



**SAMARITANS**  
Cymru

## Listening Makes a Difference

 Samaritans Cymru  
Impact Report 2023 and 2024

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# Welcome

## We believe it's possible to prevent suicide

The latest data for Wales (Office for National Statistics (ONS)) shows that there was an **increase in suicide** rates in 2023 compared to previous years.

Samaritans is here to reduce the number of people who die by suicide. Suicide isn't inevitable; it can be prevented. Each of the 386 lives lost to suicide registered in 2023 was a tragic loss, leaving behind a ripple effect of heartbreak for all those connected to them.

To address the annual suicide rates in Wales, we must be prepared to do things differently and challenge any willingness to ignore this crisis. We believe that listening is a powerful way to respond to the increasing need for emotional support, and it's a skill that Samaritans want to share throughout the nation. We want to build a Wales where listening becomes second nature to everyone.

This report tells the story of the action we have taken across Wales to prevent suicides and support communities most at risk. Samaritans staff and volunteers work with research data and in partnership with other organisations to identify where the risk is and how we can best support those who are most vulnerable.

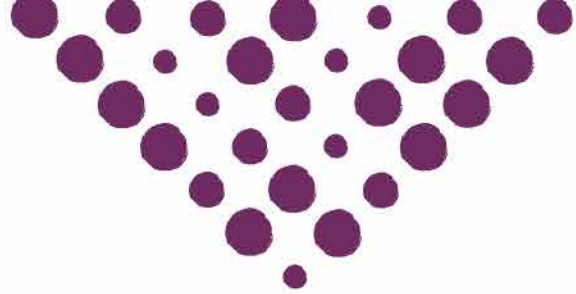
Our volunteers consistently demonstrate the importance of taking action to reduce suicide – actively listening with care and compassion, creating the vital human connection people need when facing crisis. They listen around the clock to make sure there is always someone at the other end of the phone for anyone who needs support.

“ It's important for people to have someone to listen to them. Because of the types of things people talk to us about on the phone, the types of things they can't tell their families or close friends, they feel that they don't like to be judged, so they can be totally open with us and just share their worries. ”

### **Bangor Samaritans volunteer**

Beyond the phone lines, our branches and volunteers also offer targeted community outreach services and work to make sure that people in distress across Wales know that they're never alone on their journey.

We are a unique nation, with unique communities and needs. Suicide isn't an issue for just one sector, organisation or government department to solve.



We all need to work together, listen to those with lived experience and commit to a new bold vision of reducing suicide in Wales – with action to match that vision.

With a small staff team, nine branches, one hub and hundreds of dedicated volunteers across Wales, we're achieving big things. Our passion and dedication to this work is driven by our vision to reduce suicide and the devastating affect that it has on individuals, families and communities across Wales.

The third sector in Wales is fully committed to preventing and reducing poor mental health and suicide. But as a nation, our decision makers, local authorities and

Suicide rates in Wales and England are collectively at their highest in over 20 years; this is unacceptable. In Wales, men are three times more likely to die by suicide than women and there is a strong link between suicide and poverty. Suicide in Wales is a major public health issue, but crucially it is also a major inequality issue.

services must be prepared to unlock the full potential of Wales's third sector, who stand ready to play a full role in delivering Welsh Government's new Self-Harm and Suicide Prevention Strategy.

We believe it is possible to prevent suicides. And we know that listening can play a powerful role in creating positive change. Together, we can build a Wales where fewer lives are lost to suicide.

We hope you'll join us in achieving this.



**Neil Ingham**  
Executive Director  
for Wales



**Christine Gwyther**  
Volunteer Regional  
Director for Wales



**Catherine Goodwin**  
Chair of Wales Nations  
Committee and  
Trustee for Wales

# Why we are here

Almost every day, someone in Wales takes their own life.<sup>1,3</sup>



In Wales, males are three times more likely to die by suicide than females.<sup>1,3</sup>

Suicide is not equal. Those living in the most deprived areas of Wales, are at higher risk of suicide than those living in the least deprived areas.<sup>1,3</sup>



In Wales, nearly four times more people died by suicide than in road traffic accidents.<sup>2,3</sup>



1 in 5 of us have had suicidal thoughts.<sup>4</sup>



Suicide was the leading cause of death among young people under 35 in England and Wales.<sup>3</sup>



For every suicide, it is estimated that 135 people knew the person who died.<sup>5</sup>

1. Public Health Wales Real Time Suspected Suicide Surveillance Report 2023-2024

2. Welsh Government Reported Road Casualties: 2023

3. Office for National Statistics Suicides in England and Wales: 2023 registrations

4. McManus, S., Bebbington, P., Jenkins, R., & Brugha, T. (2016). Mental health and wellbeing in England: Adult Psychiatric Morbidity Survey 2014.

