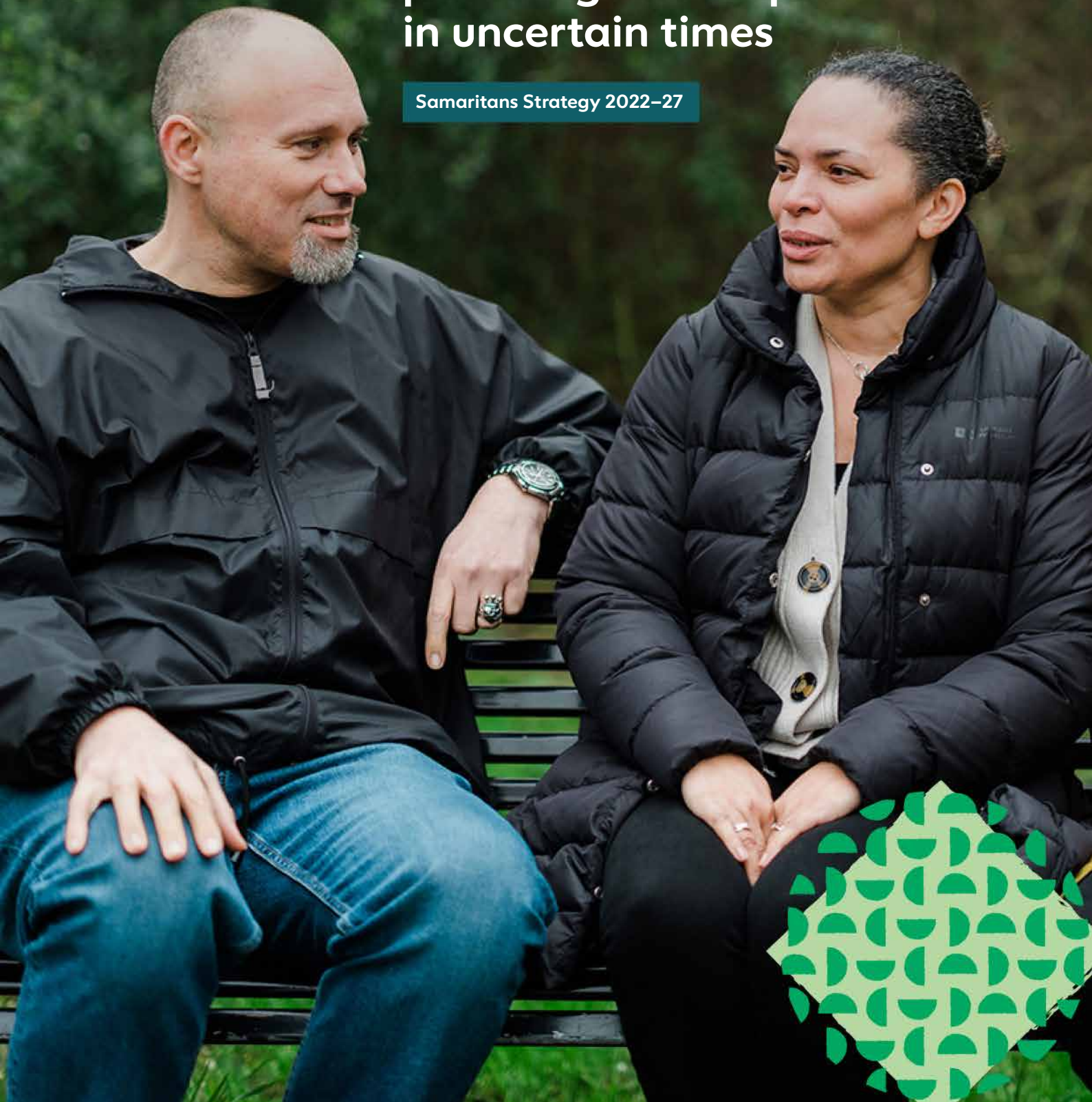


SAMARITANS

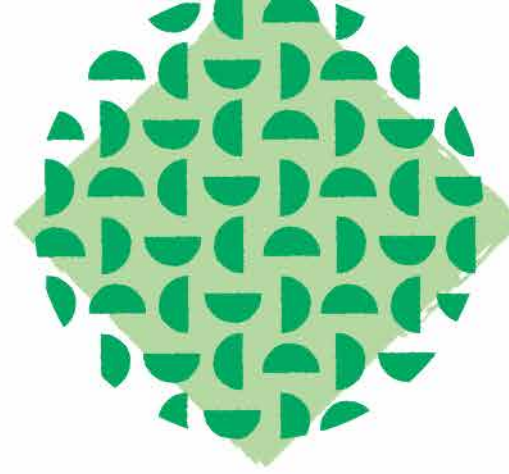
# Tackling suicide together:

