



SAMARITANS IRELAND

Impact Report

November 2010 – October 2011

Samaritans Ireland is the longest-serving national organisation working in the area of suicide and suicide prevention. It is a volunteer-led organisation, which provides confidential, non-judgemental emotional support, 24-hours a day, for people who are experiencing feelings of distress or despair, including those which could lead to suicide. Services are available by telephone, email, letter, SMS texts and through face-to-face support in Samaritans' 12 branches throughout the Republic of Ireland. The organisation also works in community, prison, hospital and school settings.

Further information about the work of Samaritans is available at: www.samaritans.ie.

Samaritans' 24-hour helpline number is 1850 60 90 90.

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Photo: Marc O'Sullivan

1.0 A message from our Volunteer Representative

This report is intended to document the work of Samaritans in the Republic of Ireland during the 12 month period from November 2010 to October 2011.

The past year has been one of the busiest for Samaritans since it first established a presence in Ireland in 1961. Samaritans offers emotional support to people who may be in distress, despair or who might be experiencing suicidal thoughts. We don't know when someone might need our support which is why we open 24-hours a day, every day of the year.

2011 has been a very difficult year for many people. The economic situation, the financial problems faced by families and the seemingly never-ending gloomy news must have some negative impact on the emotional health of every citizen in the country.

Samaritans aims to reduce the numbers of deaths by suicide. We are working towards this aim by increasing the number of hours branches are available for callers and maintaining a high number of volunteers to offer emotional support by telephone, email, SMS texting and face-to-face visits. We work in outreach projects in schools, clubs and community groups. Samaritans works in eight prisons, where we train prisoners as Listeners and provide direct support. Samaritans' volunteers listened for 55,611 hours in 2011, an increase of two per cent on the previous year. In the same period, the total number of calls increased by nine per cent to 265,445.

In recent decades, many organisations and groups have also begun working in the field of emotional support and suicide prevention. Samaritans welcomes the energy and commitment many of these groups bring to this work. We recognise the value in partnership and complementing the work of others so that the aim to reduce the number of deaths by suicide can be achieved. We will continue to develop closer working partnership with statutory and voluntary groups. None of us have all of the answers ourselves.

We are all experiencing an increasing demand on our services at a time of dwindling resources. What we do must be seen to be an effective and a prudent use of the support available.

Samaritans continues to be concerned at the number of deaths by suicide among males. Men are three times more likely to take their own lives than women. We feel that many men don't feel able to talk about their feelings and instead bottle them up.

Last year, Samaritans launched an advertising campaign aimed at working class men in their 30s, 40s and 50s - a group in which suicide is on the increase. We encourage men to talk to someone about the pressures and stress in their lives. Samaritans' services are available 24-hours a day, 365 days a year.

Over the past year, Samaritans has continued to recruit new volunteers who freely give of their time to listen to anyone who might be struggling to cope. Samaritans' volunteers provide emotional support when many other organisations are unavailable. I feel confident that their level of commitment will ensure our services will continue to be available to everyone who needs support.

Giovanni Doran

Volunteer Representative, Samaritans Ireland



Photo: Marc O'Sullivan

2.0 Director's report

As the largest provider of emotional support in Ireland, Samaritans has seen – at first-hand - the psychological impact of the recession on family life in Ireland. In the last 12 months, calls to our helpline increased by 9 per cent.

Callers reported feelings of depression, relationships difficulties, often exacerbated by financial problems, stress and anxiety about the future. While the increase in caller numbers and call intensity is of great concern, it is clear that the stigma associated with talking about emotional health issues is less. Inevitably, some increase in our calls is a direct result of greater public discourse around mental health.

As the recession in Ireland deepens, Samaritans continues to provide 24-hour emotional support through our helpline, and to offer outreach services in hospital, school and prison settings.

We are also exploring ways in which we can work with other agencies to allow callers better access to support services. In 2012, we will begin work on a new project, 'Connect' which is a two-phased initiative to raise awareness of the services on offer for people in distress. The project aims to bring agencies across the sector together to help us provide an enhanced service and build relationships with other groups working in the area of suicide prevention.

Working together - and in partnership - with other agencies is becoming increasingly important as demand for services grow and resources contract. Reducing duplication and enhanced referral systems are among the measures that all organisations working in the area of suicide prevention must adopt. That way – within the resources available – we can address issues of unmet need and ensure that every individual who requires emotional support gets it.

One of our focuses for 2011 was to raise awareness of the varied services we provide and demonstrate the commitment of our volunteers. We commissioned a photographic exhibition, entitled '24/7', to highlight the fact that Samaritans' services are available 24-hours a day, 365 days of the year. '24/7' captures the range of services provided by Samaritans volunteers in Ireland, and it continues to be exhibited in locations throughout the country. The exhibition has been very useful in improving understanding of the work of Samaritans and the wider issue of suicide and emotional distress.

Without the commitment from our volunteers and the support of our many fundraisers, donors and statutory support we could not continue. We are enormously grateful to everyone who helps us to sustain this important service.

We aim to enhance and improve our work over the coming year and continue to provide confidential advice and support to people in emotional distress.