5. Cerel, J., Brown, M. M., Maple, M., Singleton, M., van de Venne, J., Moore, M., & Flaherty, C. (2019). How Many People Are Exposed to Suicide? Not Six. *Suicide & life-threatening behavior*, 49(2), 529–534.

# Our listening service and partnerships

## Samaritans Cymru Impact 2023 and 2024



Every **10 seconds**, Samaritans answers a call for help (2023 UK & Ireland).

The primary concerns raised relate to **mental health or illness, family, isolation or loneliness and relationship problems.**

Volunteers in Wales answered **225,000** calls for help through our national helpline.



Volunteers in Wales contributed over **111,000** hours on helpline shifts.

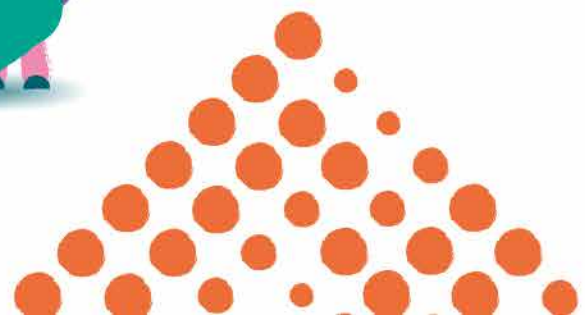


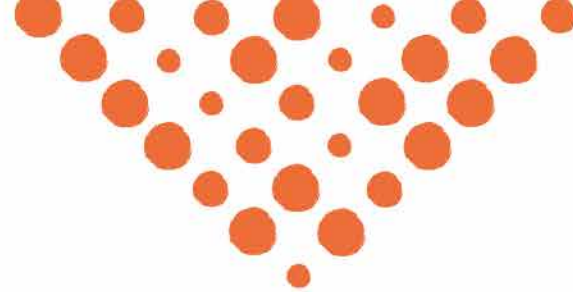
Volunteers in Wales answered over **7,500** emotional support emails as well as responding to over **5,000** webchat contacts.



Volunteers across **5** branches responded to **2,000** calls for help in Welsh (Welsh helpline available 7 days a week, between 7pm-11pm).

Volunteers attended over **400** outreach events across Wales to raise awareness of our service and offer emotional support.





## Our work in prisons

In Wales, we work with His Majesty's Prison and Probation Service (HMPPS) on suicide prevention through our Listener scheme, a peer support service that aims to **reduce suicide and self-harm in prisons**. The Listener scheme started in HMP Swansea in 1991 and now operates in nearly every prison in the UK, including every prison in Wales.

**Prison Listeners in Wales responded to more than 5,300 requests for emotional support from fellow inmates in 2023-2024.**

## Our work with the rail industry

Our national partnership with Network Rail Wales, Transport for Wales (TfW) and the wider rail industry, including British Transport Police and the train operating companies, aims to reduce suicide on the railways in Wales and to support everyone affected.

**As a result of our partnership, 200 life-saving interventions were recorded on the rail network in Wales over 2 years, 2023-2024.**

## Festival Branch of Samaritans

Festival Samaritans attend a range of festivals and events throughout the UK. In 2023 and again in 2024, they attended In It Together and Green Man festivals, two major annual events for Wales.

**Festival Branch helped 391 people with emotional support during the Wales festivals.**

## Our work in schools

We work with schools to support young people through our resources, and we offer special support if there's a suicide in a school community with our Step by Step service.

**Our Wales team has continued to support both schools, colleges and universities and supported 8 settings following an incident during this period.**



# How we work

➤ Our vision is that fewer people die by suicide in Wales.

We are committed to supporting those who are most at risk of suicide and we are strongly focused on the social determinants driving this risk; the external and situational factors which make life difficult for individuals and communities.

In Wales, we have volunteers at nine branches and one hub, who run our helpline and crucial outreach work within their communities and a Wales team which is made up of six members of staff.