providing a safe space  
in uncertain times

Samaritans Strategy 2022-27



# Contents



Foreword	3
Who we are	6
Recent successes and achievements	9
Our strategic priorities 2022–27	10
<b>Priority 1: Access</b>	
Anyone who needs us can access our support	12
<b>Priority 2: Reach</b>	
Let more people know we're here	14
<b>Priority 3: Impact</b>	
Make our voice heard	16
<b>Priority 4: Capacity</b>	
One team: valued, diverse, skilled people	18
<b>Priority 5: Sustainability</b>	
Build meaningful relationships with supporters	20
The difference we'll make	22
Together, we can	23

As Samaritans approaches its 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary, we will build on everything we know about listening to people when they are struggling to cope and in times of crisis, continuing to adapt and innovate so that we can be there in the right way for people who need us most.

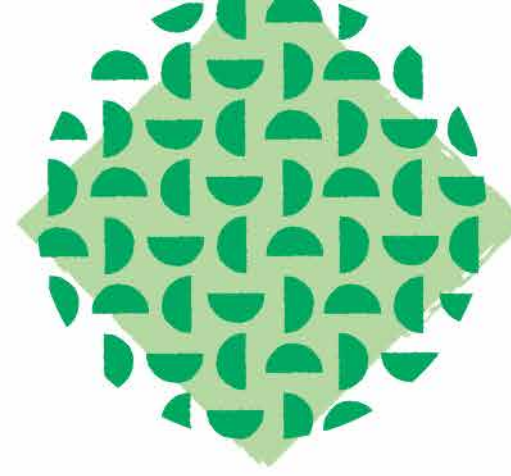


Chris O'Donovan Photography/Samaritans



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# Foreword



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

We share this strategy in uncertain times. In recent years the world has become, for many, a very worrying place. Anyone, at any time, can find themselves needing emotional support.

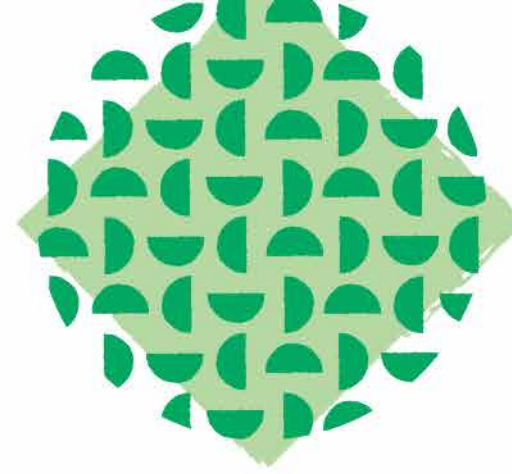
But growing awareness of issues such as discrimination, climate change, the negative effects of social media and global conflict, alongside the issues caused by the coronavirus pandemic and increased cost of living, have added new burdens – many of which affect some people more than others because of inequality within society. These can all have ongoing ripple effects which may last for a long time and increase the risk of suicide, owing to poorer mental and physical wellbeing, bereavement, isolation, economic hardship and stretched public services. Our purpose, to be there for people who are struggling to cope and in times of crisis, is as vital as ever.

To achieve our vision that fewer people die by suicide, we must do more to broaden our impact in society. Samaritans is not only for the moment of crisis – we're taking action to prevent the crisis. In the coming five years, as well as continually striving to adapt, expand and improve our unique 24-hour listening service by phone, online chat, email, letter, face to face and through our Welsh language service, we will grow our campaigning and lobbying work, including helping our branches to influence local decision-making.

