



# SAMARITANS SCOTLAND

---

## IMPACT REPORT 2017 -2018

## WELCOME

680 people died by suicide in 2017. Nearly three quarters were men. On average, two people in Scotland die by suicide every day and Scotland continues to have a higher rate of suicide than almost every other part of the UK.

Every one of those 680 deaths represents a tragedy that will have touched family, friends, co-workers and the community. In fact, research by Samaritans found that nearly 2 in 3 Scots have first-hand experience of suicide – whether through their own experience of suicidal thoughts or from supporting someone with suicidal feelings or the loss of a friend or family member.

Suicide is complex, rarely caused by a single factor. But at Samaritans we're working to better understand the factors that can contribute to suicide and the steps we can take to address them.

We know suicide is shaped by inequality and that people living in the most deprived communities are three times more likely to die by suicide than people living in the least deprived. We know men continue to face an increased risk of suicide and rates for middle-age men have increased in recent years. We know suicide

continues to be a leading cause of death among young people in Scotland, killing more young people under 29 than all types of cancer combined.

But most importantly, we know suicide is preventable and there are steps we can all take to help reduce it.

At Samaritans Scotland, we're not just working to raise awareness of suicide prevention; we're also working hard to ensure we're there for anyone who needs us, 24 hours a day, 365 days a year.

In 2018 our volunteers spent more than 60,000 hours responding to people in distress and providing emotional support via phone, text, email and face-to-face conversations. That equates to over 2,500 days of support.

Our volunteers have also been hard at work making connections in their communities – from running conversation cafes at rail stations to speaking to shoppers & stall owners at the local farmer's market, connecting

with patients and visitors in hospitals to working with local foodbanks.

Across Scotland, Samaritans volunteers also run hundreds of talks and workshops with schools and colleges, businesses and community groups every year, championing the power of listening and encouraging others to reach out to those who might be struggling.

We also need suicide prevention to be a priority at a national and local level. That's why Samaritans Scotland work with national and local government, MSPs and MPs, business, health and the third sectors to play an active role in prevention.

In 2018 we were a leading voice in shaping Scotland's new National Suicide Prevention Action Plan, calling for the strategy to take an ambitious approach that we believe will lead to meaningful change. Following our campaigning work we were invited to join the National Suicide Prevention Leadership Group and will work together with the Scottish Government, health and third sector organisations to realise the ambition of reducing suicide by 20% by 2022.

We're working towards a Scotland where fewer people die by suicide and where everyone feels able to ask for and receive support. We know to achieve that we need to be there for

people whenever they need us and our remarkable volunteers up and down the country mean we can do that. And we are also making progress on broader issues that will help reduce the risk of suicide in Scotland.

We know to achieve this we need to continue to be there for people whenever they need us. Our remarkable volunteers up and down the country are vital to making that possible.



**Catherine Simpson**

Regional Director for Samaritans Scotland



**James Jopling**

Executive Director for Samaritans Scotland

# Samaritans Scotland

OUR VOLUNTEERS PROVIDE SUPPORT THROUGH CALLS,  
EMAILS, TEXTS, LETTERS AND FACE TO FACE CONVERSATION.



ACROSS SCOTLAND  
WE'RE CONTACTED EVERY  
**2 MINUTES**

OUR VOLUNTEERS SPENT  
**MORE THAN**  
**60,000**  
HOURS

RESPONDING TO  
CALLS FOR HELP

THAT'S EQUIVALENT TO ↗

**£840,000**  
OF TIME\*\*

EVERY YEAR WE RECRUIT  
**200** NEW  
VOLUNTEERS  
TO KEEP OUR SERVICE  
RUNNING IN  
**SCOTLAND**

**750**

VOLUNTEERS

DO ONE OR MORE LISTENING  
SHIFT EVERY MONTH IN SCOTLAND

\* This includes any contact made to Samaritans for support, whether by phone, text, email, or face to face. This figure is based on the 2018 calendar year.

\*\*Based on the ONS median hourly rate of pay.