Based on the latest data and research, we endeavoured to work where the risk is. We know that action is required to achieve real change, and we are all proud of our progress across Wales.

“What’s important is that people feel they’re able to talk and able to feel listened to by someone. Encourage people to do so whenever it might be helpful to talk, to challenge any kind of stigma associated with, especially men opening up in that way, it’s something that I think is important.”

**Cardiff Samaritans volunteer**

## Strategic Priorities

### Access

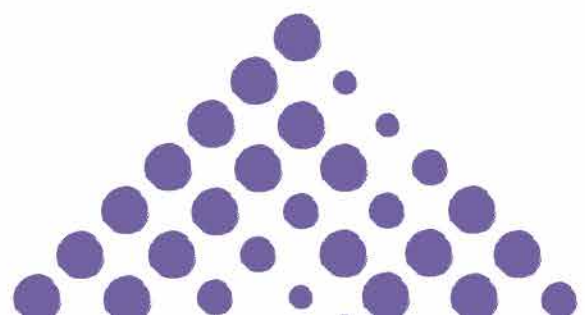
Make sure anyone who needs us can access our support.

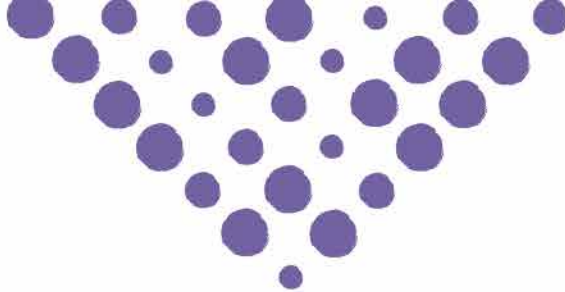
### Reach

Reach more people to let them know we’re here.



- Our rail programme secured a partnership with Amey Infrastructure Wales Limited (AIW) who operate the rail infrastructure on the busy Transport for Wales Core Valley Line in the South Wales Valleys. This means we can now train and support rail staff across that region. The partnership delivers lifesaving interventions and offers emotional support to staff and passengers affected by incidents on the rail network.
- We launched the 'Our Farming, Our Future' project which aims to break the cycle of suicide risk in rural Wales.





The project is delivered in partnership with farming support charity, Tir Dewi, and works closely with Wales Young Farmers Clubs and their members to develop peer-led activities and resources to reduce the risk of suicide in rural communities across mid-Wales.

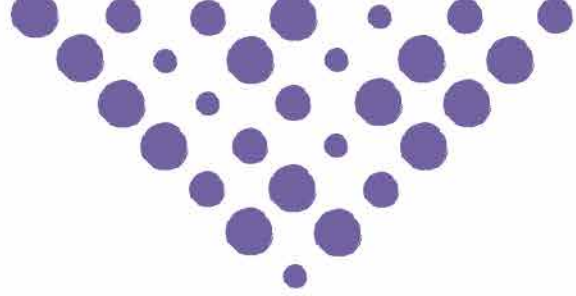
- Following the news of the closure of Port Talbot blast furnaces and the loss of more than 3,000 jobs, Samaritans volunteers have been supporting the community through emotional support sessions delivered in Port Talbot town and on-site to the workforce affected.
- Branches including Haverfordwest, Newport and South Wales Valleys Samaritans have continued to secure invaluable partnerships with police forces across Wales. Volunteers offer face-to-face emotional support to those being detained in custody suites which can be a uniquely traumatic and distressing time.
- Our volunteers attended major events in order to provide emotional support and increase awareness of our service. They offered support at Pride Cymru, the Royal Welsh Show, the National Eisteddfod for Wales, In It Together and Green Man festivals.



**Our Farming, Our Future Launch at Royal Welsh Show 2024**



**Mental Health and Wellbeing Show**



- We launched our Parental Mental Health Project with the release of our research report, informed by lived experience of parenthood journeys: *'Waiting for Change: reducing suicide and improving poor mental health on the parenthood journey in Wales'*. The core aims of the project are to reduce suicide in new parents, raise awareness of the mental health support required for anyone facing challenges on the parenthood journey and tackling the mental health stigma surrounding this.
- We launched our new male suicide prevention campaign for Wales – *Open Up Listen Up*. The campaign challenges the stereotype that men don't know how to talk about their feelings and instead, focuses on the importance of being listened to. The bilingual campaign video reached 165,000 adult males across

