‘You said, we listened’

One Year Anniversary Edition

May 2022

One year of Samaritans Lived Experience Panel

In the first year of the panel, you have contributed to 21 surveys and 3 polls.

In total, you have given over 1,200 individual responses.

Samaritans Lived Experience Panel celebrated its first anniversary on the 6th May 2022, and we would like to say a huge thank you for all of your input and support!

“Over the past year, Lived Experience Panel members have shaped and informed work across the organisation. I wholeheartedly thank you for sharing your valuable insights with us, and helping us achieve our vision that fewer people die by suicide.”

- Julie Bentley, CEO

Every single one of these responses has provided valuable insight to inform the work that we do across many areas of Samaritans.

- Awareness raising campaigns, e.g. through the Small Talk Saves Lives campaign survey
- Fundraising campaigns, e.g. through the Christmas Campaign survey
- The Online Excellence Programme, through the Practitioner Guidance survey, the Online Harms Safety Bill survey, the Online Safety Training For Young People survey and the Online Signposting survey
- Policy work, through the High-Risk Communities survey, the Use Of Alcohol survey and our policy work in Scotland, through the Scotland Suicide Prevention Strategy survey
- The Listening service, through the Email Redesign survey, the Listening In Pilot Scheme survey and the Caller Outcomes survey
- Our research topics, through the Research Priorities at Samaritans survey
- How we work with people with Lived Experience, through the Case Studies survey, the Wellbeing Measures survey, the Lived Experience Opportunitues survey, the Lived Experience Values and Expectations survey, and the Lived Experience Panel Feedback survey
- And finally, the future of Samaritans, through Samaritans new strategy for 2022-2027 survey!

Remember: people can join the panel at any time. If you know someone who might be interested in joining, they can sign up here.
Back in June 2021, many of you completed a survey as part of our scoping stage of the strategy, on your views about what Samaritans’ new strategy should focus on. Along with views from Samaritans volunteers and staff, results from this survey strongly informed the direction that strategy took in terms of who we should be there for and what we should be doing.

We identified our main priorities for the next five years: improving access, reach, impact, capacity and sustainability.

You will be able to access a more detailed description of this once it is shared on 6th June. But in the meantime, you can watch our animation introducing Samaritans’ strategy, ‘Tackling suicide together’ and our five priority areas for the next five years.

The aim of the panel is to create the space for people with personal experience of suicide, self-harm, or Samaritans’ service-use to have their voices heard, and most importantly, influence the work that we do.

We want to make sure that our work is informed by people with lived experience and to recognise these valuable insights and knowledge, that would otherwise be missing from our work.

We know that drawing on your personal experiences can be difficult at times, but your knowledge and insight is invaluable and really makes a difference. Our helpline (116 123) is available 24/7 if you need to talk to us.
Who is on the panel?

We have been overwhelmed by the support received and the growth of the panel - we currently have 402 members across the UK and Ireland.
Lived Experience opportunities

Over the past year we have used the Lived Experience Panel to advertise 30 opportunities for people with lived experience to work alongside us on Samaritans’ projects. This has resulted in Samaritans working with:

- Eleven Lived Experience Advisors for the Strategy Lived Experience Advisory Group who worked with us on key elements of Samaritans 2022-27 strategy
- Eight Lived Experience Advisors for our Online Harms Lived Experience Advisory Group who provide feedback on various aspects of the Online Excellence research and insight programme
- Eight Lived Experience Advisors for our Young Person’s Lived Experience Advisory Group to help us develop an online safety training resource to help young people stay safe online
- Three Lived Experience Advisors for our research on people who use Samaritans’ helpline frequently

Keep an eye on our [website](#) for future opportunities!

The impact of your involvement

Staff at Samaritans recognise the important contribution your voice and input has on the work that they do, and would like to take this opportunity to reflect on the impact of your involvement.

“Hearing the voices of people with lived experience has been invaluable to our online harms work. Through the panel survey, you have helped inform our policy position and our asks to the government about what changes are needed to make the internet a safer space.” (Lydia, Online Harms Programme Lead).

“It’s very important for us to be able to hear from a diverse group of people with lived experience so that we can make sure the variety of needs and perspectives are considered in the design. Without that input, it’s very difficult to understand the impact of different design decisions.” (Simon, Service Development Project Lead).

“Engagement with the Lived Experience Panel has enabled us to ensure that our recommendations to national and local decision-makers are informed by real-life experiences which gives them real weight and power, hopefully leading to improvements.” (Sarah, Alcohol and Suicide Prevention Project Lead).

“The consultation on an ambitious new strategy for suicide prevention was an important opportunity to share our long-term vision with decision-makers about what needs to change to reduce suicide risk. We wanted to draw on the wealth of knowledge of our listening volunteers and members of our lived experience panel so that our recommendations are not just based in data and evidence, but also the experiences of people who have had suicidal thoughts and feelings or been bereaved by suicide.” (Mairi, Project Lead Samaritans Scotland).

What is it like to be a Samaritans Lived Experience Advisor?

Four Lived Experience Advisors working on a research project exploring peer support for people who self-harm published some reflections on working with us and learnings from the project.

Read [From ‘they’ to ‘we’” – Reflections on working as Lived Experience Advisors](#)
“It’s very clear from the responses that most people felt that an intersectional approach – one which acknowledges that characteristics like our gender, neurodiversity, sexuality or background are complex and interconnected – is important.” (Alex, Project Lead for High-Risk Communities).

“It was important to include the panel on our work to share the stories of people with lived experience, not only to showcase some of the procedures we have in place to do this well, but also to hear about how and what makes people feel most comfortable to share and to improve the way we gather real life accounts.” (Becky, Project Lead Media Case Studies).

What’s next for Samaritans Lived Experience Panel?

- We will continue to send surveys or polls every fortnight direct to your inbox.
- The ‘You said, We Listened’ newsletter will be shared with you every quarter so you can find out more about the impact of your contributions.
- There will be lots more lived experience opportunities for you to be involved and work alongside us at Samaritans – please keep an eye on your inbox or visit ‘Lived Experience at Samaritans’ to find out more.
- We will continue to promote the panel across Samaritans, as well as externally. We shared news of the panels one year anniversary on our social media channels, which had over 16,000 impressions!
- Sneak Preview: over the next few months we will be sending you surveys on a range of subjects, including UK veterans’ perceptions and experiences of our service and the experiences of suicidality among people from LGBTQ+ communities.

Thank you so much again for joining Samaritans Lived Experience Panel. We appreciate you taking the time to share your views and experiences with us, and we are looking forward to seeing what more the panel achieves in the next year!

If you would like to get in touch or have any feedback, please contact us at myexperience@samaritans.org.