in early 2013.

In July 2007, the European Commission decided to reserve a common telephone number – **116 123** – for emotional support helplines in all EU member states. This followed on from 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 was charged with managing the assignment of the 116 numbers. It assigned 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 the harmonised emotional support service, notably its 24 hours a day, seven days a week coverage.

Since the number was allocated, Samaritans has been in negotiations with the six largest telecoms companies (BT Ireland, eircom/Meteor, O2, Three, UPC and Vodafone), which are members of IBEC's Telecommunications and Internet Federation (TIF).



Ms Kathleen Lynch TD, Minister of State for Disability, Equality, Mental Health and Older People; Torlach Denihan, Director of IBEC's Telecommunications and Internet Federation and Suzanne Costello, Executive Director, Samaritans Ireland. (Photo: Marc O'Sullivan)

They have now committed to a two-year funding programme for the number.

Under the new partnership agreement, anyone phoning this number seeking emotional support will not be charged for the call by the any of the six participating telecoms companies. The annual value of the arrangement is expected to be in excess of €400,000, which represents strong recognition by the six largest telecoms companies that there is a need for a consistently accessible helpline for people struggling to cope.

#### **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, a core element of effective emotional support. 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.



# Dublin Samaritans 'Bumper Week' in Five Lamps, Dublin

Dublin Samaritans was the first branch to be set up in the Republic of Ireland, and it has been in operation since 1970. The centre in Dublin is open 24 hours a day, 365 days a year and at present it has 286 active volunteers.

The branch places great emphasis on outreach, and it works regularly in schools, day hospitals and prisons. As part of this outreach work, Dublin Samaritans organises an annual 'Bumper Week' during which volunteers go out into the community in a chosen area of Dublin to highlight the work of Samaritans and make themselves available to listen if people need to talk. The theme of Bumper Week is "Life's Worth Talking About."

Following two successful 'Bumper Weeks' in 2010 and 2011 in Dun Laoghaire and Ballymun respectively, Dublin Samaritans organised its third annual event in the Five Lamps area of the city, close to where the branch is based, from 27 April to 3 May of this year. The decision on the choice of location for the event was made in consultation with Samaritans' volunteers who suggested that they organise Bumper Week on their own doorstep.

Over 50 active listening volunteers took part, speaking at a number of centres in the area including Youthreach, after-school projects, gardening clubs,



Dublin Samaritans volunteer participating in Bumper Week in the Five Lamps area of Dublin. (Photo: David Waters)

citizens information centres and addiction recovery groups. Volunteers also spoke to students outside local colleges; they also made themselves available to speak to people as they left church services over the weekend. In addition to this, volunteers spent two hours each lunchtime over the course of the week in the Five Lamps area spreading the message about the number of ways to contact Samaritans including by telephone, text message, letter and face to face.

Dublin Samaritans received an overwhelmingly positive response, with local people delighted that we were taking an interest in the Five Lamps area.

#### **Prison work**

Samaritans has an established and well-regarded association with prison support work, most notably in the form of its 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 listening volunteers. They listen in complete confidence to fellow prisoners, who may be experiencing feelings of distress or despair, including those which may lead to suicide.

In 2012, the Listener Scheme celebrated its tenth 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. The organisation trained 43 prisoners as Listeners in 2012.

Samaritans' Listeners in prisons had approximately 1,100 calls from their fellow inmates over the past 12 months, an increase of 83 per cent on the previous year. Samaritans has attributed the significant rise to the extension of the service to the Dóchas Centre this year, and also due to an increase in the number of new Listeners.



# Oireachtas briefing on the Listener Scheme at Wheatfield Prison

In July 2012, Samaritans Ireland briefed a delegation of Oireachtas members on its Listener Scheme at Wheatfield Prison on the importance of one-to-one emotional support for prisoners as an important intervention in reducing levels of distress, self-harm and suicide amongst the prison population.

The briefing took place as part of Samaritans' efforts to secure greater awareness amongst policy-makers of the importance of emotional support services within the prison system. Under its Listener Scheme, Samaritans selects suitable candidates who have volunteered to become Listeners, and who have been approved by prison management for participation. Volunteers receive intensive training and support from Samaritans and, upon completion of their training, receive a certificate which enables them to practise as a Listener.