As we work for change, Samaritans needs to make changes too. The charity turns 70 in 2023 and it's our job to ensure we adapt and innovate, to provide a safe space for all of those who will need us in the coming decades.

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## Foreword



With 22,000 amazing volunteers in over 200 branches and locations across the UK and Ireland, we are already at the heart of local communities, working with schools, workplaces, railways, prisons and hospitals, delivering training, providing support and helping people turn their lives around as part of our suicide prevention work. But there is more that we need to do. We must make sure that anyone struggling with difficult and overwhelming emotions knows that our volunteers are here, ready to listen, by actively going out into more and diverse communities and letting people know that they can talk to us the way they want to, in the way that feels most comfortable for them at any time of the day or night. We will do more to offer support and tools, resources and services online that help people look after their own mental and emotional health and wellbeing, understand more about suicide and support others. And we will continue to encourage, promote and celebrate those moments of connection between people that can protect and save lives.

To address the causes of suicide and self-harm, we must take more meaningful action to challenge discrimination and injustice, hand in hand with people affected by both. We have worked closely with our volunteers, staff, people who've had suicidal thoughts or been affected by suicide, supporters and partner organisations to shape a strategy that builds on the charity's solid foundations and everything we've learned over the years.

We invite you to join us on our journey, as we continue to react to a changing world and innovate to keep up with new demands and opportunities. Whether as part of our amazing family of volunteers and staff, or as one of the wonderful individuals or organisations who support us, together we can continue providing emotional support to people when they need it most.

**We must make sure that anyone struggling with difficult and overwhelming emotions knows that our volunteers are here, ready to listen.**



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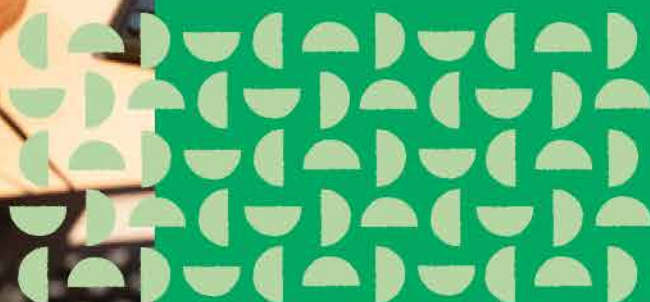


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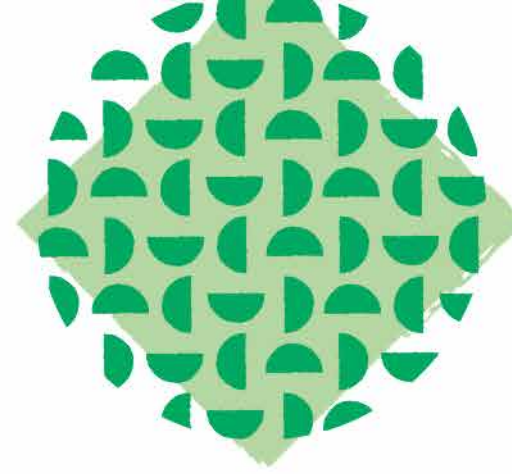
All I wanted, I suppose, was just space to talk, and the volunteer gave me the space. She helped me listen to myself. And that was quite powerful for me at the time.

”

**Glenice**  
**Samaritans volunteer**  
Talking about a time when she reached out to Samaritans for support.



# Who we are



## 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.



 Samaritans branches  
(map not showing Festival branch or Correspondence branch)

## 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 values

Our support services adapt to the changing environment, but the values at the core of our listening service remain constant:

**Listening**  
Exploring feelings alleviates distress and helps people to reach a better understanding of their situation and the options open to them.