## Strategic Priority

### Impact

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

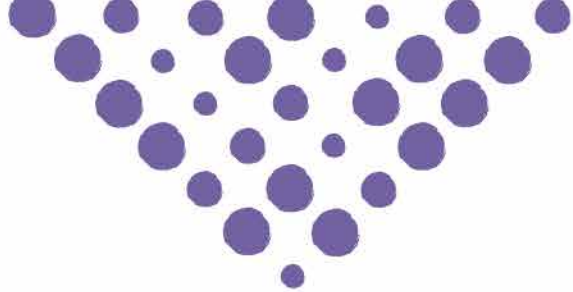


Wales on social media and was aired on YouTube, S4C and ITVX.

- We actively contributed to the regional suicide prevention forums across Wales, helping focus and shape local prevention activity.
- Our team and branches have contributed to risk reduction activity at high-risk locations across Wales. We met with community groups of people with lived experience to listen and support their efforts to reduce risk. We also offered expert advice to multi-agency groups and statutory partners across Wales.
- We have continued our education work in Wales through the promotion of our 'Compassion in Education' toolkit for staff. We contributed to the Welsh Government education directorate through a variety of presentations made to education professionals. In 2023/2024, we delivered a



Cardiff Samaritans presentation



Wales-only bilingual results day campaign, reminding pupils that their results do not define them.

- We have worked closely with the Welsh Government on suicide prevention, in particular through the Cross Governmental Group on Suicide Prevention. We helped co-produce the Draft National Strategy released for consultation in 2024 and continued to support development of that Strategy as part of the new Welsh Government Suicide and Self-Harm Prevention Strategy Board.
- We continued to be active members of the National Advisory Group on Suicide and Self-Harm prevention to Welsh Government and the Wales Alliance for Mental Health (WAMH). We also provided the secretariat for the Cross Party Group (CPG) on Suicide Prevention.
- We worked closely with the NHS Wales Executive National Suicide and Self Harm Prevention Programme team. We contributed to the development of the new National Advisory and Liaison Service, supporting those bereaved by suicide and to the ongoing development of a Lived Experience capacity to inform National Strategy and Delivery.
- We have worked with the Welsh Language Commissioner to create a new accredited Welsh Offer or *Cynnig Cymraeg*. This offer

reflects our commitment to providing support in Welsh and communicating bilingually.



“ I find it very rewarding taking calls from people who are finding it difficult to cope with things going on in their lives. By talking to me, they manage to find, using their own thoughts and words, a way to overcome some of these challenges. Our callers really need help and are grateful for me spending time listening to them. We don't tell them how to do things we just listen and ask questions. ”