Suzanne Costello

Director, Samaritans Ireland



3.0 Board members and administrative information

Board of Directors, Samaritans Ireland¹

Catherine Johnstone, **CEO, Samaritans UK and Ireland**

Sophie Andrews, **(Chair), Samaritans UK and Ireland**

Giovanni Doran, **Volunteer Representative, Samaritans Ireland**

Anita Lawlor, **Trustee, Samaritans UK and Ireland**

Suzanne Costello, **Director, Samaritans Ireland**

Board of Trustees, Samaritans UK and Ireland²

Sophie Andrews **(Chair)**

Professor Stephen Platt

Ralph Homer

Anita Lawlor

Sherine Krause

Bryn Davies

Karen Mills

Norman Craig

Michael Rogerson

Chay Champness

Alison Davenport

Tony Taylor

Registered Address

4-5 Usher's Court, Usher's Quay, Dublin 8

Company Number

450409

Charity Number

CHY11880

For further information about the governance and activities of Samaritans, the 2011 Annual Report of Samaritans UK and Ireland can be accessed at: http://www.samaritans.org/media_centre/annual_report.aspx



4.0 The work of Samaritans Ireland

4.1 Organisational structure

Samaritans is a charitable company limited by guarantee, which was founded in 1953. It is the central charity and coordinating body for the 201 Samaritans' branches in the UK, the Republic of Ireland, the Channel Islands and the Isle of Man, each of which is an independent charitable organisation.

Samaritans' branches are organised and work together in 13 geographic regions to offer emotional support services. The 20 branches on the island of Ireland comprise one region, with eight branches located in Northern Ireland, and 12 in the Republic of Ireland. However, this report deals solely with the work of the 12 branches in the Republic of Ireland.

The head office of Samaritans is based in London, but the organisation has a national office and Director for Ireland, based in Dublin. Samaritans Ireland was established in December 2007 and became operational in April 2008. It is incorporated in the Republic of Ireland as a company limited by guarantee.

Samaritans is governed by a Board of Trustees, which currently has 12 members³ (maximum 15), who are also Directors of the company. Two-thirds of the Trustees must be Samaritans' volunteers.

The Board is advised by the Council of Samaritans, which is made up of a representative from each Samaritans branch, a representative from each of the 13 operational regions and the Chair. The Chair of the Council is also the Chair of the Board of Trustees and is elected by the Council. The Regional Representatives represent the Board of Trustees in the wider organisation and play a vital role in supporting branches and ensuring the implementation of Samaritans' policies.

4.2 Vision, mission and values

Samaritans’ vision is that fewer people die by suicide. The organisation works to achieve this vision by making it its mission to alleviate emotional distress and reduce the incidence of suicidal feelings and suicidal behaviour. It does this by:

- **Being available 24-hours a day to provide emotional support** for people who are experiencing feelings of emotional distress or despair, including those which may lead to suicide.
- **Reaching out to high-risk groups and communities** to reduce the risk of suicide.
- **Working in partnership** with other organisations, agencies and experts to achieve Samaritans’ vision.
- **Influencing public policy and raising awareness** of the challenges of reducing suicide.

Samaritans is committed to the following values:

- **Listening**, because exploring feelings alleviates distress and helps people to reach a better understanding of their situation and the options open to them.
- **Confidentiality**, because if people feel safe, they are more likely to be open about their feelings.
- **People making their own decisions**, wherever possible, because Samaritans believes that people have the right to find their own solution and telling people what to do takes responsibility away from them.
- **Being non-judgemental**, because Samaritans wants people to be able to talk to the organisation without fear of prejudice or rejection.
- **Human contact**, because giving people time, undivided attention and empathy meets a fundamental emotional need and reduces distress and despair.

4.3 Overview of services

Samaritans provides completely confidential emotional support, 24-hours a day, by telephone, personal visits, email, text message and letter, through its branch network. This includes outreach activity at festivals and other public events; in prisons; hospitals; schools; the workplace; and with homeless people. The majority of contacts to Samaritans are currently by telephone.

People contact Samaritans about a wide range of issues, including depression, relationship and family issues, loneliness, physical and mental health issues, alcohol, drugs, self harm, financial worries, illness and exam pressures, as well as suicidal thoughts and feelings.

There is no charge for the listening service provided by Samaritans’ volunteers and no referral is required. People can choose to call a local branch number or the national number at rates set by the callers’ telecoms provider. Details of the call charges involved are regularly updated on Samaritans’ website, www.samaritans.ie. At present, it only costs callers six cents to call Samaritans from an Irish landline or 33 cents from a mobile phone, irrespective of how long the call lasts.

Currently, Samaritans does not offer a free-to-caller service, but for callers who cannot afford the cost of a call, the organisation accepts reverse-charge calls and will make call-backs on request. **A free-to-caller number is due to be implemented by Samaritans** in early-2012. This number - 116 123 - is being implemented as part of an EU initiative aimed at providing essential helplines with uniform telephone numbers across EU states. The 116 123 number is the EU’s number of extreme social value for an emotional support helpline. Samaritans has been in discussions with Comreg, the telecoms providers in Ireland and the Department of Health about supporting the roll-out of this number.

