

How to save lives

➤ Samaritans' guide to how politicians can prevent suicide



6,507 suicides
were registered in
the UK last year.

Suicide is the leading cause of death of men under 50 and young people aged 16-24. It kills three times more people than road accidents.

It is a gender and inequality issue. The poorest men living in the most deprived areas are ten times more likely to take their own lives than the wealthiest living in the most affluent areas.

This year, rates in the UK have risen for the first time since 2013. Middle-aged men remain the highest risk group, and rates among young people are rising. The suicide rate for young women is now at its **highest rate on record**.

Every single one of these deaths was a tragedy that devastated families, friends and communities.

Yet, suicide is preventable, not inevitable.

Samaritans' vision is that fewer people die by suicide.

Realising this vision is everyone's business, and politicians all have a part to play in saving lives, whether that's by influencing party policy, pushing for change in their constituency, or keeping the issue on the agenda in Parliament.

Suicide prevention needs to go beyond mental health services

- Around two-thirds of people who take their own lives are **not in touch with mental health services** in the year before they die.
- **We need a specific plan**, backed with proper funding, for reaching and supporting these people. All Government departments need to take responsibility for suicide prevention, using every route available to them, for example, through debt advisors and housing associations, to reach people on low incomes at risk.

Much more to be done to reach less well-off, middle-aged men

- Middle-aged men on low incomes have been the highest risk group for suicide for many years. Despite this, **far too little is known** about what really works to support this group when they are struggling.
- We need evidence-based services which are built on an understanding of how best to reach this group and **what they actually want**, supporting them to deal with the full range of issues they're facing.

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We have to prioritise self-harm

- Levels of self-harm are **rising among young people**. In England, the proportion of people saying they had self-harmed at some point in their lives nearly tripled between 2000 and 2014 to over 6 per cent.
- The specialist support that young people need **just doesn't exist** in many cases. The great majority of people who have self-harmed never receive formal medical support, and so the issue stays largely hidden in communities.
- Although most people who self-harm don't go on to take their own lives, it is a strong predictor of future suicide; many people who take their own lives have self-harmed in the past. Self-harm is a sign of severe emotional distress, and **everyone who self-harms should have access to support** to help them identify and address the reasons for their distress, and find alternative coping mechanisms.

Local suicide prevention efforts need more funding

- A recent Samaritans study found that there's still a real gap between local councils' suicide prevention plans and what is actually being delivered with ever more stretched resources.
- **Councils must be funded** to effectively implement their suicide prevention plans and share information and best practice with each other. They also need the resources to provide services that address the risk factors for suicide, such as substance misuse and debt.

Samaritans are open 24 hours a day, every day of the year

The online environment needs to be made safer

- Harmful content relating to suicide and self-harm is **far too easily accessible online**. We want to see this content minimised, while opportunities for support and help online are maximised.
- As well as creating a new online regulator and standards for the UK, the Government should be **leading international action** to set out a framework for a suicide-safer internet. Without this comprehensive, international approach, vulnerable people will remain at risk.

For many people, Samaritans are the **only source of support** at their most difficult moments.

Samaritans answers a call for help every **6 seconds**

We need the continued support of the Government for our vital work

In 2018, the UK Government announced it would provide funding for Samaritans' helpline for four years, meeting around 10% of the total helpline costs.

We're calling on any future Government to continue funding our helpline so we can ensure there's always someone there for anyone who's struggling to cope.

For further information on how you can help prevent suicide and materials to show your support

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