

Rail industry to help break silence with Samaritans this Christmas

December 6, 2022



Network Rail and the wider rail industry is joining **Samaritans** to raise awareness that rail staff and passengers alike don't need to struggle alone.

Samaritans' new winter campaign #BreaktheSilence is encouraging people to open up about their struggles with mental health and suicidal feelings. Every 90 minutes in the UK, someone dies by suicide, but talking saves lives.

Now, the rail industry is supporting the charity to ensure staff and passengers know Samaritans are on-hand to provide emotional support throughout the festive season. 13,000 listening volunteers at Samaritans branches across the UK and Ireland are expected to answer calls for help from people feeling overwhelmed this winter. Whilst last year, Samaritans volunteers responded to 244,254 calls in the UK and Ireland over the festive period.

As part of the rail industry's suicide prevention programme and Network Rail partnership with the charity, rail companies are being encouraged to raise awareness of the campaign and the charity's vital helpline by displaying posters across the UK network and internally for their staff – so they know support is at hand

should they need a listening ear.

One rail industry worker who knows first-hand how talking can save lives, is Shane, a Mobile Operations Manager for Network Rail. Shane was recently awarded a Samaritans Lifesaver Award at the Rail Staff Awards 2022 for his inspiring action when he helped a suicidal man on the railway in December 2021, simply through the power of talking and opening up about his own struggles.

Shane said: "Physically he was fine, but I could tell mentally he was in a really dark place. We got talking and he told me he'd been through a bad relationship breakdown. I wanted to build trust with him and so I opened up about my own experience with my mental health, which he was able to relate to and see that we had some common ground. We'd been speaking for about 45 minutes and he turned to me and said 'I'm sorry for what you've been through, I have a 13 year old son and the thought of not seeing him again has just dawned on me'. He came down and we hugged it out."

On the importance of looking after our mental health, he added: "My own mental health has been a lot better now that I've found the tools to cope. Whether it's talking therapy, medication or the gym - you've got to find what suits you. It's so important to open up about things that are difficult, especially as men as well, now more than ever, we need to say if we're not okay and know there is help out there."

Shane is encouraging rail staff to support the charity this festive season to keep Samaritans here for people when they are ready to break their silence: "We always make sure we've got Samaritans cards on us and in our van so we can signpost anyone we see who might need help."

Olivia Cayley, Head of Rail at Samaritans, said: "Whilst many look forward to the festive period, at Samaritans we know that many people find it a particularly challenging time - with the added societal pressure to put on a brave face. But that's why we're encouraging people to break their silence and talk about their feelings, especially if they are feeling mentally low or suicidal. Our volunteers are here 24/7 and available to listen for free on 116 123. A huge thank you as always to the rail industry in supporting us to get this important message out there. Talking really can save lives."

Louise McNally, Suicide and Trespass Prevention Lead, Network Rail said: "Whatever challenges you're facing this Christmas, it's so important that we continue to look out for each other and ourselves. Samaritans and its team of volunteers are here to listen and provide round the clock support."

For more information on how your organisation can get involved in Samaritans winter campaign, email railcompanies@samaritans.org. Making a donation as little as £5 will help Samaritans' volunteers answer a call for help from someone struggling this winter. To help Samaritans listening volunteers continue to be there for people, visit [Samaritans.org/silence](https://www.samaritans.org/silence).

When life is difficult, Samaritans are here - day or night, 365 days a year. You can call them for free on 116 123, email them at jo@samaritans.org, or visit www.samaritans.org for more information.