In addition to providing emotional support by telephone, email, text, letter and one-to-one interaction, Samaritans also works in other settings and on a range of issues relating to emotional health. The other main areas of work for the organisation can be categorised as follows:



Suzanne Costello, Director of Samaritans; Eileen Foley, Director of Samaritans' Dublin branch, and the Minister for Children, Frances Fitzgerald TD. Courtesy of Maxwell Photography.

FOCUS ON: ‘24/7’ exhibition

Each year around 24 July, Samaritans highlights the 24-hours-a-day, seven-days-a-week nature of its work. As 2011 was designated as the European Year of Volunteering, the organisation made a particular effort to promote the extent of its service and, in particular, highlight the important role which volunteers play in its delivery.

To this end, Samaritans documented a snap-shot of its work in a photographic exhibition, entitled ‘24/7’.

This exhibition highlights the fact that Samaritans’ services are available 24-hours a day, 365 days of the year. It also celebrates the contribution made by Samaritans’ volunteers: over 2,000 people volunteer with the organisation on the island of Ireland, coming from all walks of life and ranging from in age from early 20s upwards.

‘24/7’ captures the varied services provided by Samaritans in Ireland. For the exhibition, volunteers were photographed at work in the Dublin and Sligo branches of the organisation, and at the Oxegen music festival and Dublin’s Wheatfield Prison, delivering some of Samaritans’ outreach services. Some of the photos also show volunteers on the streets of Temple Bar in Dublin for a ‘feet on the street’ initiative.

Samaritans opened the exhibition in the European Union House in July 2011. The event was attended by a number of politicians, including the Minister for Children, Frances Fitzgerald TD, and the Minister of State for Disability, Equality and Mental Health, Kathleen Lynch TD, and Samaritans’ volunteers and staff.

Since being showcased in Dublin, ‘24/7’ has been on display in two locations in Co. Galway, in Ballinasloe and in Galway City.

All photographs in the exhibition were taken by Derek Speirs.



4.3.1 Outreach and training services

Samaritans' branches are rooted in their local communities and are committed to proactive awareness raising and skills training in local settings. Each year, Samaritans receives many requests for training in 'active listening' skills, a core element of effective emotional support. Samaritans provides skills training in this area for a range of agencies, groups and other charities, including the Irish Cancer Society, Living Links and University College Cork's 'Niteline' service.

Samaritans' volunteers also work with schools, youth groups and third-level institutions in supporting the many initiatives that are undertaken to educate young people about the importance of maintaining good mental health and techniques for improving coping skills. Interest in training from business, sports and representative groups has increased as more people begin to appreciate the importance of listening, talking and building resilience in dealing with challenging times.

4.3.2 Prison work

Samaritans has an established and well regarded association with prison support work, most notably in the form of its Listener scheme, the largest and best-established peer-support scheme in prisons. Listeners are prisoners who are selected, trained and supported by Samaritans, using the same guidelines that apply to all listening volunteers. They listen in complete confidence to fellow prisoners, who may be experiencing feelings of distress or despair, including those which may lead to suicide.

In 2012, the Listener scheme will reach its tenth anniversary in Ireland. Currently, Samaritans provides Listener schemes and direct prison support in eight prisons. Listener schemes are provided at Arbour Hill, Cloverhill, Mountjoy, Mountjoy Training Unit and Wheatfield. Direct support is provided at the Dóchas Centre, St. Patrick's Institution and Limerick Prison. The organisation trained 47 prisoners as Listeners in 2011 - an increase of 12 on numbers trained in 2010.

Samaritans' Listeners in prisons had approximately 600 calls from their fellow inmates over the past 12 months, an increase of 20 per cent on the previous reporting period. This figure, however, does not include the number of people that Samaritans' volunteers speak with on an informal basis in prison settings.



FOCUS ON: Facebook and Google initiatives



In 2011, Samaritans teamed up with Facebook to create a pioneering new scheme allowing Facebook users in Ireland and the UK to get help for a friend that they believe is struggling to cope or feeling suicidal.

People concerned about a friend are able to contact Samaritans via Facebook's Help Centre (www.facebook.com/help). The facility allows people to report specific content such as a status update or wall post of concern to them. Facebook will then put Samaritans in touch with the distressed friend to offer their expert support.

This initiative between Samaritans and Facebook recognises that a friend is often better placed to know whether someone close is struggling to cope or even feeling suicidal. Even through social media, it is vital people know that if a friend says life isn't worth living, they should always be taken seriously.



Need help? In Ireland, call 1850 60 90 90
Samaritans

Since July 2011, internet users in Ireland who are searching online for information about suicide using Google will find Samaritans' helpline number prominently displayed beside search results.

This new feature is intended to help vulnerable people on the web who are at risk of taking their own lives or in distress. A highly visible red telephone icon-containing contact details for Samaritans - pops up above normal Google search results when people use a range of search terms related to suicide. The move follows the successful introduction of the service in the UK in November 2010.