The briefing for Oireachtas members was addressed by the Minister for Disability, Equality, Mental Health and Older People, Ms Kathleen Lynch TD, who said: "The Samaritans Listener Scheme is a little-recognised, but hugely important, service within our prison system. I congratulate the organisation for working so effectively over the past ten years to implement the scheme across five prisons, and I am



Members of the delegation of Oireachtas members. (Photo: Maxwell Photography)

fully behind the extension of the scheme around the country. The higher instances of self-harm and suicide among the prison population is a concern for me, and the provision of emotional support in a prison setting can go some way towards tackling this issue. I am particularly heartened by the positive impact which the Samaritans training has on the Listeners themselves. It is offering a genuine self-development opportunity, and is clearly having an impact on the path of life Listeners take after their release."

#### Media guidelines for reporting suicide and self-harm

The importance of responsible reporting of suicide and self-harm cannot be overestimated. Samaritans media guidelines, if followed, should reduce the risk of copycat suicidal behaviour.

There is a proven link between suicide reporting and copycat suicides. Samaritans and the Irish Association of Suicidology (IAS) produce media guidelines which are designed to enable responsible reporting of suicide and self-harm. These guidelines provide a valuable resource for those in the media who have any involvement in the reporting or portrayal of suicide and they represent an important

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

Speaking about the guidelines, Professor Keith Hawton, Director, Centre for Suicide Research, University of Oxford said: "A fine line remains between sensitive, intelligent reporting and sensationalising the issue."

An updated edition of the media guidelines will be published in 2013. Publication of an all-island document was postponed for six months to incorporate the recommendations of the Leveson Inquiry.

#### **Connect – Getting support to those who need it**

In 2012, Samaritans began work on a new project, 'Connect'. Connect is a two-phase initiative which will implement a comprehensive signposting system for Samaritans to allow callers better access to support services. Connect Phase 1 has been funded by the National Office for Suicide Prevention.

In close co-operation with agencies across the sector, Samaritans is working to build partnerships which will benefit people in distress. Samaritans is a household name and supports thousands of people each year. For some time we have been receiving calls from people who find themselves in distress for the first time in their lives: their knowledge of services is limited and often they don't know what is available to help them. There are many innovative and specialist services at work in Ireland. By building strong working relationships with these groups, Samaritans aims to provide an enhanced service and help provide a holistic approach to providing support to anyone in distress.

Importantly, Samaritans met with HSE Resource Officers who work in local communities in the areas of mental health promotion and suicide prevention to gain an understanding of local issues. Local branches and volunteers are involved in these meetings in an effort to build effective, long-term relationships. While meeting groups throughout the country, Samaritans has found a significant willingness to collaborate to complement each other's service. Samaritans developed partnerships with agencies outside the sector who provide practical supports and use Samaritans' services to offer emotional supports to their callers.

Connect Phase 2 is currently being piloted. This phase of the project uses a direct divert system whereby organisations can forward their helpline calls to Samaritans whenever their own helpline is unavailable.

# FOCUS ON

### **Connect in action**

#### **Dublin**

As a result of concerns about suicide incidents in Howth, Co Dublin, the HSE Resource Officer brought together a group of interested parties to discuss the issue. The group included representatives from the local branch of Samaritans, Fingal County Council, chambers of commerce, the Harbour Master, the Coastguard and An Garda Síochána. The group agreed on new signage highlighting helpline details and services as well as awareness training on available services. Following awareness raising workshops by Samaritans, the HSE delivered two 'Safe Talk' programmes in the community.

#### Cork

In 2010 Samaritans partnered with Suicide Aware (Ireland) Ltd, a Cork-based voluntary organisation founded in June 2009 which aims to help deal with issues of depression and suicide in Ireland. Suicide Aware had been offering telephone support to people struggling to cope but found that they were finding it difficult to meet the demand due to limited



(Photo: Derek Speirs)

funding. The organisation met with Pio Fenton, then Samaritans Cork Director, to discuss how they could best focus their work on creating public awareness and understanding of mental health, depression and suicide. As a result, Suicide Aware now directs people to the Samaritans phone number. This has enabled the organisation to concentrate on its work in schools and in the community.