**Confidentiality**  
If people feel safe, they are more likely to be open about their feelings.

**Non-judgemental**  
We want people to be able to talk to us without fear of prejudice or rejection.

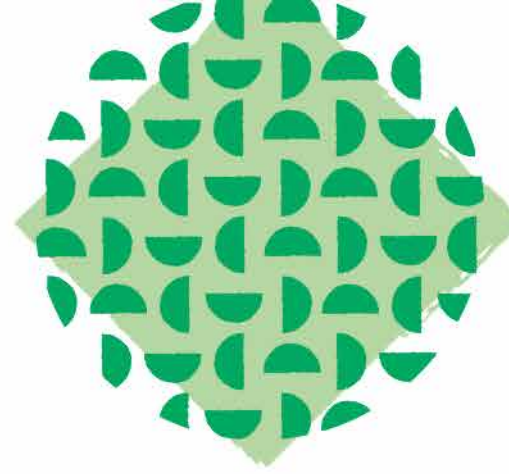
**People making their own decisions wherever possible**  
We believe that people have the right to find their own solution and telling people what to do takes responsibility away from them.

**Human contact**  
Giving people time, undivided attention and empathy meets a fundamental emotional need and reduces distress and despair.



---

## Who we are



## Our principles

Our strategic principles guide everything we do at Samaritans. They are at the heart of the way we work and behave.

### Equity, diversity and inclusion (EDI):

**We will** break down barriers to make Samaritans more diverse and inclusive, both through our people, but also in who we connect with and support, making sure that we are responding to people's needs in a way that is relevant and meaningful to them and their circumstances. Our EDI commitment is available on [our website](#).

### Personal experience:

**We will** ensure the voice of people with experience of suicidal feelings, suicide attempts, self-harm, or bereavement by suicide is central to and shapes all our services, products, campaigns and activities.

### Safety and quality:

**We will** ensure a safe, effective and positive experience for all those who come into contact with our services. We will continue to focus on safety and quality, including safeguarding children and adults at risk of harm who seek support from us. We will always look to exceed the expectations of people we support.

### Evidence-based:

**We will** use research, evidence, insight and data to inform all our services, activities and digital offerings. Where evidence is not available or clear, we will look to work with partners to fill those gaps.

### Vocal and visible:

**We will** never shy away from raising our voice and campaigning on issues that matter to us, particularly those that directly or indirectly impact people's risk of suicide, such as inequality, deprivation, prejudice and unfair treatment.

### Innovation and technology:

**We will** encourage innovation and keep pace with developments, so that we can offer up-to-date and responsive services to the people who contact us, and the most effective platforms for our people.

### Environmental responsibility:

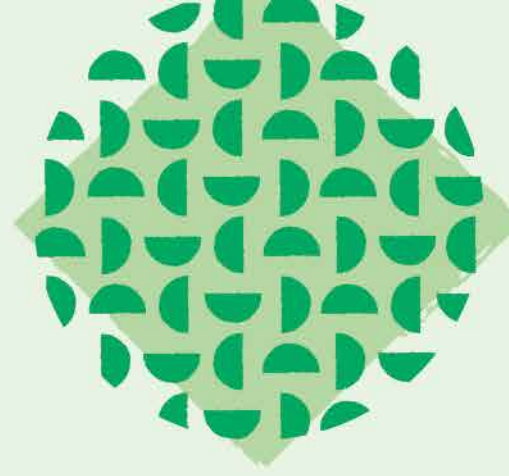
**We will** build a sustainable approach as we embrace hybrid working and volunteering and develop a better understanding of our energy footprint.