4.3.3 Media guidelines for reporting suicide and self harm

Samaritans and the Irish Association of Suicidology (IAS) produce media guidelines for reporting on suicide and self harm. The aim of the guidelines is to ensure the quality of reporting on – and portrayal of – suicide and related issues is responsible, non-sensational and of a high standard. The guidelines also seek to ensure that media coverage includes advice for people at risk and worried families, including contact information for support services. The guidelines aim to ensure media coverage raises awareness of the complexities of suicide and self harm.



Responsible reporting reduces suicide contagion. Suicide contagion is the exposure to suicide or suicidal behaviours within one's family, peer group or through media reports. It can result in an increase in suicide and suicidal behaviours in persons at risk of suicide, particularly in young people. Research has shown that young people often get their information on suicide from the media, and high-profile cases of suicide can sometimes lead to copycat effects.

The media guidelines are updated regularly. In 2012, Samaritans and the IAS will publish a new edition and an accompanying piece of guidance for bereaved families and those supporting the bereaved in handling media contact in the aftermath of a suicide.

4.3.4 Connect – getting support to those who need it

In 2012, Samaritans will begin work on a new project called 'Connect'. Connect is a two-phased initiative which will implement a comprehensive signposting system for Samaritans to allow callers better access to support services.

Working closely with agencies across the sector, Samaritans will work to build partnerships which will benefit people in distress. Samaritans is a household name and supports thousands of people each year. Currently there are many callers who find themselves in distress for the first time in their lives: They have limited knowledge of services and often they don't know what exists to help them.

There are many innovative and specialist services at work in Ireland which people struggling to cope may not be aware of. By building strong working relationships with these groups, Samaritans aims provide an enhanced service and help provide a joined-up approach to providing support to anyone feeling vulnerable.

Connect Phase 1 has been funded by the National Office of Suicide Prevention and preparatory work has been underway throughout 2011 to enable its implementation.



5.0 Helpline statistics

5.1 How Samaritans' helpline statistics are recorded

In analysing data around calls to helplines, it is useful to understand the behaviour of callers to a helpline. For anyone vulnerable, it can be enormously difficult to ask for help. Many people will ring several times before they feel comfortable enough to speak. In Samaritans' experience, these 'silent' calls can represent a number of things, for example:

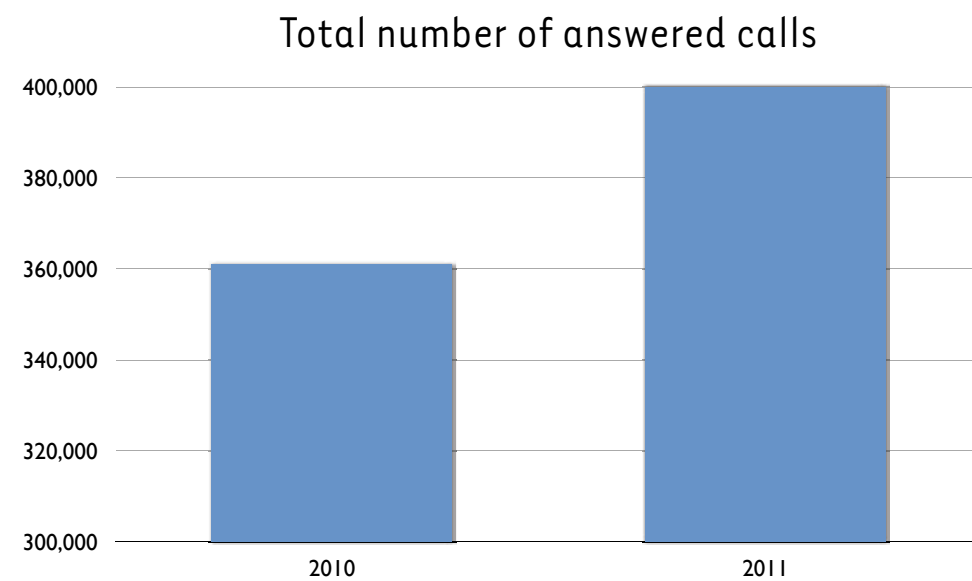
- Someone calling to check the service is available if they feel they want to talk.
- Someone calling and yet feeling unable to speak; perhaps building up confidence to speak.
- Someone calling and waiting for the 'right' voice to answer – someone they feel comfortable opening up to.

These silent calls are recorded as calls to Samaritans' service, and Samaritans' volunteers will not end a silent call; they remain on the line until the person at the other end hangs up.

All calls that involve conversation between Samaritans' volunteers and callers (i.e. all calls other than silent calls and those lasting less than 10 seconds) are known as 'dialogue contacts'.

During the 12 months from November 2010 to October 2011, the Samaritans' helpline answered a total of 400,357 calls. The number of answered calls represents an increase of 11 per cent on the previous 12 month period.