#### Research

Samaritans is committed to carrying out high-quality research to develop its understanding in a number of areas. In September 2012, Samaritans published a major report on men and suicide, *Men and Suicide: Why it's a social issue*. The report provided an in-depth examination of why men from disadvantaged backgrounds in their 30s, 40s and 50s are at higher risk of suicide than the rest of society. Men from low socio-economic backgrounds living in deprived areas are ten times more likely to die by suicide than men from high socio-economic backgrounds living in the most affluent areas.

The report explored the reasons for suicide beyond mental health issues in this group of men and called for suicide to be addressed as a health and social inequality issue. The key points contained in the research are illustrated in the panel on the right.

Samaritans Ireland called on the Government, statutory health services and relevant NGOs to recognise the heightened risk of suicide among disadvantaged men in mid-life, and to treat suicide as a health and social inequality issue.

The following case studies are extracts from accounts provided by two Irish men as part of the research carried out while preparing the report. The men concerned have given consent to have their accounts published, on the basis that their identities have been protected.

Men compare themselves against a 'gold standard' which prizes power, control and invincibility. When they believe they aren't meeting this standard, they feel a sense of shame, which can lead them to have suicidal thoughts.

Men in mid-life are now part of the 'buffer' generation, not sure whether to be like their older, more traditional, strong, silent, austere fathers or like their younger, more progressive, individualistic sons.

The changing nature of the labour market over the last 60 years has affected working class men. With the decline of traditional male industries, they have lost not only their jobs but also a source of masculine pride and identity.

Men in mid-life remain overwhelmingly dependent on a female partner for emotional support. But today men are less likely to have one lifelong partner and more likely to live alone, without the social or emotional skills to fall back on.



"I've always been self-employed and worked hard, a bit of a workaholic really. I've never been out of work until just over a year ago. The last few years have taken a big toll on my life. My father died and I was very close to him.

"I was working long hours driving and I don't know what it was, whether it was pressure, boredom or financial, but I got into gambling. I was just throwing the money on for the sake of it, but I spent a lot. I ended up borrowing money off my mates.

"Everything got on top of me; I don't know whether it was stress related. But I've changed since my father died; I'm not the person I used to be. I get cranky a lot and take it out on people when I shouldn't. Things come out my mouth, which I know hurt people and my gambling has caused a lot of upset.

"I gave up work because I couldn't take it any more; I was going to snap. I brought a lot of pressure home to my family and things were building up. I thought if I killed myself, it would all go away and my family would be okay. It would mean that there would be no more worrying, no more arguments at home, no more harming my kid with the screaming. My relationship was going downhill. She kept kicking me out and then taking me back.

"I went to see a counsellor because I needed to talk to someone I didn't know. It was easier to talk to a stranger than to friends or family. I wouldn't say half the stuff to someone I know. There's still a long road ahead, so I just take things day by day. I can't look into what I'm going to be doing next week or the week after, I just take in one day at a time.

"I've paid back my debts to people and I don't owe anybody anything. So going forward, I'll have to get back to work sometime. There's only so much time that you can hang around, as it gives you too much time to think." "I was 17 when I started working and I'd never claimed social welfare until last year, when I lost my job. I'd been with the business for ten years until they went into liquidation and it was bought by another company.

"I got another job with a different company, but there were loads of problems and no money coming in. I wasn't getting paid and during those six weeks when everything was a mess, it got on top of me.

"I know I'm not the only person in the house, as there's my wife as well, but it was my job to bring in the money. It was my job to finance my home and look after the kids. My wife started getting annoyed and we were arguing. There were bills coming in and I thought we'd sort it out, but we couldn't, as I couldn't get any money out of the company.

"The bills built up and built up. I kept pushing to try and get paid and then they said my contract didn't stand any more and sacked me on the spot. I had to give my car back. I had to give everything back. My phone bill became my own. They gave me a week's wages, but a week's wages had to go on six weeks of bills.

"I had to pay rent, petrol and get a new school uniform for one of the kids. You start thinking, 'Is it easier for them if I'm not here?' I had to go on the social, but it doesn't pay enough to support my wife and four kids.



I'm in arrears with my rent and I've got to stump up some money soon or my car will be taken away.

"So you do think 'Well if I'm not here she'd probably get more money for the kids, the bills would die with me, she wouldn't be spending that much on shopping each week because I wouldn't be eating, plus I wouldn't be using the car and spending money on petrol'. That's how it starts I suppose and if you say it enough times, you start to believe it.

