

SUICIDE PREVENTION AND SUPPORT ON THE RAILWAY

Your pocket handbook



Taking ownership of
suicide on our railway

SAMARITANS

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The programme and your handbook

Rail suicides have an enormous emotional impact on rail staff and witnesses, as well as on friends and family of the deceased. In 2010, a pioneering programme was launched to reduce rail suicides and support those affected by them.

This programme includes representation from Network Rail, Samaritans, British Transport Police (BTP), train operating companies, trade unions and other industry stakeholders. The interests of all these groups are brought together and their contributions delivered under the banner of the Rail Industry Suicide Stakeholder Group (RISSG).

The programme delivers a range of resources for the rail industry, including suicide prevention and support tools, training for rail staff and BTP officers and a poster campaign to reach out to vulnerable people.

The information contained within this booklet will give you tips for supporting a vulnerable person, help you understand the activities and purpose of the programme and hopefully inspire you to learn more.

PREVENTING AN INCIDENT

Barriers and myths

Having contact with people who may be feeling suicidal can naturally raise anxiety levels and leave us fearful about making the situation worse. This can be exacerbated by some of the common perceptions that surround the subject, for example:

- *'You have to be mentally ill to be suicidal'.*
- *'Suicidal people would want to take someone with them'.*
- *'If a person is serious about suicide, there is nothing you can do'.*
- *'There are no warning signs regarding suicidal behaviour'.*
- *'If you intervene and stop a suicide they'll only come back anyway'.*

Interestingly all these common beliefs are myths and often simple tried and tested intervention techniques can be incredibly effective in preventing suicides.

Intervening

Any assistance or support offered to a potentially suicidal person that helps them out of danger is classed as an intervention.

Samaritans delivers a course for rail staff which explores the subject of suicide and equips staff with the skills to carry out an intervention and talk to a vulnerable person (see page 9 for course details).

However an intervention may be necessary at any time. If you haven't had the training you can still help...

See next page →



Intervening continued...

You can help someone just by giving them the opportunity to talk about their problems or feelings.

If you feel comfortable and it's safe to do so:

- Introduce yourself and ask their name.
- Encourage them to talk and focus on listening.
- Be patient.
- Offer to take them to a more comfortable place to talk.

If you consider the situation to be an emergency i.e. an immediate response is required, contact first the signaller, and then the British Transport Police on 0300 123 9101.

Supporting

You may not feel comfortable talking to a distressed and sometimes potentially suicidal person for a great length of time. Samaritans can help in three ways:

1

Pass them a Samaritans contact card* so they can contact Samaritans in their own time.

2

Offer them the use of a phone so they can call Samaritans from a safe place in the station: 116 123.

3

Ask them if they would like to speak to a Samaritans volunteer at the station. If yes, activate the call out service by calling: **07548 720 511.**[†]

* See page 17 to order


† Please see page 13 before calling

If you're concerned about the person's wellbeing please contact the BTP on 0800 40 50 40 (non-emergency line) or encourage contact with a family member or friend.

Reporting

If you speak to someone, whether it's for a minute or an hour, it is essential that we hear from you.

Please report any intervention you have made to your manager. Your own company procedure for logging such events should be followed and details must also be recorded in the industry's Safety Management Information System (SMIS) through your SMIS inputting team.




If you or your manager are unsure about these arrangements email interventions@samaritans.org

Learning more – Managing Suicidal Contacts

The *Managing Suicidal Contacts* (MSC) course is tailored to meet the needs of frontline rail staff, to boost skills and confidence in dealing with distressed or vulnerable people at railway locations.

“Quite easily one of the best training courses I’ve attended. It was interesting and engaging, and I found I could relate the advice given to a variety of different situations”

Network Rail (Wales) delegate

For more information on the MSC course and bookings email: railcompanies@samaritans.org or visit samaritans.org/railindustry 

Please ask your manager/supervisor to be released for the day.

Watch the *Learning Tool* videos for real accounts from rail staff and discussion about the course. See page 18 for further details.

Quick reference guide

TACTICS

For identifying people in need

There's no definitive list of behaviours that a suicidal person will display but these behaviours may be shown by a person in need:

- Not boarding any trains.
- Standing alone/isolated.
- Looks distant/withdrawn.
- Out of the ordinary appearance.

*'Something doesn't
feel quite right...?'*

TACTICS

For approaching people in need

If you feel comfortable and it's safe to do so, please start a conversation with the person. The chances are you will help them by giving them an opportunity to talk about their problems or feelings.

- Encourage them to talk. Listen.
- Offer to talk in a safer environment.
- Offer Samaritans support.



