



**SAMARITANS
Scotland**

**Tackling
suicide
together:**
providing a
safe space in
uncertain times

Samaritans Scotland
Strategic delivery
plan 2022-24



Foreword

In the last two years, life in Scotland has changed in ways we couldn't have imagined. For many it's been tough, and it continues to be so. We know this because we hear the concerns of people who contact us. Across Scotland, through our one thousand volunteers, Samaritans has continued to be here, day and night, providing a safe space to listen for anyone who is struggling.

Our listening service has been at the core of Samaritans for nearly 70 years, and we will continue to be a trusted space for those who need a non-judgemental ear. The hope we offer through human connection saves lives. But as Samaritans Scotland moves into this new strategy period, we also need to do far more to reduce the levels of distress, anxiety, isolation and hopelessness that lead people to contact us in the first place.

In Scotland, right now, there are opportunities to make real and lasting change to ensure fewer lives are lost to suicide. Civil society has shown a heartening commitment to addressing the impact of coronavirus on people's wellbeing – with public campaigns, open conversations, and significant new research and investment. We continue to play our part in the pandemic response alongside our partners, offering emotional support, community outreach, online resources, training, research insights, policy solutions and awareness campaigns.

Now though, economic uncertainty and world events have added fresh worries for many. Structural inequities, child and adult poverty, addiction, poor physical health, isolation, and barriers to accessing support are just some of the factors fuelling poor mental wellbeing. These factors are not being felt equally across Scottish society; but this is not new.

People living in Scotland's most deprived communities are more than three times more likely to take their own life than those in the wealthiest. Middle-aged men remain at greatest risk of death by suicide. Young women in Scotland repeatedly reported the highest rates of suicidal thoughts through the pandemic. Some communities are so overlooked that we don't have the data to even know what risk looks like.

The reasons people feel suicidal, or take their own life, are complex. Finding the right solutions will require many voices to be heard. For the next two years, under this strategic delivery plan in Scotland, this is the work: building a collective voice for change.

- We will work collaboratively – with those who have experience of suicide, self-harm and marginalisation, supporters, volunteers and staff – to influence structural change, both locally and nationally.
- We will pool our expertise with that held by partners in other sectors to build our understanding of risk factors for suicide and campaign for change so that fewer people reach the point of distress or despair.
- We will build our volunteering offer, becoming more reflective of the communities we serve, diversifying access and sustaining our listening service for all those who need us.
- We will do more to promote our full range of services with workplaces, schools, communities, the media and civic leaders to support positive intervention and reductions in suicide across Scotland.
- But we can only do all of this with sustainable resources – so we will work to build the income and capacity available to us in Scotland to ensure we can remain a force for good across the country.

Our goal is to ensure fewer lives are lost to suicide – by always being there to listen, by bringing evidence and an experienced voice to suicide prevention, by challenging inequity, and by working hand in hand with people every step of the way.

It is possible to build a compassionate and caring society in Scotland where no one feels they need to face their struggles alone. We are hopeful. We look forward to listening, and to speaking up, with you.



Amanda Millar
Scotland Trustee and Committee Chair

About this document

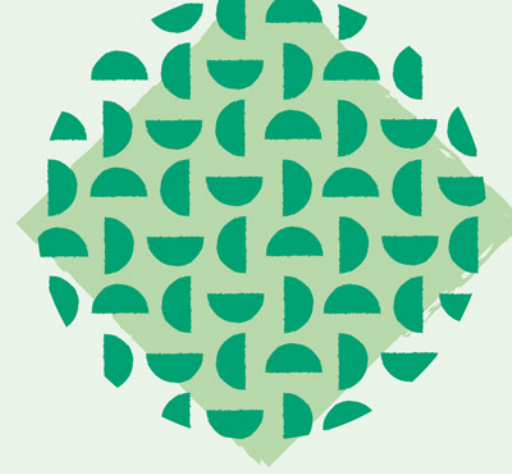
The Samaritans Scotland Strategic Delivery Plan 2022–24 should be read alongside the **Samaritans 2022–27 strategy** which set outs the direction of travel for our organisation across all five jurisdictions in which we operate: England, Ireland, Northern Ireland, Scotland, and Wales. The two-year delivery objectives set out in this document are specific to Scotland and will be delivered alongside wider UK and Republic of Ireland developments to meet our aim, that fewer people die by suicide.

We will provide a review of our progress against these Scotland-specific objectives each year and will publish an updated Scottish delivery plan in Spring 2024, focused on the final three years of the Samaritans strategy.

Acknowledgements

Our particular thanks to Rachel Cackett, Executive Director for Samaritans Scotland up to July 2022, who led the development and formulation of this Strategic Delivery Plan. And to all volunteers, staff and partners who gave their time to help shape it.