Chris O'Donovan Photography/Samaritans



Who we are



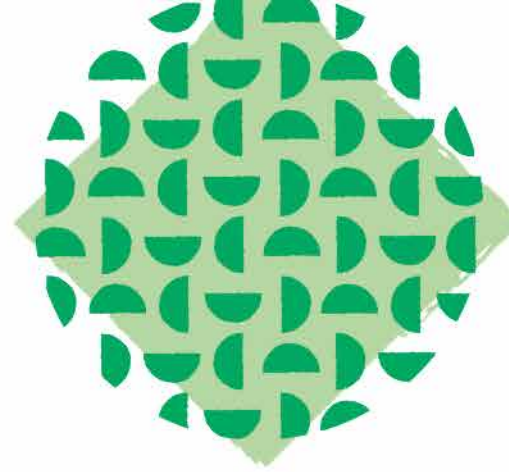
# About Samaritans

- ▶ We answer a call for help every 10 seconds. 
- ▶ We are the only 24/7 suicide prevention charity working across the UK and Republic of Ireland. 
- ▶ We provide letter, email and online chat services for those who don't want to talk but still want support. 
- ▶ We work with the media to inform responsible reporting and depiction of suicide. 
- ▶ We provide face-to-face support in communities, prisons, schools, universities and workplaces. 
- ▶ We work with governments to change policy. 
- ▶ Our listening service is always open – 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. 
- ▶ We have 201 branches in the UK and Republic of Ireland, with new satellite sites and specialist hubs opening up, all run by volunteers. 
- ▶ We work with technology companies to make the internet safer by reducing harmful content. 
- ▶ 7 out of 10 callers say Samaritans made them feel more hopeful about the future.\* 
- ▶ We research the issues around self-harm and suicide, and what works to prevent it. 
- ▶ We're an incredible team of Samaritans people: around 22,000 volunteers and almost 300 staff, plus our wider family of wonderful supporters. 

\*Source: Markham, T., Forshaw, A. and Sutcliffe, R. (2020). Samaritans Caller Outcomes Study. Birmingham: MEL Research Ltd.



# Recent successes and achievements



More than **2,000 people** have signed up to our app for Armed Forces Veterans, which launched in October 2021.



Our volunteers spend over **1 million hours** a year responding to calls for help.



Almost **80,000 people** have signed up to Samaritans' self-help app since it launched in May 2020.



Our trained prison Listeners responded to calls for help **25,000 times** and spent over **14,000 hours** supporting people in prison.

Listeners

Samaritans and Three's 'Better Phone Friend' campaign reached over **2.2 million** people with tips on how to be a better listener.\*\*



We have a lived experience panel with over **380 members**, helping us make sure our work is guided by people with lived experience of suicide or self-harm, who have been bereaved by suicide, or have used Samaritans' services.



## Samaritans' impact

Samaritans volunteers held over **1,500 outreach events** last year and raised awareness at events with over **half a million attendees**.



Our social media posts were seen **100 million** times and we had **2 million** likes, comments and shares.



We answered more than **17,000 calls** from NHS and social care workers.\*



Samaritans **stayed open 24/7** during the coronavirus pandemic.



During our partnership with Network Rail, we have trained over **29,603 railway staff** to make potentially lifesaving interventions.



We piloted online chat and had over **38,000 online conversations**.



We successfully campaigned for suicide to be a **priority area** in the UK Online Safety Bill.

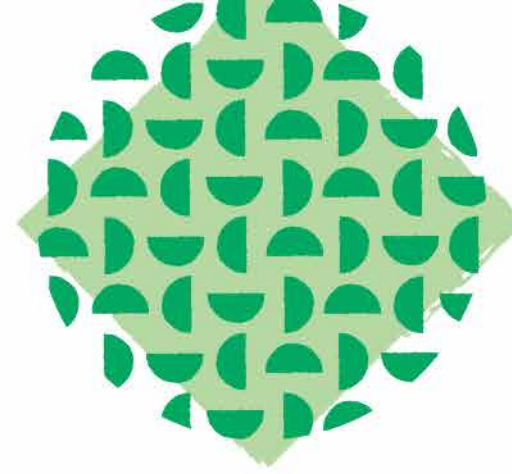


All statistics on this page relate to the 2021 calendar year, unless otherwise stated.

\*Calls answered through our national helpline (116 123) or our dedicated helplines for NHS and social care workers.

\*\*Combined PR reach for the campaign. Data supplied by Three UK, March 2022.

# Our 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**
-  **Sustainability**

We will take a phased approach to working on our priorities, over five years, meaning that not everything will happen at once. As this is a five-year strategy, our priorities will remain the same, but we will develop more detailed plans on how we will deliver them during year one, as we work to increase capacity and capability, making sure we have a solid base from which to grow.

## Having greater impact across our five nations

The policies, legislation and practices that affect suicide rates and suicide prevention are becoming ever more specific to individual jurisdictions. Samaritans has a long-established presence in England, the Republic of Ireland, Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales, which gives us real strength as a change-maker. Through this strategy period we will continue to be sensitive to the differing issues and needs of the five nations and adapt our approach to deliver the most relevant and appropriate plans across the UK and Republic of Ireland to make the most impact in different areas.

### 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 change that saves 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 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 our 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.