### Llandrindod Wells Samaritans volunteer

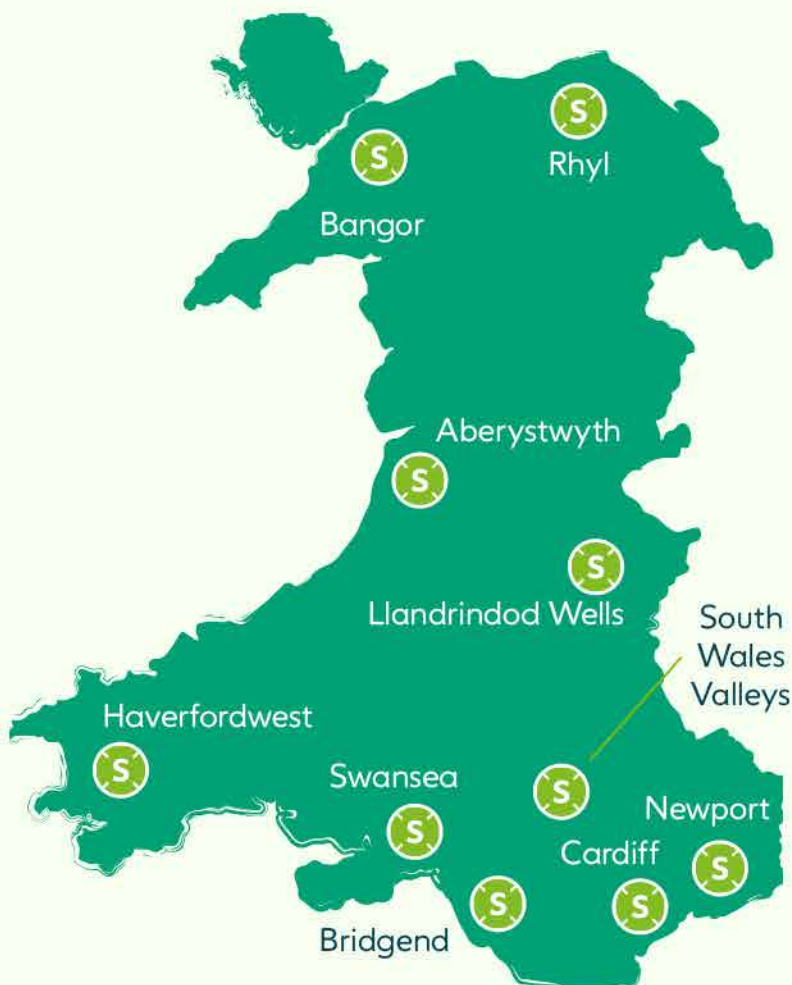


### Newport Samaritans volunteers

# Our reach across Wales

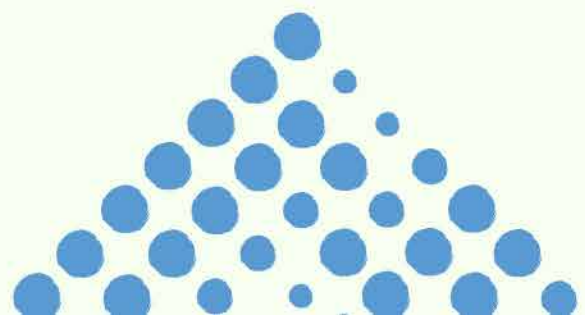
➤ Samaritans are out and about across Wales reaching out to people day and night.

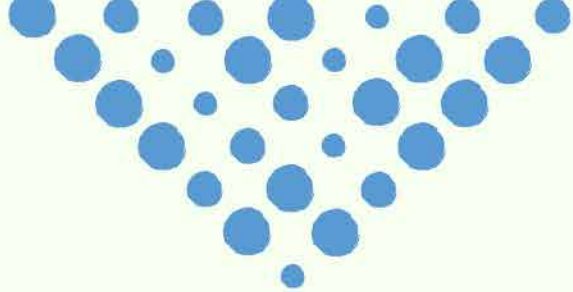
On the railways, in supermarkets, schools, workplaces, food banks and in shopping centres. Our teams attend events and festivals throughout the year. We also provide emotional support in custody suites and operate our Prisoner Listener Scheme in all Welsh Prisons.



“ Reaching out to meet people in our communities is so important. It helps them know that we are a service for everyone, and we are here for them whenever they need us. ”

**Samaritans Outreach  
volunteer, Newport**





Cardiff



Samaritans with First Minister Mark Drakeford MS at the Royal Welsh Show



Bridgend



Swansea



Newport



Eisteddfod

# Our future

## Our ambition to become a nation of listeners

Samaritans volunteers are skilled listeners, who are trained to offer compassionate and anonymous support to people who are struggling. But anyone can learn to be a better listener and be more prepared to support family, friends and colleagues.

People who are struggling are often told to 'reach out' or 'open-up' but offering support for those in need requires good listening skills in both everyday conversations and professional settings. We want to help grow those listening skills across Welsh society.

We believe that Wales can become a nation of listeners. In the coming years, we will be taking that on as a positive challenge. We will share our listening expertise and create ways to make learning these listening skills a normal part of education and work. We will also be bringing listening to life through events and creative celebrations of this vital skill.

“ I know how important my listening role can be for the caller, but I hadn't fully appreciated how much I have to gain through processing others' experiences. It also provides structure and meaning for me. ”

**Cardiff Samaritans volunteer**

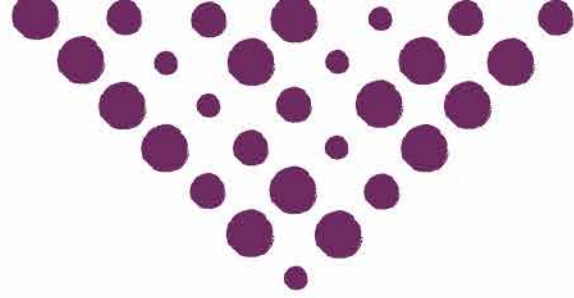
## Delivering more targeted outreach support to those at risk

As evidenced in this report, our branches and volunteers already undertake a diverse range of outreach activities in communities across Wales. Since 2023, we have worked closely with branches to coordinate outreach activities. We're increasingly data-driven, using a variety of sources, including Real Time Suspected Suicide Surveillance data, to focus and shape our activities.