"I don't know what stopped me from killing myself. You say to yourself you're going to do it and then one of the kids will say something that'll make a bit of a difference. Recently, I've been given the opportunity to do some work and I'm coming off welfare.

"I know the bills aren't going away, but I'm busy trying to turn things around and see what I can do. The job is only offering a little bit more money than the welfare, but it's more money that I had last week."



To read the full research visit www.samaritans.org

## HELPLINE STATISTICS

#### How Samaritans' helpline statistics are recorded

When 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 Samaritans' experience, these 'silent' calls can represent a number of things. For example:

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



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



Someone calling and waiting for the 'right' voice to answer – someone they feel comfortable about opening up to. These silent calls are recorded as calls to the 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.

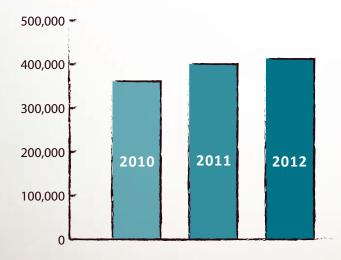
All calls that involve conversation between Samaritans' volunteers and callers (i.e. all calls other than silent calls or those lasting less than ten seconds) are known as 'dialogue contacts'.

During the 12 months from November 2011 to October 2012, a total of 412,167 calls were answered by the Samaritans' telephone helpline. The number of calls answered by Samaritans represents an increase of three per cent on the previous 12-month period.

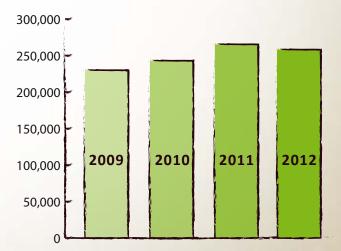
Of the total calls answered, 153,922 were silent calls and/or calls that lasted less than ten seconds. There were 258,245 dialogue contacts over this period.

In order to provide a clearer representation of actual incidences of emotional support given to people calling Samaritans' helpline, only dialogue contacts have been included in the figures below (i.e. calls lasting less than ten 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'.

#### **Answered calls**

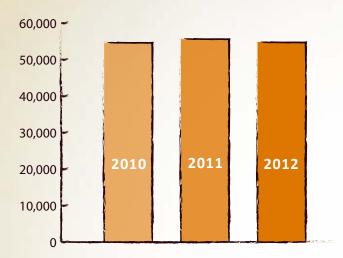


#### **Dialogue contacts**



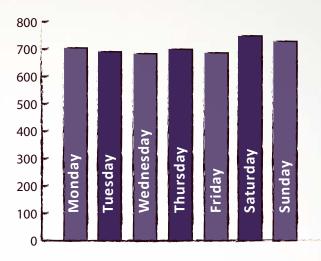
Samaritans recorded 258,245 dialogue contacts on its telephone system in the Republic of Ireland between November 2011 and October 2012. This represented a decrease of three per cent – or 7,200 calls – on the previous 12-month period.

#### **Listening hours**



Samaritans' volunteers in Ireland gave 57,410 hours in listening time on the organisation's helpline in the 12-month period from November 2011 to October 2012. This constituted – on average – 1,104 hours per week. The level of 'listening time' increased by three per cent on the previous 12-month period. The average duration of dialogue calls increased overall from 12.5 minutes in 2011 to 13.5 minutes in 2012. This was particularly noticeable at night-time, when the average duration of dialogue calls increased by nine per cent to nearly 16 minutes per call. The increase in listening hours reflects the growth in intensity of calls, and associated length of time spent with callers.

#### Breakdown of calls by day



The average number of calls received each day by Samaritans Ireland's helpline during the 12-month period from November 2011 to October 2012 was 707.

As in 2011, Saturday was consistently the busiest day for the Samaritans over the past 12 months, with an average of 749 calls being received by Samaritans' volunteers each Saturday. Wednesday was the least busy day, with an average of 682 calls to the helpline made each Wednesday.

The average number of calls made for each day of the week was as follows:

Monday: **704** Tuesday: **690** Wednesday: **683**  Friday: **686** Saturday: **748** Sunday: **728** 

Thursday: 699

Samaritans received the highest number of calls in the last 12 months on Thursday 15 March when 930 calls were answered. A high number of calls were also answered on Saturday 7 January (924 calls) and on Sunday 8 April (898 calls).