Recent successes and achievements



Volunteers in Scotland answered almost 160,000 calls for help, including 36,000 hours on the phone.*



We secured funding to improve diversity and inclusion among our volunteer base in Scotland.



We established a new national partnership to drive prevention activity at locations of concern.



We promoted Samaritans as a source of support for participants at national suicide prevention strategy consultation events.



Our high-profile work on self-harm resulted in the Scottish Government committing to a new strategy.



We were a key charity partner in the Scottish Government's Clear Your Head campaign, supporting public wellbeing through the pandemic.



We kicked off a new project to work with lone and isolated workers in the West Highlands and Skye.



Our branches engaged with their local communities where support was needed, such as at foodbanks or with farmers.



We co-sponsored Scotland's recommendations to improve suicidal crisis response: *Time, Space, Compassion.*



We shared our research reports on the impact of coronavirus to help shape Scotland's pandemic response.



Scotland's 1,000 volunteers, from Selkirk to Shetland, were here to listen 24/7 throughout the pandemic.



*A 'call for help' is any contact method made to Samaritans for support, for example by phone, email, letter or face to face in branch. Figures from March 2021 to February 2022.

Our vision is that fewer people die by suicide

Samaritans Scotland priorities 2022–24

Access

Champion volunteering

- Increase capacity
- Improve diversity
- Widen opportunities

Promote our services

- Show our relevance to Scottish communities



Reach

- Reduce risk factors, focused on lone and isolated workers, self-harm, criminal justice
- Partner in new research on inequalities and suicide risks
- Support risk reduction at Scottish locations of concern
- Develop new Scottish training packages



Impact

- Build collaborations in communities to improve local suicide prevention
- Shape national strategies and increase preventative interventions
- Support Scotland's Time, Space, Compassion crisis approach
- Embed Samaritans' activity within key industries
- Promote responsible reporting and conversation



Capacity

- Build the capacity, capability and diversity of our people
- Strengthen our Scotland Committee
- Ensure our Scotland operation is consistently fit for purpose



Sustainability

- Be informed by those with lived experience of suicide, self-harm, and marginalisation
- Increase income within Scotland and demonstrate the impact we have
- Offer new opportunities to campaign in Scotland



Our vision, mission and strategic priorities

Our vision is that fewer people die by suicide

To achieve this, we believe Samaritans has a crucial role to play in:

- Reducing the risk factors that make some people more likely to take their own lives.
- Ensuring that people who are at increased risk of suicide are supported.
- Making it less likely that people who do experience suicidal thoughts act on them.
- Reducing the likelihood that people will develop suicidal thoughts.

Our mission

We're here every day and night of the year for anyone struggling to cope. We make sure people have somewhere to turn and support when they need it most. We work with communities to let people know we're here for them and we campaign to make suicide prevention a priority.

Our organisational strategic priorities 2022–27

We've worked closely with people who have contacted Samaritans, been affected by suicide or suicidal thoughts and those who volunteer and work with us or support us to identify five major ambitions for our new strategy to improve: **Access, Reach, Impact, Capacity and Sustainability**.

1. Make sure anyone who needs us can access our support

We'll work hard to ensure people who seek our support can reach us how and when they need to, by training more volunteers and working innovatively on new ways to connect with us, like online chat, alongside continually reviewing and improving our phone, email and in-person listening services.

2. Reach more people to let them know we're here

We'll actively go out into a more diverse range of communities so that the people who need us most see us, trust us and know we're here for them. We will do this together with the most relevant people, organisations and industries as well as strengthening our existing work within local communities.

3. Make our voice heard at a national, regional and local level for maximum impact

We'll push harder to make suicide prevention a priority nationally, regionally and locally across the UK and Republic of Ireland, working collaboratively to make changes that save lives. We will listen to people who have been affected by suicide or suicidal thoughts and identify key areas that need more research, in order to help us make the greatest change.

4. Increase our organisational capacity to become one team of valued, diverse, skilled people

We'll strive to become more flexible and supportive so that a wider range of people can fit volunteering into their lives and so we fully reflect the communities we serve. We will support personal development, which will encourage and inspire volunteers and staff to commit to us for as long as possible.

5. Build meaningful relationships with supporters to ensure our sustainability

We'll create ways for the people and organisations who support us to add their energy, resources and experience to our work so that together we can be there for those who need us for years to come.

Our commitment to equity, diversity and inclusion is one of the key principles in our new strategy. It will connect with everything we do at Samaritans, guiding the way we work and behave.

Our EDI commitment is available on our website.

Delivery In Scotland

In Scotland, we will, over the next two years, commit to objectives to deliver on these priorities in the context of Scottish needs and opportunities. The following Scottish-specific objectives sit alongside objectives in the overarching **Samaritans strategy**, which will apply right across the UK & Republic of Ireland and which will be rolled out gradually over the next five years.

