

Suicide prevention and support on the railway

Your pocket handbook



SAMARITANS

INTRODUCTION

- 3** The programme and your handbook

PREVENTING AN INCIDENT

- 4** Barriers and myths
- 5** Intervening
- 7** Supporting
- 8** Reporting
- 9** Learning more: Managing Suicidal Contacts
- 10** Quick reference guide

RECOVERING FROM AN INCIDENT

- 12** Supporting others
- 14** Supporting you
- 16** Learning more: Trauma Support Training

FURTHER INFO

- 17** Samaritans' Real People, Real Stories campaign
- 18** The Learning Tool videos
- 18** Local Samaritans branch contact details

The programme and your handbook

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

This programme is supported by the whole of the rail industry, Samaritans, British Transport Police (BTP), 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 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.

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 for 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.

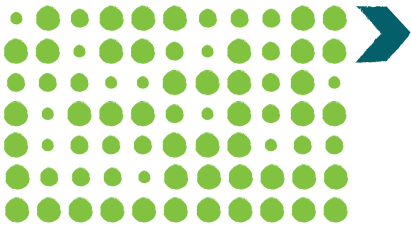
Intervening

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, first contact the signaller if there is a risk to the operational railway, and then the British Transport Police on **0300 123 9101**.



Supporting

You may not feel comfortable talking to a distressed and 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** (this number is free to call).
- 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.**[†]

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.

* See page 17 to order

† Please see page 13 before calling

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 Intelligence 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.

“Great course, really well done. I've recommended it to everyone I work with.”

ScotRail delegate

For more information on the MSC course and bookings, email: railcompanies@samaritans.org or visit [samaritans.org/railindustry](https://www.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.





TACTICS

For **identifying** people in need

If someone is considering suicide on the railway there aren't always clear warning signs. But below are some common behaviours to look out for:

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



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





TACTICS

For **approaching** people in need

If you feel someone may need support, trust your instincts. You can help someone by simply giving them an opportunity to talk. If it's safe to do so:

- Introduce yourself and encourage them to talk. Listen.
- Offer to talk in a safer environment.
- Offer Samaritans' support:

Call free anytime on

116 123

In an emergency contact:

- Signaller
- British Transport Police on **0300 123 9101**

Report interventions to your manager and email: interventions@samaritans.org

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[†]**

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

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.
- On request Samaritans can provide one-to-one emotional support, or can check in on staff more informally whilst also raising awareness of Samaritans services with passengers. Volunteers are happy to do either, or both.

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 four to six weeks to recover from a traumatic incident, but everyone is different. 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.



Real People, Real Stories campaign

Samaritans *Real People, Real Stories* campaign is supported by the whole of the rail industry. It uses stories from men who have experienced difficult times, and words that summarise these stories, to encourage others to seek support when times are tough.

Campaign materials are available to rail locations, free of charge in the following formats:

- Double royal, A3, A4 posters.
- A5 sticky-backed posters.
- Credit card sized contact cards.
- Digital versions also available.

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.npsglearningtool.co.uk



Local Samaritans contact details

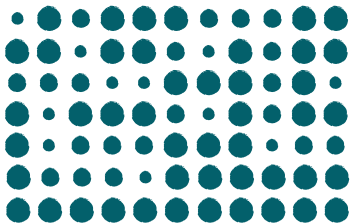
Enter branch contact details here:



Thank you...

Suicide is not inevitable, it is preventable.

Whilst we may never know the 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 about the industry's suicide prevention programme, or to submit your comments and feedback, email suicideprevention@raildeliverygroup.com

To request a visit from
Samaritans after a
traumatic incident, call:

07548 720 511[†]

[†] Please see page 13 before calling

Whatever you're facing,
we're here to listen.

Call free anytime on

116 123

Email jo@samaritans.org

Web samaritans.org

SAMARITANS

A registered charity