WE ARE AVAILABLE  
24 HOURS  
A DAY 365 DAYS  
A YEAR

SAMARITANS HAS

# 19 BRANCHES ACROSS SCOTLAND



**680**  
PEOPLE  
LOST THEIR LIFE  
TO SUICIDE IN  
**SCOTLAND**  
IN 2017



**77%**  
WERE MEN

**MEN AGED 45-54**  
HAVE THE HIGHEST SUICIDE  
RATE OF ANY GROUP

IN 2017  
THE RATE INCREASED FOR  
THIS GROUP FOR THE  
THIRD CONSECUTIVE YEAR

WE HELD MORE THAN

## 600 OUTREACH EVENTS

LAST YEAR

RAISING AWARENESS OF OUR SERVICE AND  
SUPPORTING SCHOOLS, COMMUNITY ORGANISATIONS,  
PRISONS AND MORE

**SAMARITANS**  
SCOTLAND

## BEING THERE WHEN IT MATTERS MOST

Our volunteers are here for people who are struggling. Volunteers at our 19 branches respond to calls for help from people all over the UK and Ireland, meaning Samaritans can be here 24-hours a day, 365 days a year.

In 2018, we were contacted more than 249,000 times.

### Volunteers

- answered and made more than **194,000** phone calls
- replied to more than **16,000** emails
- more than **37,400** texts
- and had **800** face to face conversations in branches.

People contact Samaritans for a wide range of reasons. Some of most common issues our callers mention include problems with mental or physical health, loneliness or isolation, and problems with family or relationships. Almost one in three people who contacted us expressed suicidal thoughts.

Our volunteers spent more than **60,000 hours** listening and providing emotional support in 2018... that's the equivalent of around **£840,000** of time (based on the ONS median hourly rate of pay).

In addition to our listening service we carry out a wide range of roles in the community, raising awareness and promoting emotional wellbeing by working with schools, colleges, universities, local employers, public services and more. And we run our Prison Listener Scheme across Scotland to ensure prisoners have someone they can turn to if they're struggling to cope.



Chris O'Donovan Photography/Samaritans

“...the number of people I speak to who have absolutely nobody to talk to about their problems...”

## CASE STUDY

Kym McCulloch joined her local branch, Dunfermline Samaritans, at the start of 2018. She shares her experience of her first year as a volunteer.



“My personal interest in mental health and adverse childhood experiences, plus my own experience being a mum are what first got me interested in volunteering with Samaritans. I have four children between the ages of 12 and 19 and I’m really lucky to have a good relationship where we can talk openly and honestly but I know that’s not the case for every person. I decided I wanted to be a part of organisation that supports people who are struggling to cope and who may not have anyone to turn to.

I went to the open day at my local branch in January and then started my training in March. I was a little nervous at the outset but I hadn’t realised how good the training would be! Listening into my mentor’s calls at the start was really helpful as it gave me some idea of what to expect. By the time I was taking my own calls I felt really well prepared to cope with whatever came up. In the end, the thing I found hardest to deal with was getting comfortable with long pauses on the calls!

Every call is different but I do feel like I’m making a difference in some small way. One thing I’ve been shocked by is the number of people I speak to who have absolutely nobody to talk to about their problems, no family or friends they can share with. It means a lot to know I can be there for someone when they might not have anyone else in their life they feel they can talk to.”

## MAKING PREVENTION A PRIORITY

Our vision is for a Scotland where fewer people die by suicide and where everyone can ask for and access support when they need it.

Scotland's suicide rate continues to be higher than almost every part of the UK and while this rate has fallen in recent years we know there's still a long way to go.

We want to make suicide prevention a priority in Scotland. To do this we undertake research to better understand the complex factors behind suicide. We work with decision-makers at a national and local level to ensure they're doing everything possible to prevent suicide. And we work with the media to raise awareness of the scale and urgency of the problem.

Throughout 2018 we've worked with government, politicians, public, private and third sector partners to make meaningful change. Here are some of our achievements.

### Shaping the National Suicide Prevention Action Plan

We worked hard to ensure the voices of people with lived experience of suicide were heard in consultation around Scotland's National Suicide Prevention Action Plan.