Samaritans recorded 258,245 dialogue contacts on its telephone system in the Republic of Ireland between November 2011 and October 2012.



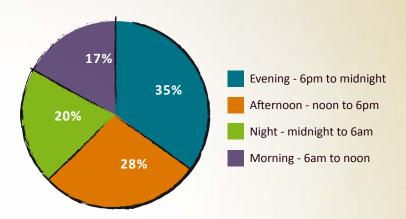
#### **Busiest times**

The busiest hours for Samaritans' helpline in the 12 months from November 2011 to October 2012 were on average:



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

#### When we answer calls



#### Mode of contact

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

During the 12 months from November 2011 to October 2012, a total of 6,912 people received face-to-face support from Samaritans. The face-to-face support provided by Samaritans represents an increase of 17 per cent on the previous 12-month period. Within the same reporting period, 11,697 emails and 7,467 text message contacts were supported.

Over 65 per cent of contacts made to Samaritans' helpline in Ireland are now by mobile phone rather than landline. Increasingly, Samaritans has observed a shift away from landline calls to mobile calls, and the organisation is therefore concerned that vulnerable people who rely on pay-as-you-go mobile phones may find calling Samaritans' 1850 number too expensive.

In light of this, the planned launch of Samaritans Freephone number 116123 in 2013 will remove both a perceived and actual barrier to accessing the service.

Samaritans' volunteers gave – on average – 1,104 hours per week hours in listening time on the organisation's helpline.

#### 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 the 2012, the five main issues that arose were:



In the reporting period, the volume of calls is significant but the increased intensity of the contacts is the more remarkable trend. Concerns regarding finance were reflected in many calls. Currently, Samaritans estimate the rate of recession-related calls is approximately one in six.

It is important to note that although the increase in the duration of calls reflects a level of stress and anxiety, it also reflects people's willingness to talk about their problems. This may be linked to the impact of 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 13 branches of Samaritans.



(Photo: Derek Speirs)

# VOLUNTEERS

There are currently over 1,400 volunteers in Samaritans' branches in Ireland, an average of 107 volunteers per branch. It is estimated that each volunteer commits an average of 15 hours per month as listeners. The largest branch is Dublin, which has 286 volunteers, while the smallest is Kilkenny, with 74 volunteers.

Samaritans invests heavily in initial and ongoing training for its 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 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 ongoing basis.

Volunteers are the heart of the Samaritans organisation, delivering the core support service, running all branches, raising vital funds, and raising awareness of the work that 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. There are, however, many good reasons to extend this branch network in the near future.

> There are currently over 1,400 volunteers in Samaritans' branches in Ireland, an average of 107 volunteers per branch.

## Dublin Samaritans Listener Scheme

Dublin Samaritans has been working to support prisoners in Dublin for almost half of the organisation's entire period of existence, with volunteers first visiting prisons in 1991. Samaritans Dublin Branch now supports all prisons in Dublin, with Listener Schemes in six of the seven prisons. A Listener Scheme is a peer-support scheme, where Samaritans select, train and support prisoners who volunteer to listen to their fellow inmates. These Listeners support fellow prisoners in line with the values of Samaritans, providing 24-hour, on-site, confidential emotional support. Samaritans continues to visit St Patrick's Institution for Young Offenders on a weekly basis, providing direct emotional support to the young men. Those in prison also have the facility to confidentially telephone Samaritans.

This year, Dublin Samaritans held training sessions in Mountjoy Prison, in the Mountjoy Training Unit, and also in Cloverhill and Arbour Hill, successfully training 34 volunteers. The branch also launched a Listener Scheme in Dóchas Women's Prison earlier this year. The Dublin branch currently has 43 Listeners across the Dublin prisons. As part of this work, volunteers meet with prison management on a regular basis, working with them to support the Listeners in the work that they do.



The Listener Scheme in Wheatfield Prison. (Photo: Derek Speirs)

Dublin Samaritans Prison Support Team delivered a one-day training Listening Skills Course to 30 prison officers in August 2012. Places on the course were offered to all Dublin prisons supported by Samaritans. The officers attending represented all seven of the Dublin prisons. The branch also ran a self-awareness course over three evenings in St Patrick's Institution for Young Offenders.

