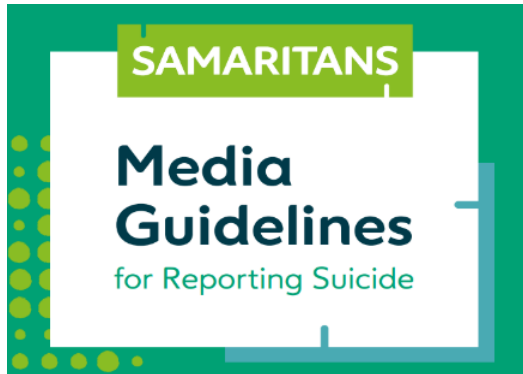


Samaritans' Roundup

May - July 2021

Media Advisory Service



'Suicide in the Media' Training

So far this year we have delivered 16 'Suicide in the Media' training sessions to news outlets and 12 sessions to non-media teams, including mental health and suicide prevention leads.

In the last three months, this training has been delivered to The Independent and regional titles including Cheshire Live, Liverpool Echo and the Basingstoke Gazette, as well as Mental Health Today, Disney+, Network Rail media managers and the London Fire Brigade.

If there are spokespeople and communications leads in your area who may find this training helpful, please do get in touch to arrange a session at: mediaadvice@samaritans.org

Spotlight on our advice and support

The team has advised on 149 suicide-related programmes, stories and campaigns since May. This work has supported national and regional media titles including BBC national and local news

teams, Radio 4, Channel 4, The Sun, The Mirror, Metro, Derbyshire Live, Glasgow Times, Westmorland Gazette, Bristol Live and Sunderland Echo.

We have been working on a number of storylines for soaps, dramas and films, including a new teen drama and a documentary about reality TV. We've also worked with several authors and advised on a couple of music videos including the [official video](#) for Rudimental x Skream *So Sorry*.

We worked with the coroner for the inquest of reality TV star Mick Norcross and distributed guidance to editors on how to report celebrity deaths safely. This resulted in responsible coverage and no mention of the suicide method in news headlines.

We also issued an advice note to editors covering reporting of novel suicide methods.

If you become aware of a suicide-related incident or death which may generate unhelpful press coverage, please do get in touch with us to share your concerns so we can plan a briefing if necessary and offer support to media teams.

Online Harms



As part of our Online Excellence Programme, Samaritans in partnership with Middlesex University, the University of Birmingham and Canterbury Christ Church University is conducting research to better understand the nature of suicide and self-harm content online across different platforms and its impact on users, whether or not

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they have lived experience of self-harm and suicidal feelings. We are inviting people who are aged 16 or over and live in the UK to take part in an anonymous [online survey](#). This includes anyone who has ever seen, posted and/or engaged with self-harm and suicide content online.

In May, the UK Government published a draft Online Safety Bill that will make social networks and sites hosting user-generated content safer for vulnerable users. A joint committee of MPs and members of the House of Lords are scrutinising the bill and will report on this by 10 December.

If you have concerns about content or activity you've come across online and would like advice, get in touch at: onlineharms@samaritans.org

'Small Talk Saves Lives' campaign

Samaritans in partnership with Network Rail, British Transport Police and the wider rail industry, has launched a new phase of *Small Talk Saves Lives*, to empower the public to act to prevent suicide in the rail environment and other settings.



After a tough year and as the nation begins to readjust to life with easing restrictions, the campaign reminds the public they already have the

skills to start a conversation with someone who needs help, giving them the confidence to act.

The latest phase of *Small Talk Saves Lives* has the backing from leading suicide prevention expert and psychologist, Associate Professor Lisa Marzano, from Middlesex University. Further new research from Marzano has confirmed that when asked, people with experience of suicidal thoughts said that verbal interventions, including small talk, providing reassurance and listening, are the most helpful things a person can do to respond to someone in a crisis.

World Suicide Prevention Day

Ahead of this year's World Suicide Prevention Day, we have written to editors to offer media guidelines training to support journalists and encourage positive stories of hope.

First launched by the International Association for Suicide Prevention (IASP) in 2003, WSPD falls on the 10 September each year to shine a light on the issue of suicide.



The theme for WSPD 2021-23 is '**Creating Hope Through Action**' – forming the perfect opportunity to reach out to people in your community with positive media stories about hope and recovery.

On the day, Samaritans will be exploring what hope means to people and how to stay hopeful during difficult times.

Evidence has shown that sensitive news stories focusing on hopeful recovery can serve as powerful testimonies to others and encourage them to reach out for help. These stories have also been linked to falls in suicide rates.

Journalists are always on the lookout for human interest stories, so if you have positive stories

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about suicide prevention work in your area, or helpful case study stories, please do consider sharing these with your local press.