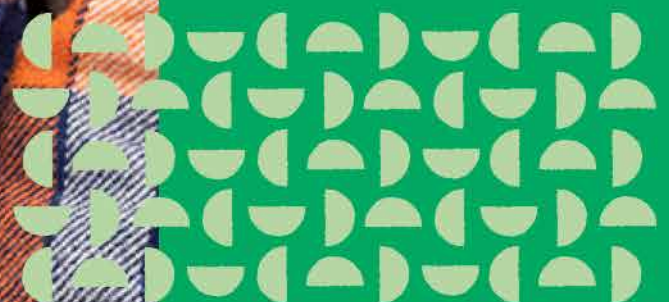


“

On the two occasions when I reached out to Samaritans I was in a pretty desperate place. The ability to get those feelings out – the feelings of lack of self-worth, hopelessness, whatever you want to call it – empowered me to then go to the people around me.

”

Ian





# 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.



Chris O'Donovan Photography/Samaritans

### We will achieve this by:

- Recruiting and training more volunteers to meet demand.
- Expanding our digital services, such as online chat and self-help apps, because we know many people find it easier to reach out this way.
- Improving our service to callers who require additional support.
- Reviewing and improving the accessibility of our branches, hubs and satellites.
- Undertaking targeted recruitment campaigns to attract a more diverse range of people so that our branches reflect their local communities.
- Improving rotas to make it easier for volunteers to be aware of particular times and reasons for increased pressure on the service, such as in the middle of the night or early morning, and volunteer at times and in places that suit them best.

### And we will protect our high standards of safety by:

- Building on our hubs as a place where we deliver specific services and focus on quality.
- Continuing to ensure the highest standards of safeguarding so that all children and adults at risk of harm are protected and supported.
- Investigating how we can better respond to the needs of under-18s who reach out to us.



## ◆ Priority 1: Access



“

When I was a teenager, I was struggling with my anxiety, depression, getting bullied at school horrifically. So I rang Samaritans and just literally offloaded all my stuff to them. It felt good. It felt like someone's listening to me and just made me feel better, a big weight off my shoulders. ”

**John J**

# 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.

### We will achieve this by:

- Assessing the needs of specific communities and developing resources to help our branches understand which local communities or groups need us most.
- Increasing our presence in locations of greatest need, for example by opening new hubs or satellite branches.
- Taking action to reach a more diverse range of people who could benefit from Samaritans' support, such as those who are marginalised or living in deprivation.
- Partnering and collaborating with national organisations who already work with groups who could benefit most from our support, to introduce Samaritans and what we do. We will support our branches and regions to do the same locally.
- Learning from our NHS and Social Care line, we will investigate specific support for sectors that are most in need of the work we do.



Chris O'Donovan Photography/Samaritans



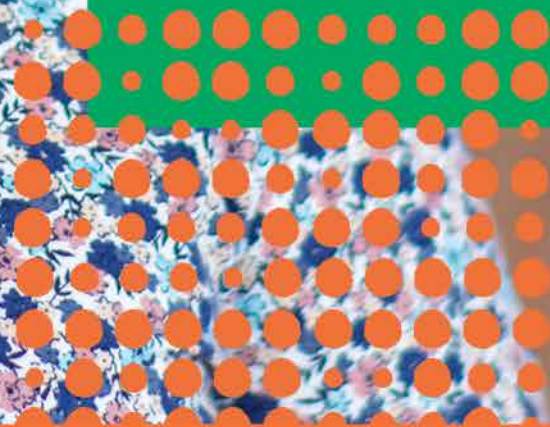
## ● Priority 2: Reach



“

It's really important that we actually speak to people before they reach crisis point. And if we can encourage people in our local community to be a lot more aware about the services that we can offer, but also more aware about the signs when somebody might be struggling and then how to listen, that can hopefully prevent somebody then reaching that crisis point. ”

**Ann**  
**Samaritans volunteer**



# 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.

### We will achieve this by:

- Striving to ensure there are robust suicide prevention strategies in England, Northern Ireland, the Republic of Ireland, Scotland and Wales.
- Pressing for reforms in policy, legislation, institutions and services that will reduce suicide risk factors and help save lives.
- Working with our branches to influence local policies and practices that impact suicide risk in their communities.