Our aim is to increase our outreach offer, mainstream our most effective outreach services, such as our presence in police custody suites, and to innovate in seeking to reach individuals and communities that are hard to reach.



**Aberystwyth**



## Improving our Welsh Language Line service

We know how vital it is that people can access support in their first language. Our Welsh Language Line currently operates 7-11pm, 7 days a week and receives around 1,000 calls per year. We know there is demand for increased hours of service and that it's particularly key that people can access our support late at night and in the early hours of morning.

Our long-term aim is to offer a 24/7 Welsh line. We're currently rebuilding our English and Welsh Language Lines within digital systems that provide a foundation on which we can grow the Welsh line.

## Led by Lived Experience

We want to ensure our work is informed by the experience and insights of those who need us most. Our Lived Experience Panel now plays a key role in shaping Samaritans' strategy and approach, with people in Wales well represented on the panel.

Our Parental Mental Health research project and contributions to new Welsh Government Strategy have brought lived experience to the fore. Starting in 2025, we will be coordinating Lived Experience input into a new Suicide Prevention Research Centre

hosted by Swansea University and we continue to support the creation of Lived Experience capacity through the NHS Wales Executive Programme.

“ I'm very proud that we have a Welsh helpline. When you want to speak about your worries or the things that put pressure on you, it's really important that you can speak in your mother tongue. This is where deeper feelings can be expressed. ”

## Fiona, Welsh-speaking Samaritans volunteer



## Bangor Samaritans volunteers with Lesley Griffiths MS

## Equity, diversity and inclusion

Our commitment to equity, diversity and inclusion is one of the key principles in our strategy. EDI connects everything we do at Samaritans, guiding the way we work and behave.

Our culture and environment must support all of our people to feel welcome. In 2024 Samaritans rolled out EDI learning to all staff, and this will now roll out to volunteers in 2025.

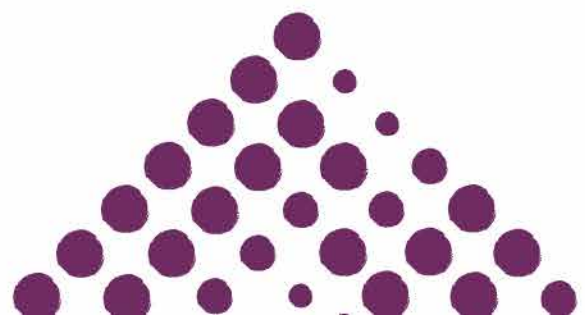
“ I’m in very poor health with visual impairment and mobility problems. Being a volunteer with Samaritans helps me to overcome my daily personal challenges. Speaking to callers, listening to them quietly, makes me realise how difficult other people’s lives are. The support of other volunteers also adds to the quality of my everyday life. After every duty I have a sense of achievement, of time well spent hopefully easing others’ problems. ”

**Haverfordwest**  
**Samaritans volunteer**

It’s vital that our staff and volunteers become more representative of the communities we live and work in and that we support a wider range of people by taking action to become more accessible and relevant to different communities. We’re hoping to deliver a funded project over the next two years that will support proactive diversification of our team in Wales.



**Pride Cymru 2024**



# Our services in Wales

## Our helplines

Here if you  
need us

Talk to us,  
we'll listen

Call free day  
or night on

**116 123**

Or talk to us for free in  
Welsh 7pm–11pm daily

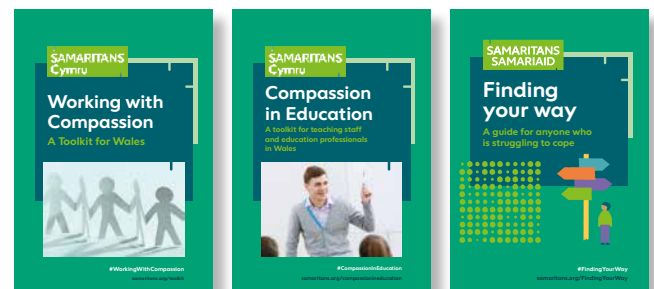
**0808 164 0123**

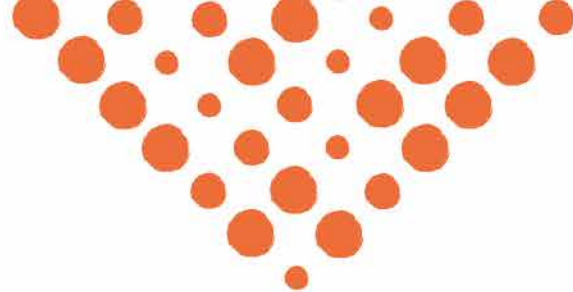
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SAMARIAID**

