



SAMARITANS
Ireland

Listening, supporting, saving lives

Ireland and Northern Ireland
Impact Report 2024



About Samaritans



We are in 24 towns and cities across Ireland and Northern Ireland.



We are the only 24/7 suicide prevention charity working across Ireland and the UK.



Our helpline is open day and night, 365 days a year, for anyone struggling to cope.



We work with a range of industries and organisations to increase our reach and impact.



We provide face-to-face support in communities, prisons, at festivals and events.



We provide email and online chat services in NI for people who prefer not to call.



We provide the tools and training to help people look after themselves and those around them.



We carry out research to understand the issues around self-harm and suicide.



We work with governments to influence positive change.



We campaign to raise awareness and make suicide prevention a priority.

Welcome from Samaritans Ireland's Directors & Board

We're here 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. Whatever you're going through, a Samaritan will face it with you.

As you read this, no matter what time it is, a Samaritans volunteer is responding to a person who is struggling to cope.

Samaritans' vision is that fewer people die by suicide. Our volunteers create a safe space for human connection that can often be life-saving.

Every life lost to suicide is a tragedy. That's why we're working round the clock to reach more people and make suicide prevention a priority.

Our volunteers and staff are incredibly proud of the contribution they have made towards saving lives.

This Impact Report shows Samaritans remains a trusted and much valued organisation, which continues to be there for people who need someone to listen without judgement.

This has been a very special year for Samaritans.

We marked 10 years of freephone in Ireland, during which time we answered five million calls for help. We were honoured to be awarded Humanitarian Organisation of the Year at the Irish Red Cross Awards. 2024 also marked Samaritans' 10 years as official Mental Health Partner of the GAA.

Our landmark *Understanding Our Callers* research revealed a persistent theme of loneliness, with one-third of callers experiencing isolation and loneliness. Behind each statistic is a person reaching out in their darkest hour. We call for the development of a comprehensive national loneliness strategy and implementation plan that deals with this growing public health concern.

A huge thank you to each and every one of our incredible volunteers and supporters for making a difference when someone needs it most.



**Sarah O'Toole,
Executive Director**



**Jonathan Neville,
Regional Director
– Ireland**



**Marcella Taylor,
Regional Director
– Northern Ireland**



**Eleanor Farrell,
Chair, Ireland Board**



Our priorities

For over 60 years, the people we support have been at the very heart of everything we do. Our strategy reflects this, as we have built on the lived experience of people who have been affected by suicide and self-harm to develop our strategic priorities and principles.

We continuously work together towards our goals in the six priority areas set out in our strategy:

Access – Make sure anyone who needs us can access our support.

Reach – Reach more people to let them know we are here.

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

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

Sustainability – Build meaningful relationships with our supporters to ensure our sustainability.

Governance – Enhance the organisational effectiveness and efficiencies of Samaritans Ireland.

In 2024, Trustees made the decision to extend our current strategic period by two years, to 2029, to give us more time to deliver the important work in our plans.



Colin

Samaritans volunteer, Coleraine

“ During a visit to my local branch with work, I discovered they were in need of volunteers, so at that point I wanted to give back to the community and signed up.

I came on to the training course and realised how great an organisation it was and the work they do in the community is unbelievable, so I have never regretted the decision.






Becoming a Samaritans volunteer is an amazing experience. It's something that I've never looked back on. ”



Watch

Colin talks about what volunteering with Samaritans means to him.

A year of listening

		Ireland	Northern Ireland
	Average length of a phone call for emotional support	28 minutes	21 minutes
	Hours responding to calls for help	More than 100,000 hours	More than 26,000 hours
	Calls responded to every day*	More than 1,200	Almost 300
	Calls responded to in 2024*	More than 470,000	More than 100,000
	Active listening volunteers on 116 123	More than 1,500	More than 600

*Calls include inbound calls, outbound calls, emails, face to face, Listener Scheme contacts (and online chat in Northern Ireland)

In Ireland, we also...



Answered over **6,800** calls diverted from other organisations* when their helplines were closed.



Answered over **280** calls **from overseas** via the Government of Ireland's Emigrant Support Scheme.

* Alone, Aware, Family Carers, Grow, LGBT Ireland

Here when you need us

Samaritans helps people find ways to cope when life is tough.