Priority 1: Access

1. Make sure anyone who needs us can access our support

Our challenge

We cannot always meet the demand for Samaritans' services and there is a risk that people who are trying to contact us can't get through or get the response they need.

Our ambition

People will be able to access our support whenever they need it and get through to us in a way that works for them.

Scottish objectives:

1. We will champion the recruitment and retention of volunteers across Scotland so that we play our part in ensuring sustainable access to Samaritans' services, including a particular focus on:
 - Working with our Scottish branches to increase capacity by becoming more diverse and inclusive, better reflecting the communities we serve.
 - Supporting new approaches to increase the capacity of volunteers in Scotland at times of high demand for our service.
 - Testing the promotion of new, flexible volunteering options, starting in the West Highland mainland and Skye.
2. We will improve how we promote Samaritans' full range of services for anyone in Scotland struggling to cope, showing the Scottish people that we are active in their communities and are relevant to them, whenever they need us.

Keith Walker, Volunteer at Inverness Samaritans and Deputy Regional Director for Scotland:
"Reaching out to remote and rural communities means we can properly address the specific issues caused by isolation – our new project in West Highlands and Skye is just the start."

2. Reach more people to let them know we're here



Our challenge

We are not yet good enough at reaching people whose circumstances mean they might have a higher risk of suicide, such as those living in deprivation or who are marginalised.

Our ambition

To be more visible and relevant, particularly to a more diverse range of people and communities, so those who might need us most, trust us and know we're here for them.

Scottish objectives:

1. We will develop our activities focused on diverse groups in Scotland who may experience increased suicide risk factors, and we will share our insights to shape national policy, concentrating initially on:
 - Lone and isolated workers in remote communities,
 - people who self-harm, and
 - people in the criminal justice system.
2. We will build collaborative partnerships at national level, seeking joint funding to commission new research on suicide, inequity and marginalisation, to increase shared understanding of Scottish risk factors and campaign for change.
3. We will develop training packages to support wellbeing and connection within specific Scottish communities – focused initially on a new project in the West Highland mainland and Skye, where Samaritans currently has no on-the-ground presence.
4. We will work with partners to support reductions in risk at key Scottish locations of concern, at both national and community levels.

Danielle Rowley, Influencing Manager, Samaritans Scotland:

“By bringing people together and using our network, research and experience, we are informed by a diverse range of voices. We have used our collective voice to influence local and national policy, successfully campaigning for a dedicated self-harm strategy. We’ll continue to engage with communities across Scotland, so that we reach more people, and in doing we ensure that fewer people reach crisis point.”

3. Make our voice heard at a national, regional and local level for maximum impact

Our challenge

As decisions are increasingly taken at a local and regional level that impact on suicide prevention, we lack the resources and systems to make effective change at national, regional and local levels.

Our ambition

To make suicide prevention a priority nationally, regionally and locally for governments, public services and businesses, so that fewer people die by suicide.

Scottish objectives:

1. We will develop our positive, informed engagement with local multi-agency groups to influence suicide prevention services effectively in Scottish communities.
2. We will increase our work with local organisations in Scottish communities to deliver greater impact in collaboration, particularly focusing on strengthening local relationships that promote equity, diversity and inclusion.
3. We will provide research, intelligence, and creative ideas to policy makers to help ensure new or reviewed national strategies on suicide, self-harm and mental health meet the needs of the people of Scotland and support our aim that fewer people die by suicide. We will increase focus on upstream interventions, so more people avoid crisis.
4. We will share insights and research from Samaritans' services to support evidence informed developments in crisis response in Scotland – and we will learn from others. We will bring our expertise and learning in non-judgemental listening to support the delivery of Scotland's Time, Space, Compassion recommendations.
5. We will continue to embed our suicide prevention work with the rail industry in Scotland and will explore partnerships with new sectors to further our reach.
6. We will continue to actively promote responsible reporting and public portrayal of suicide and self-harm to support positive, well-informed discussion that reduces harm.

Rupert Kendal, Branch Director, Borders Samaritans:

"Samaritans is part of steering groups across the Scottish Borders with various partners – including the police, councils and NHS – to really try and work collaboratively and influence the issues surrounding suicide prevention. Regularly sharing the ideas and expertise available in our branch network has a huge impact in raising awareness, as well as making a difference."

Priority 4: Capacity

4. Increase our capacity to become one team of valued, diverse, skilled people



Our challenge

Samaritans' impact is limited by a lack of diverse representation in our people, by our capacity issues and the pressure some roles are under, and by our existing organisational structure.