Central to the success of the scheme is the participation and support of prisoners, management, staff and the chaplaincy service. Dublin Samaritans continues to work with the Irish Prison Service to develop the services provided.

### Cork Samaritans Men's Sheds



(Photo: Derek Speirs)

In July 2012, a new director joined Cork Samaritans. The director's key priority was to focus on the development of the organisation's outreach programme, and, specifically, to increase public awareness of Samaritans by reaching out to the public generally and, more specifically, to at-risk groups. Men's groups were identified as a priority in this category.

On foot of this, Cork Samaritans has initiated contact with men's groups, such as Men's Sheds. Men's Sheds believe in men working alongside each other; this is a



traditional means for men to communicate with each other. The Men's Sheds idea originated in Australia, and these groups are now becoming more popular in Ireland.

The outreach team has focused on developing contacts and initiating relationships with six Men's Sheds groups and four general men's groups in Cork city centre and also in rural areas. The team have no expectations when they go to meet with men's groups. Sometimes they have a cup of tea and a chat with the men they visit. At other times volunteers may give a talk about what they do as Samaritans. The experiences have been both powerful and profound and many of the men have been very open about telling volunteers about their lives and how they have been coping with challenges.

One of the most important messages coming from this work is that all Samaritans' volunteers are normal, everyday people. Samaritans do not judge; Samaritans are confidential and they try their best to understand what it is like to be the person at the other end of the phone/email/text or sitting across from them.

The hope is that by allowing men to see volunteers as people and in a space where they are comfortable, they may see that they are real people who are there if they need them.

In the next year, Cork Samaritans plans to meet more groups of men, to encourage them to talk and help them develop the skills they need to deal with the stresses they experience.

### Samaritans Festival Branch

2012 marked Samaritans' 14th year of offering emotional support on the streets of Ireland by being available at events throughout the island over the summer months.

Drawn from volunteers from the 20 branches on the island of Ireland, the age groups of the 71 Festival branch volunteers range from early 20s to late 70s and everything in between. The branch was originally established to provide volunteers for events where there were large gatherings of people, thereby increasing the availability and accessibility of confidential emotional support to anyone who needs it.

The volunteers actively promote the concept of talking about feelings and although there may be a fun, good time atmosphere at events, many people who attend big festivals can experience feelings of loss or despair. Samaritans volunteers actively listen in a confidential, supportive and non-judgmental way at such events.

Among the events attended by the Festival Branch in 2012 were Teen Aware (Tullamore), Riverfest (Limerick), Puck Fair (Killorglin), North West 200 (Portrush), Cork Midsummer Festival, Tullamore Agricultural Show, Galway Arts Festival, Tall Ships (Dublin), Fleadh Cheoil (Cavan) and Matchmaking Festival (Lisdoonvarna).

This year, the branch was delighted to include The Volvo Ocean Race Festival in Galway as part



(Photo: Derek Speirs)

of their work. The festival was a huge success for its organisers in terms of tourism and revenue generated. Almost 200 people sought emotional support from the Festival Branch on the streets of Galway.

Each festival is unique in its demographics, with programming ranging from family-based events to young people's music events, and events for people looking to build relationships. The Festival Branch volunteers reported that the main challenges facing callers were relationship problems, loneliness, depression, money-related and drink/drugs.

In 2012, the number of people accessing emotional support at all festivals increased to 1,498.

### Map of branches and festivals



#### **Festivals**

- Lisdoonvarna Matchmaking Festival
- North West 200
- Teen Aware, Tullamore
- Riverfest, Limerick
- Cork Midsummer Festival
- Tall Ships, Dublin

- Galway Arts Festival
- Tullamore Agricultural Show
- Fleadh Cheoil na hEiréann
- Puck Fair, Killorglin
- Volvo Ocean Race Galway

For further information about the governance and activities of Samaritans, the 2012 Samaritans UK and Ireland Annual Report can be accessed at

http://www.samaritans.org/sites/default/files/kcfinder/files/Annual%20Report%202012.pdf

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Company Number: 450409 Charity Number: CHY11880

Further information about the work of Samaritans is available at www.samaritans.ie.

Samaritans' 24-hour helpline number is 1850 60 90 90.

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visit us – find your nearest branch on our website