Throughout the consultation process we called on decision-makers to ensure the Action Plan matched the scale of the challenge. We worked with NHS Health Scotland and the Health and Social Care Alliance to engage with people who had lost a loved one to suicide or who had their own experience with suicidal thoughts to find out what changes they wanted to see. And where the draft Action Plan missed some key opportunities to bolster prevention, we called on the Scottish Government to make changes.

We welcomed the publication of the final Action Plan in September 2018 and have been encouraged to see a number of our key recommendations included. Following the plan's launch, Samaritans were invited to join the National Suicide Prevention Leadership Group and will play a key role in delivering the Action Plan, working with Government, health and third sectors to realise our shared ambition of reducing suicide in Scotland by 20% by 2022.

## Addressing the link between poverty and suicide

Following the launch of Samaritans' *Dying from Inequality* report in 2017, which highlighted the link between poverty and suicide, we've been working with politicians and decision-makers to explore how we can better address the impact of inequality in communities across Scotland.

In 2018 we joined with Voluntary Health Scotland, Alcohol Focus Scotland, Nourish Scotland, Obesity Action Scotland to respond to the Scottish Government's planning consultation and highlight how planning can play a positive role in addressing the impact of socioeconomic deprivation on public health.

We are continuing to raise awareness among decision-makers of the links between socio-economic deprivation and suicide and calling for mental & emotional wellbeing to play an important part in the conversation around creating a fairer Scotland.

## Working to reduce water-related suicides

Suicides account for around a third of all drowning deaths in Scotland. To address this issue we worked with Water Safety Scotland to make suicide prevention one of the priorities within Scotland's Drowning Prevention Strategy 2018-2026.

Our evidence and recommendations helped to inform this strategy, providing a blueprint for closer working between agencies, mental health professionals and organisations like us to tackle misconceptions around suicide and promote prevention around Scotland's coasts and waterways.

We now chair the Water Safety Scotland sub-committee on suicide prevention and are continuing to address water-related suicide with a range of other organisations.

## Sharing our vision for a Connected Scotland

Feelings of loneliness and isolation are one of the most commons reasons people contact us and research suggests loneliness is associated with suicide.



Chris O'Donovan Photography/Samaritans

We responded to the Scottish Government's consultation on *A Connected Scotland*, the new strategy to tackle loneliness and social isolation, highlighting the implications for suicide prevention and calling for an approach that addresses how loneliness affects people at different stages of life.

Following the launch of the strategy, we're continuing to call for decision-makers and services to explore how they can address chronic loneliness and highlighting the impact of loneliness on young people.

## Researching suicide prevention in the Highlands

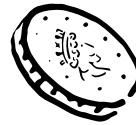
We commissioned research to better understand the unique challenges concerning suicide prevention in the Scottish Highlands. Our research, funded by the Big Lottery Fund, explored the barriers to seeking help, the provision of support services and how we should work with communities to meet local needs. We plan to use this research to inform how we shape and deliver our services in the Highlands to make sure we're reaching people where and when they need us most.

## SAMARITANS SCOTLAND IN THE MEDIA

We work with the media to raise awareness of suicide prevention and the work of Samaritans across Scotland. Here are some of the ways we made headlines in 2018:

- We were vocal in calling for the Scottish Government to strengthen their draft suicide prevention plan when we felt it could go further to reduce suicide in Scotland through more ambitious targets, timelines and resourcing.
- We published research which found 60% of Scots have direct experience of suicide, either from their own experience, from supporting a close friend or family member or losing a friend or family member to suicide.
- Our work with the Health and Social Care Alliance to ensure the voices of people with lived experience of suicide were heard throughout consultation of the new National Suicide Action Plan won a Herald Society Award for Partnership of the Year.
- We also work with the media, through our media advisory service, to promote responsible reporting around suicide.

## WORKING IN PARTNERSHIP



### Scotmid Charity of the Year

We were delighted to be chosen as **Scotmid** Co-operative's Charity of the Year in 2017/18, creating a transformative partnership between Samaritans and Scotmid staff and customers.

Over the course of the year this partnership raised **£315,000** to support our work, funding over **60,000** calls and helping to raise awareness of our listening service.

