

# Artists tea-m up to depict power of talking for Samaritans 'Brew Monday' station takeover

January 17, 2022



Today Samaritans, the leading suicide prevention charity, is calling on rail passengers to forget so-called Blue Monday and make time for a cuppa and a chat with someone they care about for the charity's alternative 'Brew Monday', supported by Network Rail and the wider rail industry.



Whilst the third Monday in January is supposedly the most difficult day of the year, Samaritans volunteers know that people can find themselves struggling at any time. The main concerns that volunteers hear from those that contact the charity include mental health and illness (46%), family (34%) and loneliness (28%) all year round\*.

So, after last year's Brew Monday campaign turned virtual due to pandemic restrictions, Samaritans volunteers are now making their return to station events across the UK to show their support for those using the rail network, including our vital key workers and rail staff, and highlighting the importance of reaching out to talk.

Launching at London Waterloo station today, Samaritans volunteers will be on hand providing tea bags and tips on how to be a better listener. The charity and Network Rail have also come together with artists with their own mental health challenges to create inspiring artwork depicting the power of connection, drawn from their own experiences.

In a bid to uplift and inspire rail users as pandemic uncertainties continue, artwork by **Britain's Got Talent** contestant and food artist **Nathan Wyburn**, former volunteer, **illustrator and author James Norbury**, and **contemporary wellbeing artist Emelie Hryhoruk**, who has called Samaritans for support in the past, will be featured on digital screens across Network Rail stations from today, 17 January.



James Norbury is a former Samaritans volunteer who recently published his first illustrated book *Big Panda & Tiny Dragon* to share some of the ideas that helped him through difficult times. James' Brew Monday illustration includes a heartfelt penned message reading "Life is like a pot of tea...Share it if you can."

Speaking about his own experience, James said: "Having struggled with intrusive thoughts for years, I've felt the pain and sadness that many callers experience. Talking can help you feel less alone and bring the problems sitting at the back of your head in the shadowy darkness, into the light. Things can often feel much more tangible, rather than a confusing awful mess. Talking about how you feel is a great tonic."

Nathan Wyburn of Britain's Got Talent fame has had his own mental health struggles and anxiety which at times stalled his creativity, but he credits the power of talking in his recovery. Nathan is known for creating art with food, including portraits of Mariah Carey and Tim Peake, so for Brew Monday Nathan created an uplifting portrait showing two people connecting, made with coffee and biscuits.



Nathan said: "Having suffered with anxiety, panic attacks and bouts of depression for many years, I know first-hand how difficult it can be to do anything in those moments, let alone talk – but take it from me, once you open up about how you're feeling, it can be life-changing. I'm so proud to be supporting Brew Monday and really hope my coffee art catches someone's eye and makes them think to pick up the phone to a friend. You never know just how much a simple conversation could help someone."

Julie Bentley, Samaritans' CEO, said: "We're so grateful to the rail industry for their support of Brew Monday again this year. Throughout the various lockdowns and restrictions, the pandemic has shown us that staying connected with others has been a vital part of getting people through difficult times. We know the impact talking and listening can have, and a cup of tea and a chat won't solve everything, but it can be a start. You don't have to have all the answers or solutions, you just need to listen and start a conversation which could just be the support that someone needs."

Andrew Haines, chief executive of Network Rail, said: "Looking after our passengers and staff is so important to our railway family and I know there is more we can all do to help those in crisis. Every one of us has the skills to help someone in need and Brew Monday is a powerful reminder of the simple steps we can take. I am really pleased we are once again able to join Samaritans in our stations to reach out to commuters and those who may be struggling with their mental health."

Rail minister Wendy Morton said: "Every year Brew Monday is a great success and shows how something as small as sitting down and talking to someone over a cup of tea can make all the difference. It makes me immensely proud to see the hard work put in by the rail industry, in collaboration with the Samaritans, to make sure staff can be there for those people most in need."

Hundreds of Samaritans volunteers will be out at their local train stations across the UK throughout January. Larger station events will be held at London Waterloo today (17 January) before moving to Liverpool Lime Street\*\*. Volunteers there will be joined by artist Nathan Wyburn who will create an inspiring Brew Monday art piece live in station using coffee and biscuits.

Paul Spiers, Liverpool Lime Street station manager, said: "We're really proud to be supporting Samaritans' Brew Monday campaign again this year and spreading this important message to our passengers. Samaritans has worked in partnership with Network Rail and the wider rail industry for over 10 years encouraging the public and our staff to recognise the power of human connection and start a conversation which could save a life. So, we're putting that into practice this Brew Monday and this coming Friday at the station by saying -out with the blue and in with the brew!"

Another station volunteers are visiting is Birmingham New Street. Patrick Power, head of stations for Network Rail's Central route, said: "We're really proud to be supporting Samaritans' Brew Monday campaign again this year and spreading this important message to our passengers. Samaritans has worked in partnership with Network Rail and the wider rail industry for over 10 years encouraging the public and our staff to recognise the power of human connection and start a conversation which could save a life. So, we're putting that into practice this Brew Monday and saying out with the blue and in with the brew!"

Train operators supporting the event include TransPennine Express and Greater Anglia. Kathryn O'Brien, customer experience director for TransPennine Express said: "While the winter months and shorter days can be a struggle for some, it's really important that we check in with one another, whatever the time of year and we are proud to be supporting Samaritans' Brew Monday campaign by giving our customers a little treat.

"Anyone purchasing a hot drink onboard one of our services on Monday 17th January 2022 will receive this

totally free of charge, with the drinks available on a first come, first served basis.”

Matt Wakefield, Greater Anglia head of safety, security and sustainability, said: “We’re really proud to be supporting Samaritans’ Brew Monday campaign at Norwich, Cambridge, Cambridge North and Ely stations and spreading this important message to our passengers. Samaritans has worked in partnership with the wider rail industry for more than 10 years encouraging the public and our staff to recognise the power of human connection and start a conversation which could save a life.”

The Brew Monday support comes as part of the rail industry’s suicide prevention programme. Samaritans has worked in partnership with Network Rail, on behalf of the rail industry, to reduce suicides on the railway for over 10 years, having trained over 24,000 rail and BTP staff to look out for passengers and make conversation if they feel someone might need help.

Avanti West Coast has also joined the rail industry to support Brew Monday by welcoming Samaritans volunteers to its stations today (Monday 17 January).

Joanna Buckley, Community Manager at Avanti West Coast, said: “Mental health is important to our people and the communities we serve and through our work with Samaritans we know that small actions can make a huge difference. So, we’re pleased to be welcoming local Samaritans groups to our stations for their Brew Monday campaign, which is designed to get people talking over a cuppa.”

Find out more at [samaritans.org/brewmonday](https://samaritans.org/brewmonday) or join the conversation on social media using #BrewMonday and why not [make a donation](#) while you’re there, you could help save a life.

\*From December 2020 – November 2021, 46% of contacts that reached out to Samaritans for emotional support mentioned mental health and illness, 34% mentioned family and 28% mentioned loneliness as a concern.

\*\* Station events held are within current government guidelines with support from Network Rail, the wider rail industry and Samaritans volunteers, including larger events at the below locations:

- London Waterloo – Monday 17 January
- Stevenage – Monday 17 January
- Liverpool Lime Street – Friday 21 January

*Photo credit: Samaritans*