We're not only for moments of crisis – we also take preventative action through our policy and influencing work.

We use the power of listening to spark meaningful human connection, and encourage others to do the same.

We believe everyone has the power to be a Samaritan.

Róisín's story

“ I have had depression and anxiety for most of my life. There was a time, at my lowest, that I turned to Samaritans for help. They spoke to me so kindly and gave me the strength to take the next steps in my recovery.

Since that day, my life has changed and improved so much. With just one call, Samaritans helped me go from surviving to thriving and I'm so happy I can give back after all they gave me.

I was so excited to take part in the

Róisín

Samaritans caller

24-Hour Challenge for Samaritans Awareness Day, and be able to contribute to such an amazing organisation, and thank Samaritans for their help and the help they give others.

Through ups and downs with my mental health, I have been incredibly fortunate to have the support of my family, my fiancé Paul, and my unbelievable friends.

There are still bad days but the good days always win. ”

Photo: Andrew Downes



Cathal

Samaritans caller

Cathal's story

“ About two years ago, I phoned Samaritans for the first time.

I found speaking to a Samaritan really helpful. I didn't know what I needed or expected, but the conversation was everything you'd hope for when you're going through a difficult time. It was a connection with another person on the other end of the phone, who was just there to listen.

Talking about my feelings made a big difference. In my experience, men can find it very hard to voice their feelings. Especially if they've been through difficult things in their lives. I think Samaritans is a good place to start for any man who's struggling to open up about his mental health.

Calling Samaritans allowed me to voice my feelings and be heard.

The anonymity is a great thing. The volunteer didn't know who I was and I didn't know who they were, so I felt comfortable sharing what was on my mind. They had a huge level of empathy, and they acknowledged that it was very hard for me.

When I called Samaritans, I was living in the past, dealing with difficult emotions, and wasn't able to see any way forward. Calling Samaritans helped because they asked questions that allowed me to find the answers myself and come to a place of acceptance. They helped me to move forward.

The things that I enjoy in my life now were all there when I called Samaritans, but I just couldn't see them. These days, I'm allowing life to happen again. I'm living in the present and enjoying my life, and I feel very positive about the future. ”

Ireland highlights

Samaritans has over 1,500 volunteers in 16 branches and satellite branches across Ireland, answering more than 50 calls for help every hour.

Photo: Mark Stedman



Humanitarian Organisation of the Year

Samaritans was honoured to have been awarded the Humanitarian Organisation of the Year in the Irish Red Cross Humanitarian Awards on behalf of all our volunteers.

The award recognised the outstanding contribution we've made to the lives of others through our work and commitment.

The Red Cross commended Samaritans for continuously targeting hard-to-reach groups most at risk of suicide through a variety of projects and campaigns.

The judges highlighted our work with prisoners through the Listener Scheme, Emigrant Support Programme and our work on rural isolation and community projects: *"Samaritans' relentless commitment to providing emotional support 24/7 underscores their pivotal role in suicide prevention and mental health advocacy in Ireland."*



Photo: Mark Stedman

Celebrating with our telecoms partners

We marked 10 years of the freephone 116 123 number in Ireland, which was awarded by the European Commission and ComReg in March 2014.

The telecoms providers - BT Ireland, eir, Sky Ireland, Three Ireland, Virgin Media Ireland and Vodafone Ireland – cover the cost of the calls and extended their partnership for another five years. This partnership is supported by Ibec's Telecoms Industry Ireland group.

We have answered five million calls for help over the 10 years because of their incredible support – giving callers some 700,000 hours of support.



Photo: Mark Stedman

Samaritans volunteers celebrate 10 years of freephone with Minister Ossian Smyth



Understanding our callers

We are delighted to share the results of our first comprehensive examination of the experiences of Samaritans callers in Ireland. What we have found is both heartening and invaluable. We sincerely thank all those who took the time to participate.

This report offers a snapshot of views from 586 survey participants and is not representative of all our callers.