Our ambition

To meet the demand for our services by recruiting more people, from a diverse range of communities, giving them the best support so they stay with us longer and work effectively together as one Samaritans team.

Scottish objectives:

1. We will engage with the Samaritans organisational review to ensure that our operation in Scotland is consistently fit for purpose to deliver on our aspirations.
2. We will build the capacity and capabilities of our people in Scotland so that we offer the best we can to those who need us or work with us.
3. In both our volunteer base and staff team, we will actively develop and support diversity and inclusion through Scottish-specific initiatives, as well as through the wider Samaritans equity, diversity and inclusion strategy.
4. We will develop our Scotland Committee to set direction and provide robust oversight of our ambitions in Scotland.

Julia Boxer-Peden, Edinburgh and the Lothians branch and co-Chair of Samaritans' Disability Network:

"There has been a fair amount of progress towards looking at how to improve the diversity within Samaritans in Scotland. This is allowing us to become even more inclusive which, in turn, helps us reflect our communities and create opportunities to do more."

5. Build meaningful relationships with our supporters to ensure our sustainability

Our challenge

To remain fit for the future, Samaritans needs more long-term supporters who will be part of the journey with us.

Our ambition

To ensure our long-term sustainability by securing the support needed to keep us strong and by taking steps to ensure our activities and organisation are fit for the future.

Scottish objectives:

1. We will build our capacity and capability to ensure all our Scottish work is better informed by those with lived experience of suicide and self-harm, and by the insights of marginalised communities.
2. We will offer new opportunities for Samaritans and supporters in Scotland to influence those in power and play their part in making positive, tangible change to help save lives.
3. We will work to build the income available to us within Scotland to deliver this plan to reduce suicide.
4. We will demonstrate to current and potential supporters of our work that Samaritans is a force for good in Scotland, delivering significant impact and offering opportunities to work with us to invest in our vision that fewer people die by suicide.

Karen Lafferty, Member of Scotland Committee:

“Serving on Samaritans’ Scotland Committee means looking at the ways we can reduce the risk factors surrounding suicide and self-harm for people living in Scotland. In these uncertain times, it’s vital the charity keeps trying to do more – and obtains the resources to do so.”

Join us

In the next hour, Samaritans will respond to almost 400 calls for help.

Behind the scenes, we will be working all hours to help people feel more hopeful about the future. We will strive to be seen and trusted by anyone who needs support – pushing for change to prevent suicide and ensuring that we remain fit for the future, and that in five years' time we can answer each and every person who is in need of support in the way that is most beneficial for them.

Of course, none of these plans can be realised unless individuals and organisations continue to choose to support us, whether through campaigning, sharing their experiences or volunteering, as well as fundraising or donating, and we are so thankful to everyone who does, even during the most difficult times.

We need your help. These are some of the ways you can join us to make sure fewer lives are lost to suicide:



Find out about volunteering for Samaritans in one of our branches across Scotland.



Donate now and help us be there for someone struggling to cope.



Share your personal experience of reaching crisis point or losing someone to suicide, to help inform our work.



Do something to raise money to help us answer the next call for help.



Spotlight opportunities to make real and lasting change, by campaigning for Samaritans Scotland.

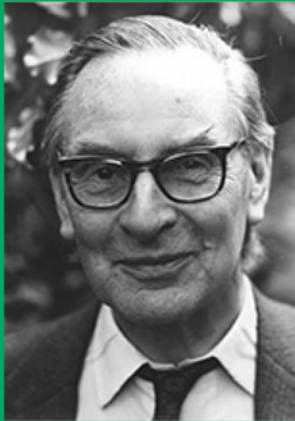


Collaborate with us and become part of our community, to reduce the risk of suicide or self-harm.

Amanda Millar, Scotland Trustee and Committee Chair:

“It is possible to build a compassionate and caring society in Scotland where no one feels they need to face their struggles alone. We are hopeful. We look forward to listening, and to speaking up, with you.”

SAMARITANS



There are in this world, in every country, people who seem to be 'ordinary', but who turn out to be extraordinary. They give their total attention. They listen and listen and listen, without interrupting. They do not preach. They have nothing to sell. We call them Samaritans.



Chad Varah
Founder of Samaritans

samaritans.org

Samaritans Scotland

Norton Park Business Hub, 57 Albion Road EH7 5QY

T 0131 556 7058



[facebook.com/SamaritansScotland](https://www.facebook.com/SamaritansScotland)



twitter.com/sams_scotland

Cover photo: Eilidh Cameron/Samaritans

Samaritans is a charity registered in England & Wales (219432) and in Scotland (SC040604) and a company limited by guarantee registered in England & Wales (757372). Samaritans registered office is located at The Upper Mill, Kingston Road, Ewell, Surrey KT17 2AF.