### We will also build partnerships for change, and influence key industries and sectors by:

- Continuing to work in alliances, including the National Suicide Prevention Alliance and Support After Suicide Partnership, for greater impact.
- Continuing our role to draw in the best available evidence from across the world and sharing our learning, through networks such as Befrienders Worldwide.
- Increasing our work to reduce the risk of suicide in public places and forge collaborations with more industries and sectors that can help.
- Building on our work to engage media and technology companies to push for responsible communication of suicide and a safer internet.

### We will expand our research and develop our use of evidence to make more change by:

- Building on and using more widely our knowledge of what works to prevent self-harm and suicide and involve people with personal experience in this work.
- Helping to fill gaps in knowledge about the risk of suicide and self-harm, recognising that there is still very limited evidence about marginalised groups and communities.
- Becoming the centre of excellence for research, learning particularly from people with lived experience.
- Pushing for the evidence to translate into meaningful actions and policies that make a real difference.

### Expanding our influence

To help prevent suicides, we must make our voice heard across governments and assemblies in England, Northern Ireland, the Republic of Ireland, Scotland and Wales, ensuring that a wider range of policy-makers, not just those in health, prioritise suicide prevention. This will include areas which help reduce risk, for example by increasing financial security, or reducing access to the means of suicide.



## Priority 3: Impact



“

Samaritans isn't just a place where you can call for support and help in the moment. We're also working to prevent those real-world difficult situations that might lead you to be in that place. ”

Emily  
Samaritans staff member



# 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.

### We will achieve this by:

- Piloting and introducing flexible ways of volunteering, so that more people are able to fit it into their lives.
- Reviewing our volunteer leadership roles and making changes to ensure they are both achievable and appealing.

- Reviewing our structures and recognising that branches are different and will have different needs and capabilities.
- Championing one Samaritans culture to better enable collaboration between our different services and our people, no matter where they are based or what their role is, working together as one team.
- Reviewing and improving recruitment, induction and training of volunteers, including a new central volunteer recruitment and training school that complements the branch-led programme.
- Creating more non-listening and leadership volunteer roles, so we can match the right people to the right positions and improve local and national capacity to deliver our service.

### And we will develop our people by:

- Reviewing our mentoring and ongoing development for listening volunteers and supporting them to develop new skills and get involved with other types of volunteer roles.
- Reviewing and improving our recruitment so that we can best train people and match them to roles that will work for them.
- Giving people more opportunities for personal development, for example considering optional accreditations for certain volunteer roles and focusing on leadership skills.
- Enabling and encouraging discussion and knowledge-sharing between our people, no matter where they are based.

Chris O'Donovan Photography/Samaritans





## Priority 4: Capacity

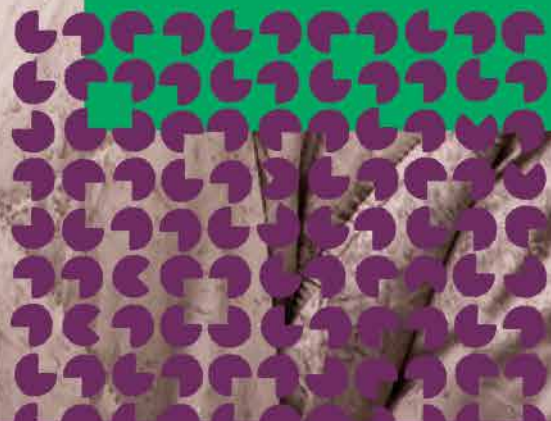


“

In the future, Samaritans would like to be able to have a range of inclusivity from all communities. So it's a safe space for everyone, regardless of your background.

”

**Kay**  
Samaritans volunteer





## Priority 5: Sustainability

# 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 taking steps to ensure our activities and organisation are fit for the future.