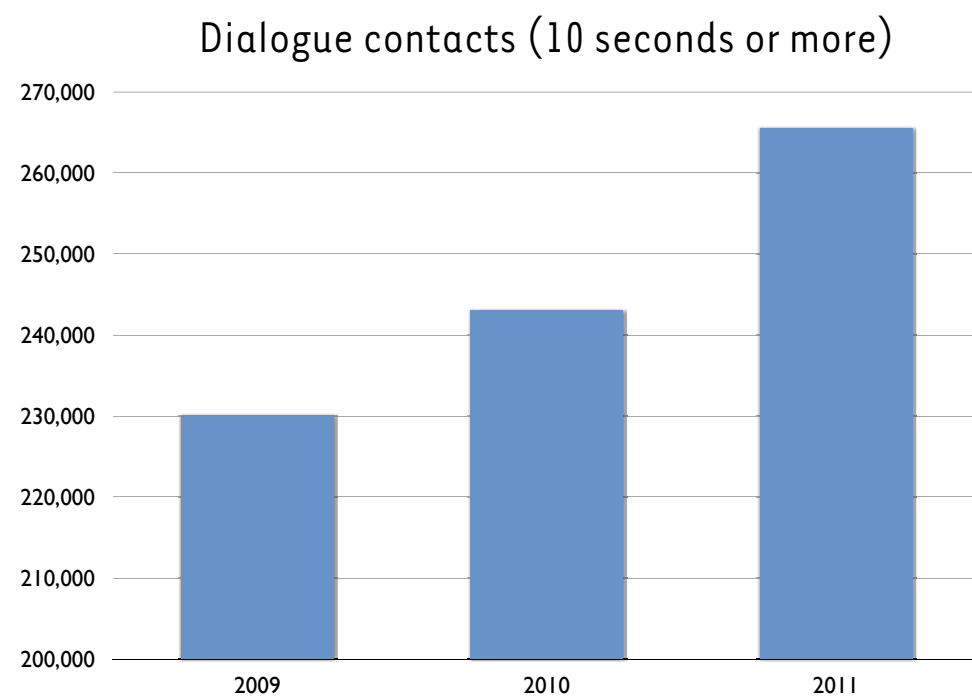
Of the total calls answered, 134,912 were silent calls and / or calls that lasted less than 10 seconds. There were 265,445 dialogue contacts over this period.



In order to give a clearer representation of actual incidences of emotional support given to people calling Samaritans' helpline, only dialogue contacts have been included in the figures below (i.e. calls lasting less than 10 seconds and / or silent calls have been excluded). In the graphs and texts in the following sections, the generic term 'calls' is used to refer to 'dialogue contacts'.

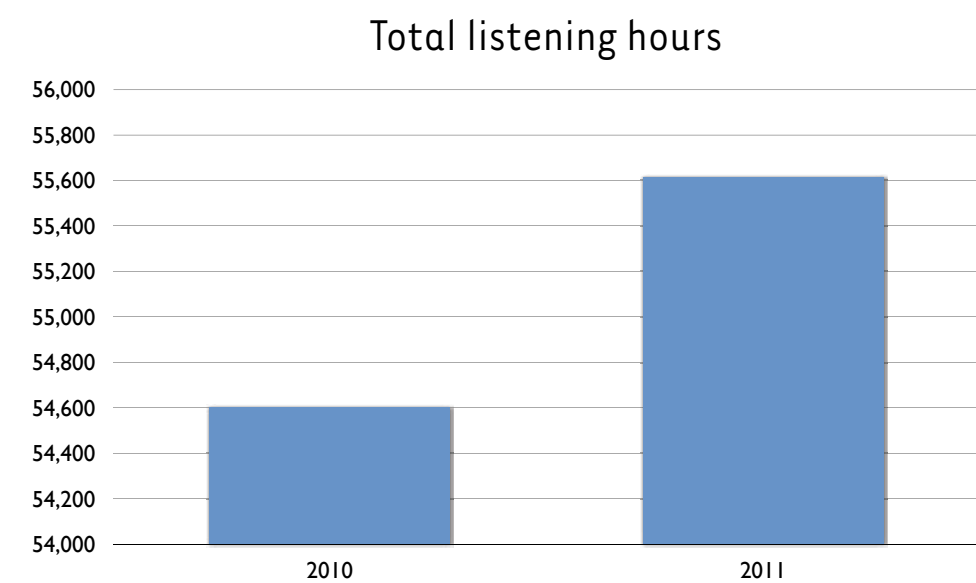
5.2 Total number of dialogue contacts

Samaritans recorded 265,445 dialogue contacts on its telephone system in the Republic of Ireland from November 2010 to October 2011. This represented an increase of 9 per cent – or 22,445 calls – on the previous 12 month period.