If you're working with local media on a piece for WSPD please do use this as an opportunity to remind them to report responsibly and signpost Samaritans' **Media Guidelines for Reporting Suicide**

Our advice team is also available to support you in your dealings with the press. If this would be helpful you can email us at: mediaadvice@samaritans.org

Samaritans' helpline for health & care workers

Samaritans' dedicated helpline for frontline health and care workers in England continues to operate until at least September. The helpline was set up at the start of the pandemic, making our volunteers available to support frontline staff feeling overwhelmed after a tough day.

Call free for confidential support on: 0800 069 6222 (7am to 11pm 7 days a week)

Here to support
NHS and social
care workers
in England

Samaritans has launched a new confidential support line for NHS and social care workers.

Our volunteers are here to support you when you've had a tough day, are feeling worried or overwhelmed, or just have a lot on your mind and need to talk it through.

Call our free confidential support line
0800 069 6222
7am to 11pm, 7 days a week

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Working in partnership **SAMARITANS** **NHS**

Coronavirus research findings

To understand how Covid-19 has affected wellbeing and suicidal feelings among our callers, Samaritans analysed its anonymous service data and regularly surveyed volunteers through the year since restrictions began:

- During the year since restrictions began, we provided emotional support over half a million times to people concerned about covid. Concerns peaked in April 2020 and have generally mirrored the timing of UK lockdowns, with covid a more common concern in times of tighter restrictions.
- The pandemic has exacerbated existing inequalities in suicide risk. Calls to Samaritans about loneliness and isolation, family, finances and work are most strongly associated with distress linked to covid.
- Healthcare workers were identified as a key group impacted, with feelings of anxiety, trauma and mental fatigue commonplace. Volunteers described the effect of unprecedented exposure to serious illness and death, lack of access to support and resources, and challenges opening up to family or friends.
- The research highlights other groups of concern, including people with pre-existing mental health conditions, young people, middle-aged men and people in prison.

Samaritans also spoke to people who'd felt suicidal, self-harmed or attempted suicide during the pandemic:

The interviews and written responses show what life's been like for people with suicidal thoughts or self-harm, including coping strategies, challenges and hopes for the future. The findings show an increased reliance on medication, self-care and reaching out to others, in the absence of accessible mental health support. People also spoke about their resilience during a challenging period and feeling able to rely on their pre-existing 'toolkit' of coping mechanisms to support themselves.

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Many felt the pandemic, and restrictions, led to them feeling more hopeless and trapped, but had also been a prompt to re-evaluate their life in a positive way. Intense loneliness was common among participants, as well as the loss of support from key family or friends who helped them manage suicidal thoughts.

Lived Experience work

At Samaritans, we know the importance of listening, so we have created more opportunities for people with personal experience of using our services, and of suicide and self-harm, including those bereaved, to share their views and experiences with us. In May 2021 we launched Samaritans' Lived Experience Panel, which is open to anyone with lived experience of suicide or self-harm. The panel has helped inform our work in a number of ways, including providing feedback on materials used in our *Small Talks Saves Lives* campaign and helping shape the development of our new strategy. For more information or to join the panel, please click [here](#). Alongside Samaritans' Lived Experience Panel, there are opportunities for people to work alongside us on specific projects. For example, we have six Lived Experience Advisors working with us to provide guidance and insights on our Peer Support and Self-harm project. You can keep an eye on future opportunities to be involved in our work [here](#).

Samaritans' Training

Samaritans delivers training to organisations covering topics including 'Conversations with vulnerable people' 'Managing suicidal conversations' and 'Building resilience and wellbeing'.

We delivered 120 training courses in May, June and July, to over 1100 participants from public, private and not for profit organisations.

Course titles:

Managing suicidal conversations:	26 courses
Conversations with vulnerable people:	61 courses
Building resilience and wellbeing:	14 courses
Suicide intervention:	4 courses
Listening skills and emotional health:	15 courses

To date, almost 23,000 rail staff and BTP officers have received suicide prevention training.

NSPA Update



The **NSPA's Lived Experience Network** strives to ensure that suicide prevention work across the country is underpinned by the voices of people with lived experience. We believe that our work has more impact when it's informed by these personal experiences, and this knowledge should be valued, respected and seen as legitimate.

Our Lived Experience Network launched last September, and includes:

- An online panel - anyone with lived experience related to suicide can join. We currently have over 300 members who are invited to complete surveys and polls that feed into the national suicide prevention strategy.
- A smaller group of 34 lived experience influencers, who have been through extensive training and offered a network of support to influence suicide prevention work. Since January, NSPA's lived

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experience Influencers have been involved in a variety of roles, including being part of strategic steering groups, speaking at events and supporting the development of the NSPA's network.

- Providing support and guidance to national and local organisations who are seeking to involve people with lived experience in their suicide prevention work.

NSPA Newsletter

The National Suicide Prevention Alliance publishes a monthly newsletter including a round-up of the latest research news, top suicide prevention stories and news from its network of more than 300 organisations who are working in self-harm and suicide prevention and/or bereavement support.

You can sign up via the NSPA website at

www.nspa.org.uk/get-involved

To view the latest edition, click [here](#)

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