### We will achieve this by:

- Creating exciting and appealing offerings to attract a wider range of supporters from fun, challenging events you can take part in to meaningful appeals for financial support.
- Building strong relationships with those who support us, so that people feel part of the Samaritans community and want to stay with us for longer.
- Making sure that people have a great experience when interacting with us by involving them in other ways of helping such as campaigning, volunteering, fundraising or donating.
- Communicating positive impact to supporters in a way that makes them feel part of the Samaritans community, for example by sharing inspirational stories showing the difference they have made.
- Working with organisations who employ or serve groups in greatest need of support.
- Supporting our branches to build lasting partnerships with local businesses and organisations.
- Expanding and tailoring our workplace offering for partners, with more training, self-help and emotional support for employees.
- Increasing our support for employees in partner organisations affected by suicide.
- Encouraging businesses and their employees to support us in new and exciting ways.



Chris O'Donovan Photography/Samaritans

## Priority 5: Sustainability

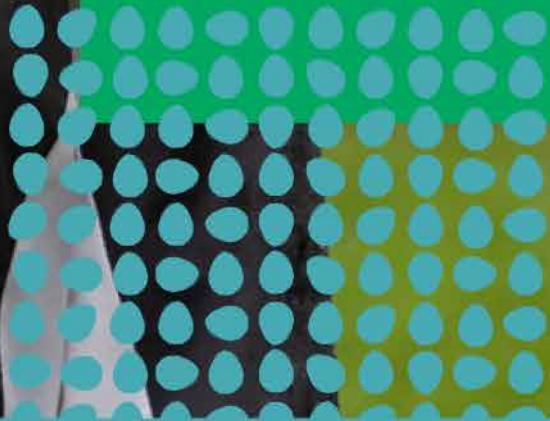


“

My challenge consisted of a 4km swim, a 200km cycle and 46km run. The reason I chose Samaritans was because of my personal experience with my own mental health and struggles. Samaritans were there to listen. They helped me feel very calm and there was absolutely no judgement at all.

”

Jade





# The difference we'll make

The strategy we've laid out isn't just about what we're doing, but about the change we're making.

We can't achieve these things alone, but we will measure our part in them by looking at the difference we are making to people in the moment, within communities and to wider society.

Over the next five years, we will hold ourselves to account for how well we're doing in pursuit of our five priorities. We will be honest about success and failure. Alongside continual analysis and review of all areas of work, which we will report on internally every quarter to our Board, we will publish results each year in our Impact Report. The first report on this strategy will be for the year 2022/23 and previous reports can be found by searching 'Impact Report' at [samaritans.org](https://www.samaritans.org).



Adam Hollingworth/Samaritans

“

The partnership between Samaritans and the wider rail industry is important because every member of staff should be trained and have the confidence to make a difference, a life changing difference. ”

**Rizwan**  
Network Rail employee



# Together, we can

**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 so, even during the most difficult times.

**We need your help. There are so many ways you can join us to make sure fewer lives are lost to suicide:**

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



**Sign up for an event and raise money to help us answer the next call for help**



**Leave a gift in your Will to help us in the future**



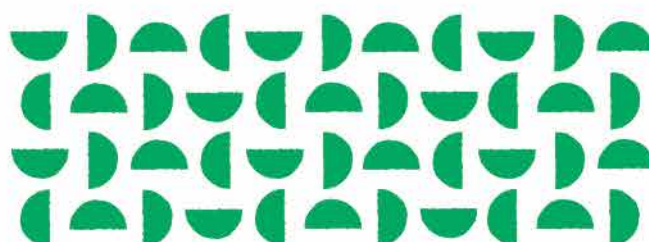
**Find out about volunteering or working for Samaritans**



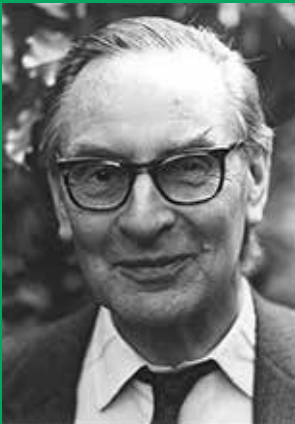
**Share your personal experience of reaching crisis point or losing someone to suicide, to help inform our work**



**Help us create change, by becoming a Samaritans campaigner**



# 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 registered office**

The Upper Mill, Kingston Road, Ewell, Surrey KT17 2AF  
T 020 8394 8300



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



[twitter.com/samaritans](https://twitter.com/samaritans)

**Cover photo:** Samaritans volunteers. Chris O'Donovan Photography/Samaritans.

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