5.3 Listening hours

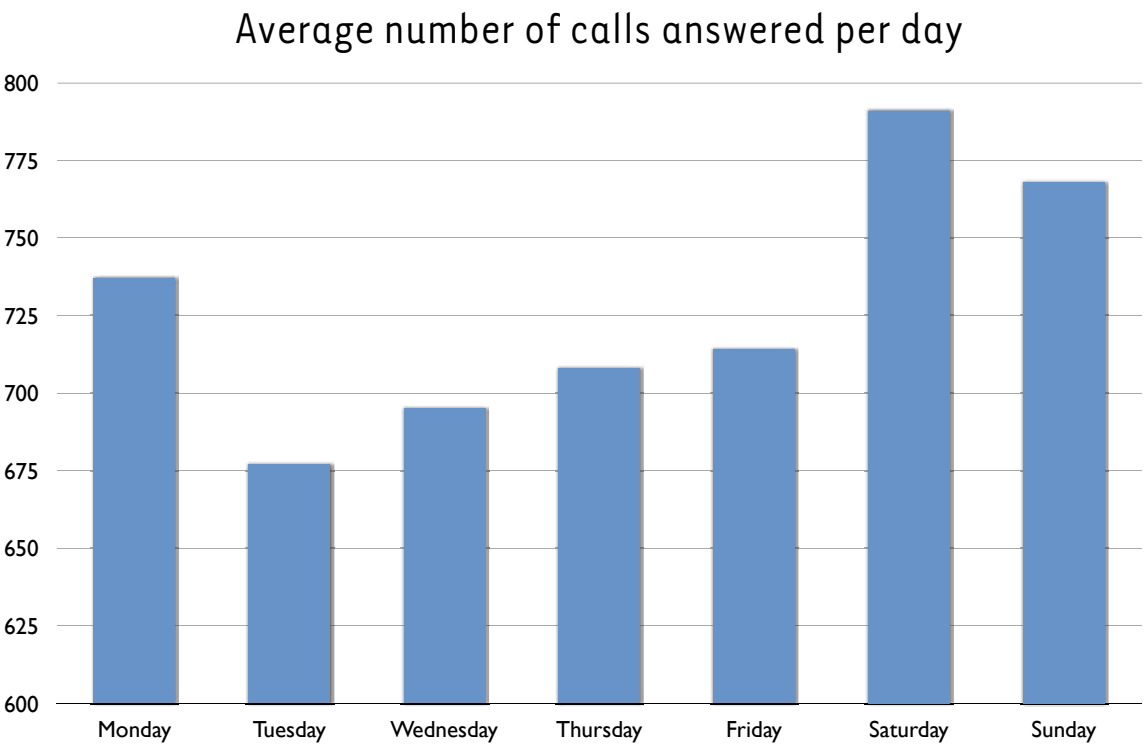
Samaritans' volunteers in Ireland gave 55,611 hours in listening time on the organisation's helpline in the 12 month period from November 2010 to October 2011. This constituted – on average – 1,069 hours per week. The level of 'listening time' increased by two per cent on the previous 12 month period.



5.4 Breakdown of calls by day

The average number of calls received each day by Samaritans Ireland’s helpline during the 12 month period from November 2010 to October 2011 was 727.

As in 2010, Saturday was consistently the busiest day for the Samaritans over the past 12 months, with an average of 791 calls being received by Samaritans’ volunteers each Saturday. Tuesday was the least busy day, with an average of 677 calls to the helpline made each Tuesday.



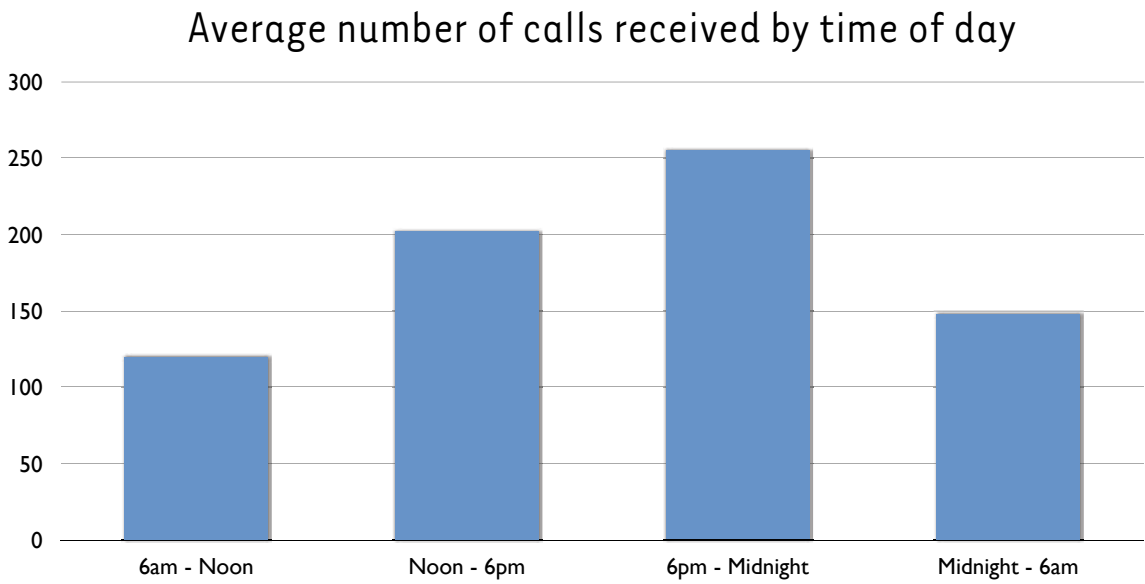
The average number of calls made for each day of the week was as follows:

- Monday: 737
- Tuesday: 677
- Wednesday: 695
- Thursday: 708
- Friday: 714
- Saturday: 791
- Sunday: 768

Samaritans received the highest number of calls in the last 12 months on Saturday, 14 May when 988 calls were answered. A high number of calls were also answered on Sunday, 10 July (930 calls) and on Sunday, 29 May (925 calls).