From zip-wiring to yoga, cake sales to Kilt Walks, the Scotmid team went above and beyond to help Samaritans be there for people when they need us most.

Our partnership in numbers:

- **£315,000** raised
- **63,000** calls funded
- **20,000** cupcakes sold on Brew Monday
- **29** brave zip-sliders zipped across the Cairngorms
- **23** hikers took part in **4** Kilt Walks
- **8** stores took part in our Tour de Scotmid Cycleathon
- **£5,000** raised at **2** Big Quizzes
- More than **4,000** Samaritans & Scotmid reusable bags sold!



## Network Rail



Since 2010 Samaritans has worked in partnership with [Network Rail](#), British Transport Police and the wider rail industry to prevent suicides on the railways. Here in Scotland this partnership work has seen Samaritans train rail staff, speak to commuters and distribute hundreds of Brew Monday tea bags.

In 2018, 91 rail staff received specialist training in managing suicidal contacts and trauma support in Scotland. Our volunteers supported outreach events as part of our Big Listen, Small Talk, Saves Lives and Brew Monday campaigns and joined with other agencies to run a Conversation Café at Edinburgh Waverley Station and on trains.

Our 'We Listen' campaign in partnership with Network Rail was in the spotlight at Murrayfield for the 6 Nations Scotland v England match where LED banner advertising behind the goalposts meant Samaritans was seen by thousands of rugby fans there on the day and around 7 million viewers on the BBC.

**“You saved my life. I cannot thank you guys enough. I am a suicide survivor and I never thought I would actually meet you to thank you in person for being there.”**

**A male passenger on meeting a volunteer at one of our Conversation Cafes**

## Prison Listener Scheme

At Samaritans we're committed to being there for anyone who needs us, whatever their circumstances, and our Prisoner Listener Scheme is an important part of this.

Our Prisoner Listener Scheme aims to reduce suicide and self-harm in prisons by training prisoners to offer peer support. We select, train and support prisoners to become listening



volunteers, offering emotional support to other inmates who may be struggling to cope.

We currently operate **20** Listener Schemes across **15** prisons in Scotland.

## Working with schools

Every year we support around 10,000 young people in Scotland by speaking to schools, colleges and youth organisations at around 300 events per year.

Our volunteers support young people to learn more about emotional wellbeing, the power of listening and the importance of asking for help if they're struggling to cope. This is also an opportunity to spread the word about our Listening Service, letting young people know we're here for them, now and in the future.



In addition to our school talks, we promote our free Developing Emotional Awareness and Listening (DEAL) teaching resources to teachers and youth workers, to equip professionals working with young people to talk openly about emotional health and resilience.

**“Going out and speaking to local people is a really important part of what we do as Samaritans volunteers. We want local people to know we’re here to support them whatever their going through so we need to be visible in our communities.**

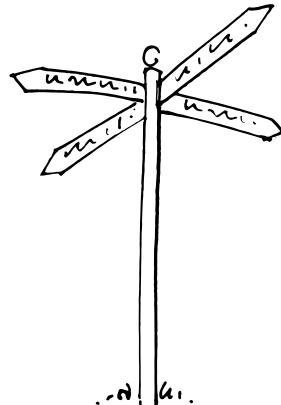
I gave my first talk to a local Rotary Club and since then I’ve enjoyed being a part of the outreach team, going out to share our work with local organisations and groups. Sometimes after a talk, someone will come up and confide in you that they’ve lost a friend or relative to suicide.

It’s a powerful reminder of why outreach matters; by encouraging people to speak openly we can make sure more people in our communities know where to turn if ever they’re struggling to cope or know someone who is.”

**Eric, volunteer with Samaritans Kirkcaldy**

## OUR BRANCHES

Samaritans Scotland wouldn't exist without the dedication and passion of our around **1,000 volunteers** spread across our 19 branches. These are some of our highlights from 2018.



### Making connections

Samaritans of Kirkcaldy have been working to build connections with their local community. Volunteers have partnered with their local Community Justice Team to speak with the Wings Women's Group, which provides support for women who have previously offended.

The team has also strengthened its links with Methil Foodbank and provided training to staff at Barony Housing Association and Kirkcaldy Jobcentre.

