

SAMARITANS of BALLYMENA

Directors' Report

for the year ended 31 March 2024

The Directors hereby present their report and financial statements, together with the independent examiner's report, for the year ended 31 March 2024.

Structure, Governance and Management

Samaritans of Ballymena was incorporated on 21 April 2017 and is a Private Company, Limited by Guarantee.

Management, Internal Control and Risk Management

The management of the Charity is the responsibility of the Directors of the Charity, who are responsible for the implementation of Samaritans strategy and to support the work of Samaritan volunteers in the Charity.

The Directors have the overall responsibility for the system of internal control for the Charity, including the safety of Charity assets and the integrity of the accounting procedures.

Public Benefit Statement

Samaritans of Ballymena offer support to those at risk of suicide by being there to listen and encourage the recognition and exploration of their options. By doing so we aim to help people find ways of coping with their distress without choosing to die by suicide. We also seek to support those whose distress is less acute, in the hope that they will not reach the point of feeling that they wish to end their lives. We make our support available in many ways, including by telephone, live chat, email, and letter.

Samaritans' service is open to people who are suicidal, despairing or in distress. The branch provides a service primarily intended for the benefit of persons in Ballymena and the surrounding area. However, it also works with all Samaritans branches to ensure 24-hour availability of the service across the UK.

The Directors confirm that they have referred to the Charity Commission's guidance on public benefit when reviewing the Branch's aims and objectives in planning future activities.

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Objectives and Activities

The objects of the Charity are:

- (a) to enable persons in Ballymena and the surrounding area (but without specific limitations as to area) who are experiencing feelings of distress or despair, including those who may be at risk of suicide, to receive confidential emotional support at any time of the day or night in order to improve their emotional health and to reduce the incidence of suicide;
- (b) to promote a better understanding in society of suicide, suicidal behaviour and the value of expressing feelings which may otherwise lead to suicide or impaired emotional health; and
- (c) to collaborate with and support the Samaritans Central Charity and its affiliated branches in fulfilling these objectives.

Mission and Values

Samaritans' **Vision** is that fewer people die by suicide. We work to achieve this by making it our **Mission** to alleviate emotional distress and reduce the incidence of suicidal feelings and suicidal behaviour. We do this by:

- being available round the clock to provide emotional support for people who are experiencing feelings of emotional distress or despair, including those which may lead to suicide;
- reaching out to high-risk groups and communities to reduce the risk of suicide;
- working in partnership with other organisations, agencies and experts to achieve our Vision; and
- influencing public policy and raising awareness of the challenges of reducing suicide.

We are committed to the following **Values**:

Listening
Confidentiality
People making their own decisions
Being non-judgmental
Human Contact

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Outreach and Awareness Raising

Throughout the year Ballymena Samaritans provided outreach activities within the community, both to groups who may be at increased risk of suicide and to raise awareness of how to promote emotional wellbeing and good mental health. Our emphasis is on prevention, information giving and skills building.

In September and October 2023, we attended Freshers week in local colleges.

In November we were invited to a local grammar school where we gave a speech to a group of about 150, 6th formers. The speech dealt with problems associated with young people in today's society and how the Samaritans can provide non-judgmental support for everyone no matter what age.

In December we received an invitation to the Mayor's Parlour in recognition of the work we do raising awareness within the local community.

In February 2024 we spoke at the club for retired people and at a local U3A group.

Between February 22nd and 19th March, we were involved with the 'Small Talk Saves Lives' campaign where a group of volunteers went to Ballymena Train Station on a number of occasions to raise awareness among the community.

In March the Mid Antrim 150 club invited us to their 2 day annual show.

We were also asked back to participate in an event at one of the local colleges.

Financial Review

At the year-end, the charity had unrestricted funds of £173,841.

The principal sources of income were donations from the public. With the exception of the current building works, expenditure is focused on core service provision, together with property maintenance and running costs. Income and expenditure for the year were £18,744 and £33,275 respectively, resulting in a deficit of £14,531.

Principal Risks

The principal risks facing the branch are insufficient volunteers to keep the branch open and the possibility of breach of confidentiality.

- New volunteer recruitment is essential to ensure that we always have adequate cover. Through a comprehensive training programme, with the theory and role-play once again delivered face-to-face to 10 new volunteers, we have maintained 59 listening volunteers at the year end.
- Fundraising is also essential in order to meet running costs as well as to pay a contribution to the central charity towards the costs of the services and systems, without which branches could not operate.

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- A corner-stone of Samaritans' service is that all those who contact us are guaranteed absolute confidentiality. Policies and procedures, including DBS checks for all volunteers, are in place to reduce the possibility of inadvertent breach of confidentiality.

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Reserves policy

As branch income is heavily dependent on donations and fundraising activities it cannot be guaranteed. The directors consider that around 18 months of annual, non-capital, expenditure (£17,000) is an appropriate level of reserves to maintain in order to meet working capital needs. Expendable reserves, which excludes fixed assets, were £173,841 at the year-end (2023: £191,274).

Appointment of Directors

Directors are elected by the members of the Branch at the Annual General Meeting. Appointment of the Director is subject to approval by the Samaritans Central Charity.

Organisational Structure

The Branch Board, which is responsible for the day-to-day management of the charity, meets on a monthly basis.

Samaritans of Ballymena is a recognised branch of Samaritans, a company limited by guarantee (No 757372), having its registered office at The Upper Mill, Kingston Road, Ewell, Surrey KT17 2AF.

The Branch operates entirely through its dedicated volunteers without whom the service could not be provided.

Induction and Training of Directors

Directors are inducted and trained in accordance with Samaritans' national policy.

Training and new recruits

Two training programmes were completed this year, with 10 new recruits completing their training and being registered on the Register of Members. Six new recruits were selected for the spring 2024 training programme.

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Statement of responsibilities of members of the Board in respect of Financial Statements

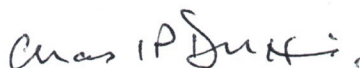
The Trustees (who are also the Directors of Samaritans of Ballymena for the purposes of company law) are responsible for preparing the Report of the Trustees and the financial statements in accordance with applicable law and United Kingdom Accounting Standards (United Kingdom Generally Accepted Accounting Practice) including Financial Reporting Standard 102 'The Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland'.

Company law requires the Trustees to prepare financial statements for each financial year, which give a true and fair view of the state of affairs of the charitable company and of the incoming resources and application of resources, including the income and expenditure, of the charitable company for that period. In preparing those financial statements, the Trustees are required to

- select suitable accounting policies and then apply them consistently;
- observe the methods and principles in the Charity SORP;
- make judgments and estimates that are reasonable and prudent;
- prepare the financial statements on the going concern basis unless it is inappropriate to presume that the charitable company will continue in business.

The Trustees are responsible for keeping proper accounting records which disclose with reasonable accuracy at any time the financial position of the charitable company and to enable them to ensure that the financial statements comply with the Companies Act 2006. They are also responsible for safeguarding the assets of the charitable company and hence for taking reasonable steps for the prevention and detection of fraud and other irregularities.

Approved at a meeting on 30 May 2024 and signed on behalf of the Board.



C Duffin
Branch Director

M. Higgins
Secretary