Survey participants

- 395 Callers
- 126 Signposted others to Samaritans
- 65 Knew someone who used Samaritans

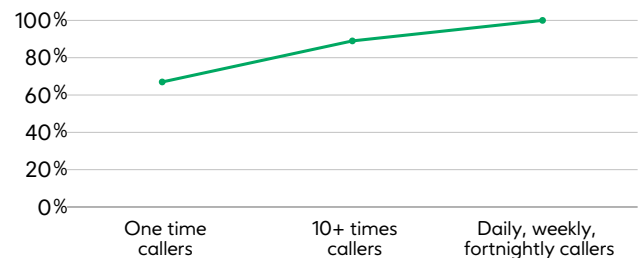
This broad perspective of replies gave us an unprecedented insight into how our service is making a difference and, crucially, how we can make it even better for everyone who needs us.

The research demonstrated strong overall satisfaction with Samaritans' listening approach.

- 84% of callers felt we provide a safe space for them.
- 79% felt genuinely listened to.
- 73% felt supported by our service.

The research found callers who were more familiar with the service had an improved experience – with 100% of daily, weekly, and fortnightly callers reporting feeling listened to.

Satisfaction levels of callers who felt listened to



Callers who contacted Samaritans in the last year also reported positive experiences (85%).

Survey respondents' primary reasons for contacting Samaritans

1. Mental health challenges (50.1%)
2. Family/relationship problems (48.4%)
3. Suicidal thoughts (37.2%)
4. Mental health crisis episodes (37%)
5. Loneliness/isolation (34.7%)

Less positive experiences were reported by users who appeared to be seeking practical advice or solutions for specific issues, such as financial difficulties or bullying/harassment, which are services that fall outside Samaritans' emotional support remit. We are working with volunteers to enhance services for callers.

"I wouldn't probably be standing here today only for them (Samaritans)." – Caller

This research was carried out by University College Cork (UCC) and supported by the HSE National Office for Suicide Prevention (NOSP), in line with Connecting for Life, Ireland's National Strategy to Reduce Suicide.



Northern Ireland highlights

We have over 600 volunteers in eight branches across Northern Ireland, answering more than 12 calls for help every hour. Volunteers also support online chat through the UK helpline system.



Craigavon volunteers & Julie Aiken

As part of our outreach to students, we produced a series of short videos focusing on awareness, volunteering and fundraising. The videos were filmed with volunteers who shared what it means to volunteer at Samaritans, and showcased our work across prisons and festivals. We are grateful to ESB for funding this project to help our branches raise awareness and recruit volunteers.



Filming with Samaritans



Mental Health Policy Alliance launch

The Mental Health Policy Alliance was created to drive change in mental health and suicide prevention policy in Northern Ireland. The aim was to combine expertise, resources, and influence to strive for better policies and services. By working together, we can advocate more effectively for change.

The Alliance was launched in September 2024. Today, we co-chair the Alliance with the Mental Health Foundation, ensuring a collaborative and evidence-led approach. Our focus remains on improving services, reducing stigma, and keeping mental health high on the policy agenda. Through this partnership, we continue to push for lasting improvements that make a real difference.



Mental Health Policy Alliance meeting



Samaritans Newry & Dundalk open day

Throughout 2024, Members of the Legislative Assembly (MLAs) and councillors were invited to visit their local Samaritans branch.

During the visit, politicians learned about different aspects of our service including prisons, volunteer training and care or outreach in communities, and were invited on a tour of the branch to see first-hand what it is like to volunteer at Samaritans.

Following the 'open days', we have seen an increase in interest from political representatives in our policy work. We have continued to build the relationship with them and are working with them on our policy asks. Volunteers have increased connections with their local elected representatives and can speak directly to them about opportunities and challenges in their areas.

The branch visits have enhanced the visibility and understanding of the work of volunteers in our services, and the reach Samaritans has into local communities.



Photo: Mark Marlow

Conor

Samaritans volunteer, Belfast

“ I’ve always been very passionate about mental health issues, and it breaks my heart that the people dealing with them often feel the need to suffer in silence.

One of the biggest surprises about volunteering for me has to be just how open and honest our callers feel that they can be with us. The fact that we’re an anonymous voice on the other end of the phone really lets our callers open up and be vulnerable in a way they sometimes can’t be anywhere else, and you often see that reflected in the relief they feel by the end of the call.

