

Befrienders Worldwide

Our members

• 401 member centres in 38 countries, across 6 continents

Argentina, Armenia, Australia, Brazil, Canada, China (Hong Kong), Cyprus, Denmark, Egypt, Estonia, France, Hungary, India, Italy, Japan, Lithuania, Malaysia, Mauritius, New Zealand, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Russia, Serbia & Montenegro, Singapore, South Africa, South Korea, Sri Lanka, St. Vincent & Grenadines, Sudan, Sweden, Thailand, Trinidad & Tobago, Ukraine, United Kingdom & Republic of Ireland, USA and Zimbabwe.

Befrienders Worldwide

- 24 hour listening for people in emotional distress, including those who are suicidal
- Confidential, anonymous, non-judgmental
- 31,000 trained volunteers
- 401 member centres
- 38 countries
- By phone, by email and face-to-face
- Outreach, education and training programmes

The global context

According to the World Health Organisation (WHO) there are around 1 million suicides every year – and for every suicide, there are approximately 20 attempted suicides. There are also many others who may not be suicidal, but urgently need access to appropriate emotional support services. It stipulates that policies and services should include reducing the number of people who develop mental health problems and eliminating stigma associated with mental or emotional problems, and also provide effective interventions to all in need. Volunteer centres play a crucial role in all of these.



Taiwan response by Samaritans in Taiwan



Volunteers meeting at conference

Contacts

Befrienders Worldwide / Samaritans

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Email: international@samaritans.org

Web: www.befrienders.org / www.samaritans.org

The Befrienders Website: www.befrienders.org

- lists over 1,200 helplines in 60 countries around the world
- has information in 17 languages
- is the principal global online resource for those seeking information on emotional help and support, suicide myths and warning signs, self harm, depression and how to help a suicidal friend/relative
- provides advice on setting up a new centre
- has general information including statistics and on suicide and the media.

International Network Befrienders Worldwide

Linking & promoting volunteer
emotional support centres



Outreach work by SAM in Parque Farroupilha, Porto Alegre, Brazil



Anna, a volunteer of Befrienders Mitchell's Plain, South Africa, with Karen from their UK born Taunton branch



Rural outreach by Samaritans volunteers in Sri Lanka



Telephone helpline in Kosovo



Befrienders Worldwide*

Who we are

Emotional Support Services

Centres provide help to those in need of emotional support, in order to reduce the number of people who die by suicide, and enable people to explore their feelings in a confidential and non-judgmental environment. Centres work with rural communities, prisoners, young people, older people and other 'at-risk' groups, in wider emotional health projects and telephone, face-to-face, email and text messaging services.

Befrienders Worldwide

Befrienders Worldwide is a membership network which provides a unique opportunity for the exchange of knowledge and experience, to enable affiliated centres to provide effective services to people in emotional distress. It also demonstrates the special role of volunteer listening services to external contacts, and helps raise awareness on issues of emotional health and suicidal behaviour with governments, relevant international and national organisations and the general public.

*(formerly Befrienders International, now co-ordinated by Samaritans UK & ROI)



A service provided by volunteers

Our network represents over 50 years of community listening services

We support not only people who are suicidal, but also those in general emotional distress. By positively promoting emotional health, centres aim to empower callers to find ways to improve their own emotional resilience or survivability.

Working in diverse cultures and regions, whether using telephone, email or through chatting under a tree in a remote village, the same basic principles are used. Volunteer-provided services are particularly appreciated for being anonymous, confidential and non-judgmental. The rights of callers to make their own decisions are respected.

People of all backgrounds and ages, when trained and managed, can effectively provide listening with empathy. Being from their local community, they also act as a bridge with more formal structures.

www.befrienders.org

Our aims

We aim to encourage the development of effective support services, and by sharing information and working together improve our ability to:

- ensure maximum access for callers to appropriate emotional support services
- demonstrate effective service policy and practice
- share information and offer mutual support
- influence policy both internally and externally
- encourage appropriate research.

Our mission is to provide confidential emotional support for people who are experiencing feelings of distress or despair, including those which may lead to suicide, and to share information and work together, for greater efficacy.

Our vision is for a society in which fewer people die by suicide, and where people are able to explore their own feelings, and acknowledge and respect the feelings of others.

Our values are based on these beliefs:

- the importance of having the opportunity to explore difficult feelings
- that being listened to, in confidence and accepted without prejudice, can alleviate despair and suicidal feelings
- that everyone has the right to make fundamental decisions about their own life.

Some activities

Our activities include:

- information-sharing on centres' activities and general developments in the sector
- the promotion of good practice and standards
- a twinning scheme linking centres across the world
- advice to new centres
- management and development of the www.befrienders.org website
- a platform at international events
- joint initiatives with other networks such as IFOTES (International Federation of Telephone Emergency Services) and LifeLine International
- the developing of more formalised links with the World Health Organisation
- collaborating with the International Association for Suicide Prevention.