5.5 Busiest times



The busiest hours for Samaritans’ helpline in the 12 months from November 2010 to November 2011 were, on average:

- Saturdays from 11pm to midnight
- Wednesdays from 10pm to 11pm
- Sundays (into Mondays) from midnight to 1am

5.6 Mode of contact

Over 60 per cent of contacts made to Samaritans’ helpline in Ireland are now by mobile phone, rather than landline.

Increasingly, Samaritans has observed this shift away from landline calls to mobile calls, and the organisation is, therefore, concerned that vulnerable people who rely on pay-as-you-go mobiles may find contacting Samaritans’ 1850 number expensive.

In light of this, Samaritans is currently working to implement a free-to-caller number which has been developed by the European Commission (EC) and is expected to operate in all EU member states over the coming year. This number – 116 123 – could become as memorable as 112 or 999 and has been designated for people requiring emotional support in Europe.

While Samaritans is operationally and technically ready to implement this new 116 123 number, issues still remain as to who will cover the cost of calls. Because – under EC rules – this number must be free to callers, no charge can be passed on to the person who instigates the call.

Over the past year, Samaritans has been working with the communications regulator, Comreg; all of the telecoms providers in Ireland; the Department of Health, and the Joint Oireachtas Committee on Communications, Natural Resources and Agriculture to secure a shared solution on the funding of the 116 123 number. The organisation is hopeful that progress will be made and that the number will become operational in 2012.

5.7 Nature of calls

People contact Samaritans about a wide range of issues, including depression, relationship and family issues, loneliness, physical and mental-health issues, alcohol, drugs, self harm, financial worries, illness, issues around sexuality, as well as suicidal thoughts and feelings.

Samaritans examined the nature of the calls during a full week in October 2011. This represents a snap-shot of the type of calls received by the organisation. During that week, the five main issues that arose were:

- Depression and mental health issues.
- Relationship problems, often exacerbated by financial difficulties.
- Anxiety about the future.
- Loneliness.
- Stress.

In the past 12 months, calls to Samaritans continued to increase, both in volume and intensity. Concerns regarding finance were reflected in many calls: Samaritans estimate the rate of recession-related calls to be constant at one in ten.

It is important to note that although the increase in calls reflects a level of stress and anxiety, it also reflects a willingness among people to talk about their problems. This may be linked to the impact of the ongoing work to reduce the stigma around mental health issues. This willingness to talk is seen in the increase in calls to Samaritans’ helpline and in the level of face-to-face support accessed through Festival branch.



David McCann
Drummer, photographer, Samaritans' volunteer



Karen Larkin
Dog-lover, live music fan, Samaritans' volunteer



Paddy Prendergast
Grandad, gardener, Tipp hurling fanatic, Samaritans' volunteer



Kelly Toner
Cyclist, horse-rider, cook, Samaritans' volunteer



Mike Fay
Rally-driver, Reiki practitioner, Samaritans' volunteer



Sean Forde
Amateur ballroom dancer, Mayo football fan, Samaritans' volunteer



Anita Lawlor
Reader, mother, frequent flyer, Samaritans' volunteer



Brian Gaynor
Number-cruncher, database fanatic, dad, Samaritans' volunteer

6.0 Volunteers

There are currently over 1,300 volunteers in Samaritans’ branches in the Republic of Ireland, an average of 112 volunteers per branch. The largest branch is Dublin, which has 286 volunteers, while the smallest is Kilkenny, with 74 volunteers.

Samaritans invests heavily in initial and ongoing training for its volunteers. The introductory training programme lasts 16 weeks – with three to eight hours of training per week – and only after this is completed are volunteers permitted to answer calls. This initial training is followed by a six-month mentoring programme for new volunteers, while experienced volunteers participate in additional training on an ongoing basis.

Volunteers are the heart of the Samaritans organisation, delivering the core support service, running all branches, raising vital funds, and raising awareness of the work Samaritans does. The volunteer profiles included here highlight that Samaritans’ volunteers are drawn from all walks of life, are all ages, and live in different parts of the country.

7.0 Branches

There are 12 branches of Samaritans in the Republic of Ireland, as well as Festival branch, which travels to festivals, concerts and outdoor events throughout the summer months each year. Samaritans Ireland also has a national office, based in Dublin. The following case studies give an insight into the work of Samaritans' branches on a day-to-day basis.



Courtesy Samaritans' Cork branch

FOCUS ON: Cork Samaritans

Samaritans' Cork branch was founded in 1972 and has 180 active volunteers. Two of the founding volunteers continue to be involved in the branch since it first opened.

Over the course of 2011, the branch organised a range of events and activities to raise awareness of Samaritans' services in Cork and the surrounding region. One of the main initiatives undertaken by the branch was a project – run in partnership with the Cork GAA – which focused on reaching out to young men. With the support of the Cork County GAA Board, the branch sent out 'watching out for others' packs to each club in the county, including posters, leaflets and advice sheets on how to access Samaritans' services. A representative from each club was also invited to a training programme on how to support young people, especially men, who displayed signs of depression.