[samaritans.org](https://samaritans.org)

## Toolkits

We're proud to have **stand-alone bilingual resources** specifically for individuals, workplaces and communities across Wales. The toolkits provide guidance and tips on looking after yourself and others, as well as details of other organisations that can help.





## Working with Compassion

Working with Compassion is a toolkit designed to help people in Wales develop compassionate approaches at work, improving the interactions between staff, customers, clients or service users. This toolkit was designed to provide staff with facts and information, alongside real tips and actions that can be used in daily working life. This toolkit can assist staff when talking to or helping someone who is experiencing poor mental health, emotional distress or suicidal thoughts.

## Compassion in Education

Compassion in Education was designed as an easy-to-use guide for education staff in Wales to help schools, colleges and universities look after their community by adopting a compassionate approach to the emotional and mental health needs of students and staff.

**These bilingual resources can be downloaded from our website [samaritans.org/wales](https://samaritans.org/wales)**

## Finding your way

Finding your way is a free resource for anyone struggling to cope across Wales. It's for anyone who has noticed a dip in their wellbeing or feelings of loneliness, through to people who are self-harming or feeling suicidal. We are thrilled to see the resource already being used far and wide across Wales, including in A&Es, foodbanks, job centres and schools. The guidance contains crucial information on self-harm, and we're grateful to have some brilliant sections from Heads above the Waves (HATW), all of which have a strong focus on lived experience. The resource also includes self-harm and suicide safety plans, which can be lifesaving tools for those struggling to cope. It's focused on prevention and aims to help people identify when they're struggling to cope early on, helping to stop them from reaching crisis point.



## Step by Step support for schools

Step by Step is a Samaritans service that provides practical support to help schools prepare for and recover from a suspected or attempted suicide.

The Step by Step team in Wales aims to:

- Provide information and support to help the school community come to terms with what has happened and prevent stigma and isolation in the school community.
- Support school communities to reduce the risk of further suicide.
- Reach out to high-risk people and communities to reduce the risk of further suicide.

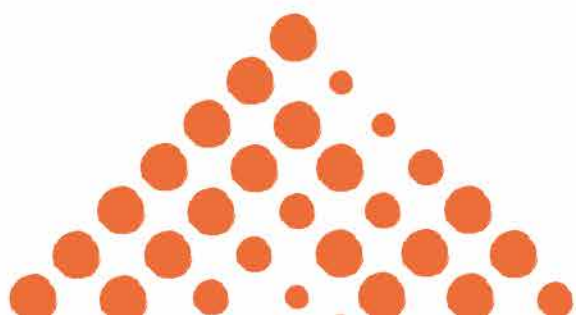
## Samaritans' media guidelines for reporting suicide

Our bilingual Samaritans' media guidelines for reporting suicide, offer practical advice on the ways to reduce the risk of media coverage negatively impacting on people who may be vulnerable. We also advise how careful coverage describing a person coming through a suicidal crisis can serve as a powerful testimony to others that this is possible and can encourage vulnerable people to seek help.

## Samaritans Training and Engagement Programmes

We can support organisations to train their people and teams to spot and support anyone struggling to cope. Course content can be tailored to your needs.

**To contact the Wales team for more information about resources, training and working together email [wales@samaritans.org](mailto:wales@samaritans.org) [samaritans.org/wales](https://www.samaritans.org/wales)**



# SAMARITANS Cymru

“ By active listening, we can sometimes hear what is unsaid and we can help people find hope, where none existed before.

Try not to underestimate the value of listening. ”

**Haverfordwest Samaritans volunteer**

Samaritans Cymru is grateful for the support of our funders in Wales.

[samaritans.org/wales](https://www.samaritans.org/wales)

**Samaritans Cymru**

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