I’ve had people confide in me about things they’ve never said to anyone but themselves, and it’s an amazing thing to be able to provide people with that safe space. ”

Partnerships

We work with partners and communities nationwide so everyone knows we're here for them.

Photo: Sportsfile



Celebrating 10 years with the GAA

GAA

We marked 10 years of being the official Mental Health Partner of the GAA. Together, GAA players and former players join with our volunteers across Ireland and Northern Ireland to reduce the stigma around mental health and encourage anyone in need to seek help.

We also secured the naming rights of Wexford GAA's second county ground.

An estimated 30,000 people go through the turnstiles of the newly named Samaritans St Patrick's Park each year. This will raise awareness of our service among players, members and supporters.



Listener scheme posters in PSEC vehicle

Prison Services

Samaritans work closely with prison authorities to deliver the 'Listener Scheme', through which our volunteers train prisoners to offer peer-to-peer support to fellow inmates in need.

In 2024, more than 2,600 Listener contacts were made within the Irish Prison service, with Listeners supporting others for over 1,000 hours.

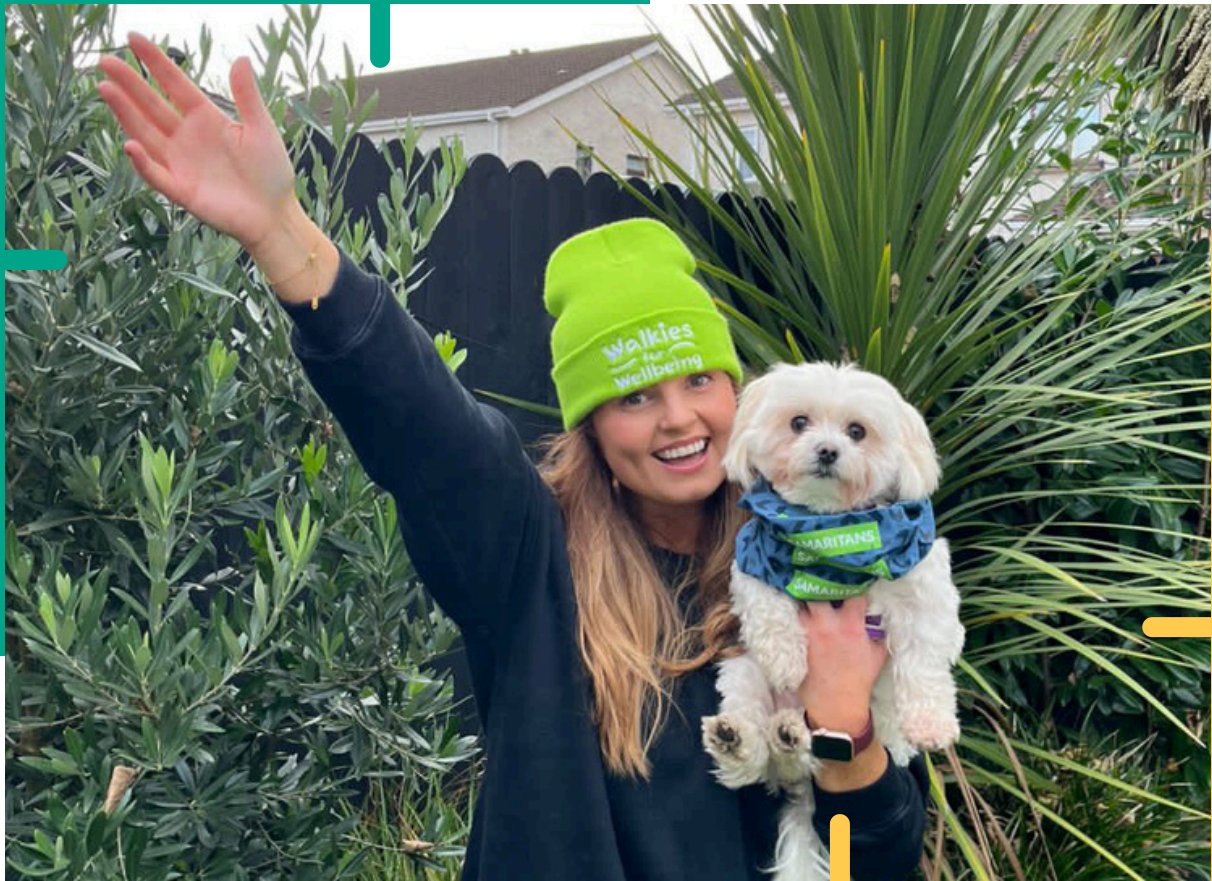
Listener scheme awareness sessions were also delivered to more than 230 newly recruited prison officers.