Another initiative launched by the branch in 2011 was the 'Taxi Initiative', a project focusing on raising awareness of Samaritans' services among taxi passengers in Cork. After finding out that Cork taxi drivers sometimes worried about passengers after dropping them off, the branch printed out leaflets on how to access Samaritans' services which taxi drivers can offer to their passengers. The branch is now looking at how it can further develop the partnership with the Cork taxi drivers to include training programmes in the area of mental health and suicide prevention.

Other activities undertaken by Samaritans' Cork branch during 2011 included:

- World Suicide Prevention Day, 10 September: 30 branch volunteers took to the streets to raise awareness of Samaritans' services. With the aid of local celebrities and politicians, they distributed 6,000 pens inscribed with Samaritans' number.
- Niteline: Each year, the branch trains 30 volunteers to work on University College Cork's 'Niteline' service. This is a dedicated service supported by University College Cork's pastoral care team which provides support to students experiencing distress.
- Mallow Youth Club: The branch provided an outreach service to a youth group in Mallow working with a group of young people who have experienced extreme disadvantage and who are at the periphery of society. This was a very challenging outreach service as the young people involved were exceptionally vulnerable.
- Crosshaven: In the aftermath of a suicide in a school, the branch was asked to attend the school to support students who might be affected. Members of the Cork branch spent a number of days in the school supporting students.
- Schools support initiative: The branch continued to attend schools in Cork, outlining its service and encouraging pupils to talk about their feelings.
- The Girls' Club: The branch teamed up with a cancer support group to provide listening skills to survivors and friends of cancer victims.
- Ongoing support work: The branch continued its work with local and community groups in the area of suicide prevention and mental health. During 2011, the branch participated in events organised by Breaking the Silence (in Cobh) and Kinsale Youth Support Services, offering advice and expertise.



FOCUS ON: Festival branch

2011 marked the 13th year that Samaritans' Festival branch offered emotional support on the streets of Ireland by being available at events throughout the island over the summer months.

Drawn from volunteers from the 20 branches in the island of Ireland, Festival branch has 71 volunteers ranging in age from early 20s to 70s and all ages in between. The branch was set up originally to attend events where there were large gatherings of people, thereby increasing the availability and accessibility of confidential emotional support to anyone who needs it.

Festival branch actively promotes the concept of talking about feelings and although there will be a fun, good time atmosphere at events, many people who attend big events can experience feelings of loss or despair. Samaritans' volunteers actively listen in a confidential, supportive and non-judgmental way at such events.

Among the festivals attended by Festival branch in 2011 were Portrush Northwest 200; Cork Midsummer Festival; Tall Ships Festival; Oxegen; Galway Arts Festival; Tullamore Agricultural Show; Fleadh Ceol; and Lisdoonvarna Matchmaking Festival.

This year, Festival branch was delighted to include the Tall Ships Festival in Waterford in June as part of its work. The Festival was a huge success for its organisers in terms of tourism, revenue and even the weather. However, it is sobering to note that over a 30-hour period on that weekend, over 200 people sought emotional support from Festival branch on the street.

Each festival is unique in terms of the demographics, ranging from family events, young people's music events, and events for people looking to build relationships. In 2011, the number of people accessing emotional support at all festivals increased from 1,227 in 2010 to 1,493.



FOCUS ON: Kilkenny branch

Since 1995, Samaritans’ Kilkenny branch operated out of a small house at the rear of the GROW building in Kilkenny City. There was little footfall on the road and poor recognition of the service; space for meetings and training was limited and the service was unable to expand.

To address these problems, a search for a new premise commenced three years ago and, eventually, a suitable property became available on Dean Street. This is a very busy street with a number of medical centres, local businesses, two churches, apartments and public car parks.

Samaritans purchased the property and renovated it to make it fit for purpose. Kilkenny branch then proceeded to decorate the space to make it feel like a ‘living room’ to encourage visitors to feel at home. The new premises were officially opened in May 2009.

To coincide with the opening, the branch put up a series of posters in the front windows to increase awareness of Samaritans and the services on offer. The new location and marketing efforts have made a notable difference, with an increase in face-to-face callers.

Before the move, many people were not aware that they could ring the bell and come and talk to someone face-to-face. Over the past year, many people have taken the opportunity to visit the branch to talk with a Samaritans’ volunteer about their problems.

The move to Dean Street highlights the importance of raising public awareness of Samaritans and how increased visibility can lead to more people accessing services.

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All photography used for this report, unless otherwise stated, is by photographer Derek Speirs as part of Samaritans’ ‘24/7’ exhibition.

7.1 Contact details

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Festivals

- Lisdoonvarna Matchmaking Festival
- North West 200
- Oxygen
- Electric Picnic
- Cork Midsummer Festival
- Tall Ships Festival
- Galway Arts Festival
- Tullamore Agricultural Show
- Fleadh Ceol Na h-Eireann



A close-up, high-contrast photograph of a man's face and upper body. He is shirtless, with a determined and slightly weary expression. He is wearing red boxing gloves and is positioned behind the ropes of a boxing ring. The background is blurred, showing the ropes and a hint of a crowd.

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