They also reached out to local schools, colleges and St Andrews University, supporting Madras College in St Andrews and holding joint discussion sessions with the student-run Nightline service at St Andrew's University, which has, in turn, encouraged students to become volunteers with the branch.

### Reaching out

In Inverness local Samaritans have been working hard to reduce isolation and loneliness in their community. The branch provided training for seasonal staff at the Caledonia Canal, supporting them to recognise and respond people who may be experiencing distress.

Samaritans of Inverness trained volunteers at their local foodbank to respond to people who may be struggling and held training with local youth project Lochaber Hope. The branch also reached out to students and staff at West Highland College, running training and raising awareness.

They continue to be a strong voice for prevention locally and lead their local Suicide Prevention Action Group which brings together representatives from the local authority, health and community organisations.

## Listening at all hours in Edinburgh

Samaritans of Edinburgh have been working hard be open day and night for anyone who needs support. Offering a 24-hours service the branch responded to more than 34,800 calls, 6,660 texts and 1,800 emails last year.

The branch has also been out and about, making sure Samaritans is visible in Scotland's capital city through partnership work with Network Rail, running stalls and conversations cafes on trains and at Haymarket and Waverley stations, bringing them into contact with thousands of commuters who pass through every day.

The branch also welcomed and trained new volunteers four times throughout the year, to help the listening service be there for more people struggling to cope.

## Supporting the community

At the heart of a rural community, Borders Samaritans, based in Selkirk, have been hard at work throughout 2018 to support local people. They have been recruiting and training new volunteers and have piloted some day time shifts to make it easier for local people to visit the branch in-person.

They have also adopted a number of new initiatives to support their work like introducing on-ongoing mentoring of volunteers to support them to grow and develop their skills.



Volunteers and supporters have also been finding creative ways to raise funds for the branch – from selling farm eggs and homemade chutneys, marmalades and jams, to holding a plant sale and a 'nearly-new' clothes sale.

## Teaming up

Samaritans of Dunfermline raised awareness and funds throughout 2018. Their partnership with Dunfermline Athletic Football Club saw Samaritans take part in a community open day and Samaritans awareness day at the

stadium, raising more than £500 for the local branch and raising the profile of Samaritans in the local area.

The branch took part in a wide range of events and talks with local schools, colleges, employers and services – including speaking to staff at Sky TV as part of their office Mental Health Awareness Day, taking part in Fife College's health & wellbeing and

Freshers' Week events, joining in the fun at Dunfermline Children's Gala and more. Branch volunteers also raised funds when Sarah Millican performed at Dunfermline's Alhambra Theatre.

Overall the branch raised over £3,800 through community and awareness events, helping it continue its work to be there wherever and whenever someone needs them.



### Keeping it local

Samaritans of Dumfries may be a small branch but its 13 volunteers work hard to support their local community. They can be found running an information stand at Dumfries and Galloway Infirmary and meeting the community at the local monthly Farmer's Market. The branch also supports the Prisoner Listener Scheme at HMP Dumfries, training and supporting inmates to become Listeners.

### Supporting young people

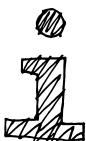
Samaritans of Falkirk and Central Scotland made 12 visits to high schools across Central Scotland, delivering talks on emotional health to pupils from S1 to S6 and taking part in mental health awareness days. The talks have helped to raise awareness of Samaritans and even inspired pupils at seven different high schools to choose to research and present on our work as part of the Youth Philanthropy Initiative.

Throughout 2018 the branch continued to develop partnerships with Falkirk and Stirling Albion football clubs and began a new partnership with Stenhousemuir football club. All three ran awareness days in 2018, with players running warm-ups in Samaritans branded kit and collections being taken to support the work of the local branch.

“We’re a small branch but we always make an effort to support our community. Anyone can struggle with feelings of loneliness or isolation from time to time – and this can be especially hard in rural areas – so it’s really important to us to raise the profile of Samaritans locally.

That’s why you’ll see our volunteers in all sorts of places, whether we’re talking to the public at the monthly Farmer’s Market, training prisoners to become listeners or chatting with patients and visitors at our local hospital.”