Posters promoting the 'Listener Scheme' were displayed in all Prison Escort Service Corp (PSEC) vehicles.

Within the Northern Ireland Prison Service, the 'Listener Scheme' operates in both Magilligan and Maghaberry prisons where Listeners responded to more than 200 contacts.

Volunteers from Belfast branch visit Hydebank Wood to offer emotional support to prisoners.

The top concerns experienced by prisoners are mental health illness, family issues, isolation/loneliness and physical health concerns.



Our community of supporters

Samaritans is a charity and our work is only possible thanks to amazing supporters like you.

We continued our charity partnerships with a number of corporate supporters including Calor, Carrolls Irish Gifts and Standard Life Ireland, who raised funds through events and matched funding initiatives. In November, Brent Pope and the team at the Elephant in the Room initiative hosted a wonderful Gala event with proceeds going to Samaritans.

On **Samaritans' Awareness Day**, 24 July, we raised awareness of our service by inviting the public to support us by taking part in a '24-Hour Challenge for Samaritans'. The event was a huge success, particularly with younger participants who were excited to dedicate 24 hours to their hobbies while supporting Samaritans.

Hundreds of supporters also signed up to support our new awareness and fundraising initiative, **Walkies for Wellbeing**. We asked supporters to walk 100k throughout October – preferably with their pet pooch – to support Samaritans. The event created a real community, with walkers catching up and supporting each other through a private Facebook group. As the initiative was such a big success, we will be running the campaign again in 2025.

Thank you to everyone who supported our work throughout the year.

We offer mutually beneficial partnerships that include volunteer engagement, fundraising and training.

To learn more about working with Samaritans, please email partnerships.ireland@samaritans.org



Marion, Samaritans festival volunteer

Left, pictured with volunteer Caitriona at Ballinasloe Horse Fair

Festival volunteering

“ I am a volunteer with Waterford Samaritans and joined the Irish Festival branch over five years ago.

Festival volunteers are a group of specially trained volunteers who attend events around the country and offer face-to-face support to people who look like they might be struggling or alone in a crowd.

In 2024, we supported more than 1,000 people at seven festivals, with 50 of those people expressing suicidal thoughts. You really do feel like you make a difference to someone's life after a call like that.

Being a festival volunteer is totally different than being a volunteer in a branch. There is such camaraderie between volunteers as you're away together and work as a team.

I love the teamwork and working with others.

I always cover Dublin Pride and for the last two years I have gone to the Ballinasloe Horse Fair as I feel it's really important to be there to support marginalised groups.

Some events and duties can be hard, and you can have some really difficult conversations with people, but you are always supported by other volunteers so you never feel alone.

The support and feedback we get from people on the streets is really positive.

It also gives a face to Samaritans and hopefully the people who see us at festivals will feel they can contact us in the future if they ever need support.

”

– Marion, Samaritans volunteer



Athlone



Carlow



Castlebar



Cork



Drogheda & North East



Dublin



East Coast



Ennis



Galway



Tralee



Kilkenny



Limerick & Tipperary



Newbridge



Sligo



Waterford



West Cork



Ballymena



Bangor & North Down



Belfast



Coleraine



Craigavon



Derry



Newry & Dundalk



Omagh

SAMARITANS

Samaritans in Ireland

-  Samaritans branches & satellite branches in Ireland and Northern Ireland
-  Samaritans offices in Ireland and Northern Ireland



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Samaritans Ireland is a charity registered in Ireland (20033668) and incorporated as a company limited by guarantee (450409). Samaritans Ireland's registered office is located at Ground Floor, 4-5 Usher's Court, Usher's Quay, Dublin 8, D08 Y223. CHY number: CHY11880. The directors/trustees of Samaritans Ireland are as follows: E Farrell, A Deane, E Ní Mhuirheartagh, A McMurray, W Wilson, C Culliton, M Horgan