

Samaritans trains 25,000 staff to save lives

April 21, 2022



Samaritans' partnership with Network Rail and the wider rail industry has seen more than 25,000 staff being trained to identify and help vulnerable people.

The milestone means over one in five staff in the industry, including at Network Rail, British transport police and train operators, have taken part in the charity's 'Managing Suicidal Contacts' course.

Since the partnership began in 2010, Samaritans has run around 1900 courses across Britain, to give rail employees the confidence and skills to look out for vulnerable people, teaching them how to start a conversation to get them to safety and onto further support.

In the past year, rail staff have helped more than 650 people to safety, potentially saving their life. As pandemic uncertainties continue, Samaritans is urging more staff to sign up to the free training, to help the charity be there for those who are struggling to cope.

I knew something was wrong.
I wasn't sure what to say, so I asked



**Hi, where
can I get a
coffee?"**

And that's all it took

If you think someone might need help, trust your instincts
and start a conversation. You could save a life.

Find out more at samaritans.org/smalltalksaveslives

#SmallTalkSavesLives

A registered charity



in partnership with



Samaritans also offers a Trauma Support Training course aimed at drivers and driver managers to support staff who may have experienced traumatic incidents and look after their own mental health.

Mobile Security Officer Karl, age 31, from Lingwood Security Management in partnership with Network Rail, was the 25000th delegate to do Samaritans' suicide prevention training this year. Three weeks later, Karl helped save a man's life.

Karl said: "My colleague and I were patrolling one of our train stations and we noticed a man sat down in the platform shelter. He was leant over and had his head in his arms crying. We went over and asked him if he was alright, and he said 'no I'm upset, I don't want to be here anymore' – so I knew we had to stay with him and try and help him.

"We were talking for about 20 or 30 minutes, but he was shivering. I said he could get warm inside my truck round the corner. He was hesitant at first, but he agreed to come with us. He didn't stop crying the whole time we were with him. We called for an ambulance and just before he got in, he threw his arms around me and thanked me and my colleague. I was so happy that we saved a life that day and that's thanks to the Samaritans course."

Karl added: "Mental health and looking out for people is really important to me. I went through a bad stage myself a few years ago and from my personal experience of being at the lowest of the low and having people, my partner and my mates, there for me to talk to and raise me up again, I'm so much stronger for it. I know I didn't speak about it until it was almost too late. Since then, I just want to encourage others to

talk, especially men.”

GWR Train Manager Kim, age 24, also helped a distressed woman who she saw on a train and wants to encourage other staff, particularly her fellow train crew colleagues, to do the training. Kim received a Gold Award from GWR for her bravery and life-saving intervention.

Kim said: “The intervention I did last year and the young woman I saved will always stay with me – I’ll never ever forget her. I was just going through the train as I usually do, checking tickets, and I saw a young woman sat with her legs crunched up and I noticed she looked really upset. It was during the pandemic, so I asked if I was okay to sit down next to her and I asked her where she was travelling to. She told me she was going away because she wanted to kill herself. I knew I just had to keep talking to her and keep her with me so she was safe and wouldn’t try to run off the train and harm herself at the next stop. I continued to chat to her and was able to call our control centre who arranged for BTP officers to come and see her.

“At the next stop the police officers got on but she didn’t want to talk to them, she only wanted to talk to me. We agreed that one police officer would travel the rest of the way with us. We got to the end destination and local police officers caught up with her there, so I knew she was in safe hands. I hadn’t been a train manager for very long and afterwards, I saw another guard who had been on my training with me and I just burst into tears. I phoned my mum afterwards and told her and she was really proud of me. The following day I saw the BTP officer who had travelled with us and I asked if he knew what had happened to her and he said she was taken to a place to get help. I was so relieved and realised I basically saved her life because I called for the police to intervene, otherwise she could have walked away and we wouldn’t know if she was alive.

“Since that happened, I feel so strongly about encouraging other train crews to learn and do the training. We need to go through the train and pick out those people that just need somebody to talk to and somebody to offload to.”

Samaritans Head of Rail Programme Olivia Cayley said: “We’re so grateful to the rail industry and inspired by their commitment to look out for others every day and save lives. This milestone is a testament to our invaluable 12-year partnership. We’re always looking for more ways to adapt and provide further support to rail staff, giving them the skills and building their confidence. We worked hard over the pandemic years to move our training online to reach staff virtually and are developing guidance for those that may be handling conversations with vulnerable people in remote social media or customer service roles.

“We know the pandemic has had a huge impact on the nation’s mental health and that will be felt for a long time – but suicide is preventable, and it’s everybody’s business. So please get in touch if you’d like to learn more and build those skills that you use every day – simply talking and looking out for passengers safety – which could save a life.”

Louise McNally, suicide prevention and trespass lead at Network Rail said: “Suicide is not inevitable and thanks to the work of the rail industry and our partners like Samaritans we have made significant strides tackling these tragic events on and around the railways. This 25,000 milestone is a fantastic achievement and we look forward to seeing even more lives positively impacted as a result of the wide range of training

options available to rail industry staff to identify and support vulnerable people.”

Alan Lingwood, Managing Director of Lingwood Security, said: “I am extremely proud of the teams, especially Karl who has been an asset to the project since day one. We have previously seen great results when working on these preventative projects with Network Rail, Samaritans and the British Transport Police so it is great that these results are being recognised throughout the organisations. It is a privilege to be involved and to be taking our share of responsibility for safety and security on the nation’s railway network for the public. We have built up a great relationship with Samaritans whilst delivering the courses and sharing awareness. I hope that Lingwood Security Management can continue to play a vital role in keeping our railways, and the people who use them, safe and secure.”

For more information and to sign up to one of Samaritans free courses, please email railcompanies@samaritans.org

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