In an emergency contact the:

- Signaller
- British Transport Police on
0300 123 9101

Please report any intervention you have made to your manager and email interventions@samaritans.org

RECOVERING FROM AN INCIDENT

Supporting others

Following a traumatic incident at a station, Samaritans volunteers can be requested to attend. The volunteers are there to provide a reassuring presence should anyone wish to talk to them. This could be passengers, staff, cleaners, BTP officers – anyone.

**To request Samaritans attendance at a station
Call 07548 720 511[†]**

1

Same day

The priority on the same day of the incident may be to respond to train service disruption and restoration of services. However Samaritans can still try to attend.

2

24-72 hours after

This option is more likely to capture regular commuters who may have witnessed the event.

Both options can be requested simultaneously.

[†] Please see page 13 before calling

Requesting Samaritans support

Things to consider:

- ➔ A volunteer presence at a station must be agreed by the station manager.
- ➔ Due to the nature of a volunteer service Samaritans cannot always guarantee attendance at a particular time or location, but the volunteers will always do their best.
- ➔ Samaritans cannot provide face-to-face support to people who are drunk, under the influence of drugs, or who are violent, threatening or abusive. In such cases it is advised that the British Transport Police are called.
- ➔ Samaritans support can range from emotional support to staff or passengers on a one to one basis, to a volunteer presence at a station raising awareness of Samaritans support services by handing out contact cards and speaking with staff and passengers.

Supporting you

As well as looking out for others it is equally important to look after yourself.

“If there’s one thing I’d like to say about how I think people should deal with trauma, it’s to do what’s right for you.”

Train driver

As rail staff, there are many sources of support available to you including:

- Your line manager/supervisor.
- Occupational health services.
- Company employee assistance programmes, such as Care First or Validium.
- Railway Chaplains.
- Samaritans (see back cover for contact details).

“There are very few places you can go in the world where you can pick up a telephone and another human being will listen to you unconditionally.”

Samaritans caller



It's common to pass through four key stages when coming to terms with a rail fatality. You may pass in and out of these at different times and not always in the same order.

- 1** Not admitting there's a problem (**denial**).
- 2** Feeling angry and resentful (**anger**).
- 3** Feeling sad and low (**depression**).
- 4** Feeling ready to move on (**acceptance**).

It generally takes about 4–6 weeks to recover from a traumatic incident, but **everyone is different**, and it doesn't mean that life has to be perfect right away. The important thing is to talk about it.

Learning more – Trauma Support Training

The *Trauma Support Training* (TST) course aims to highlight the trauma caused by railway incidents and techniques to assist recovery.

It has been designed for anyone managing or supporting those at risk of trauma on the railway e.g. Driver Managers, Local Operations Managers.

“ I would recommend this as the preferred method of training for anyone involved in the chain of care of rail staff”

Northern delegate

For more information on the TST course and bookings email: railcompanies@samaritans.org or visit samaritans.org/railindustry 

Watch the *Learning Tool* videos for real accounts from rail staff and discussion about the course. See page 18 for further details.

FURTHER INFO

We Listen campaign



Samaritans' *We Listen* awareness raising campaign is supported by Network Rail and the wider rail industry. The campaign looks to raise awareness and increase understanding of Samaritans so that people see contacting

Samaritans as a positive, empowering first step in seeking help and taking control of their lives. The campaign is primarily delivered through posters at stations but is also supported by digital content and is used outside of the railways in local communities to target at risk groups.

Campaign materials are available to stations, free of charge, in the following sizes and formats:

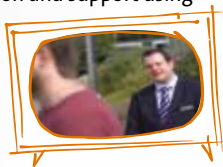
- Double royal, A3, A4 posters.
- A5 sticky-backed posters.
- Credit card sized contact cards.
- Affected by a railway incident A5 leaflet.
- Suicide prevention handbook and tactics card.

To order materials for your station, contact railcompanies@samaritans.org

The Learning Tool videos

The *Suicide Prevention and Support on the Railway: Learning Tool* features 10 videos that seek to raise awareness of suicide prevention and support using inspiring accounts from rail staff across England, Scotland and Wales.

To view the videos visit
www.nspsglearningtool.co.uk



Local Samaritans contact details

Enter branch contact details here:

Thank you...

Whilst we may never know the mid to long term outcome for the people we help, what we do know is that we were there for them at a point in their lives of extreme vulnerability and this can and does make a huge positive difference in helping turn their lives around.



For more information from Network Rail on the partnership, or to submit your comments and feedback, please email suicidepreventionprogramme@networkrail.co.uk

For Samaritans attendance
at your station call:

07548 720 511[†]

[†] Please see page 13 before calling

Talk to us any time you like,
in your own way – about
whatever's getting to you.



116 123

FREE

This number is **FREE** to call



jo@samaritans.org



samaritans.org

SAMARITANS

A registered charity