**Mike, volunteer with Samaritans of Dumfries**



### Raising funds and awareness

Dundee Samaritans partnered with Dalguise House, a local outdoors centre, to fundraise in memory of a staff member who had lost their life to suicide. The branch provided support to staff and raised awareness of Samaritans’ services while working with the centre to raise £1,953 through a charity auction.

The branch also took the opportunity to raise funds when comedian Sarah Millican performed at the Caird Hall. And Roddy, Samaritans Dundee’s longest serving volunteer, played a crucial role in supporting our bid to become Scotmid’s Charity of the Year with a powerful presentation on all the partnership could achieve.



### Being there for the community

Samaritans of Aberdeen have been making new connections in their community. In 2018 the branch offered emotional support to Aberdeen’s homeless community, taking part in an event run by Specsavers to provide eyewear to homeless people. The branch also received a funding boost from students at North East Scotland College who were inspired to organise a sponsored walk, raising £1,370.

## FIND OUT MORE

There are lots of ways you can get involved in Samaritans' work in Scotland.

### Donate

All the work you've read about in this report was supported through donations from people like you. By donating, you can help us be there for people when they need us most. To donate visit [Samaritans.org/donate-now](https://samaritans.org/donate-now)

### Become a volunteer

We depend on volunteers to help us be there for people whenever they need us. Find out more about volunteering by visiting [Samaritans.org/support-us/volunteer](https://samaritans.org/support-us/volunteer)

### Support our work in Scotland

From fundraising to business partnerships, find out how you can support our work by visiting [Samaritans.org/support-us](https://samaritans.org/support-us)

### In education

You can find out more about our work with schools, colleges and universities, download our free Developing Emotional Awareness & Listening (DEAL resources) and arrange a school talk by visiting [samaritans.org/schools](https://samaritans.org/schools)

### In your workplace

You can find out more about our support and training for workplaces,

including our Wellbeing in the City programme and staff training options by visiting [samaritans.org/how-we-can-help/workplace](https://samaritans.org/how-we-can-help/workplace)

### In prisons

You can find out more about Prison Listener Scheme by visiting [samaritans.org/how-we-can-help/prisons](https://samaritans.org/how-we-can-help/prisons)

### In the military

You can find out more about how Samaritans supports personnel in the armed forces, veterans and their families by visiting [samaritans.org/how-we-can-help/in-the-military](https://samaritans.org/how-we-can-help/in-the-military)

### Campaigning, policy and research

You can find out more about our research, policy and campaigning work in Scotland by visiting [samaritans.org/about-samaritans/about-us/research-policy](https://samaritans.org/about-samaritans/about-us/research-policy)

### Working with the media

You can find out more about our media advisory service and download our media guidelines by visiting [Samaritans.org/about-samaritans/media-guidelines](https://samaritans.org/about-samaritans/media-guidelines)

You can keep up with all work on Twitter [@Sams\\_Scotland](https://twitter.com/Sams_Scotland)

**THANK YOU** TO EVERYONE WHO MADE THIS WORK POSSIBLE IN 2018.



Chris O'Donovan Photography/Samaritans

Samaritans has provided support for people when they need it most for more than 60 years, growing from a single branch to more than 200 branches across the United Kingdom and Ireland. Our service is just as much in demand now as it was then and our volunteers ensure that - day or night – there is always someone to listen, providing emotional support to anyone who needs it.

## CONTACT US

You can contact Samaritans for free, 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. Our service is anonymous, confidential and non-judgemental – we'll keep what you say private and won't tell you what to do or make decisions for you. We'll listen and give you a space to talk about whatever it is you're going through.



**Phone:** 116 123



**Email:** [jo@samaritans.org](mailto:jo@samaritans.org)



**Letter:** Freepost RSRB-KKBY-CYJK,  
Chris, PO Box 9090,  
STIRLING FK8 2SA



Or find your nearest Samaritans branch by visiting  
**[Samaritans.org/branches](https://www.samaritans.org/branches)**

Follow us on **[@Sams\\_Scotland](https://twitter.com/Sams_Scotland)**