

# Mental health awareness week

13-19 May 2019 in the UK

Working note from Marcus Bicknell [marcus@bicknell.com](mailto:marcus@bicknell.com) 07748 111444

**Objective of this paper:** get advice from professionals on where best to orientate Marcus's energy.

**Trigger point:** national Mental Health Awareness Week in the UK (13-19 May 2019) and an accumulation of incidence of poor mental health or suicide of males in my family in the last 12 years.

Nearly 6,000 suicides occurred in the UK in 2017  
Three times as many men die as a result of suicide compared to women.  
It is the leading cause of death for men under 50 in the UK.

**Marcus's action plan:** subject to further advice from professionals in the next few days, I propose from now till 19<sup>th</sup> May...

- 1) Use my social media assets (motor racing, horse riding and one cultural/historical group, websites and Facebook pages) to get a series of messages out a) to increase awareness among people who could share the postings and talk to others and b) to let silent sufferers know that help is available and effective (please inform me the best choice of words to best connect with people on Facebook, Twitter, Messenger etc.)
- 2) To organise and host one or two events locally to me in South Bucks if I can find an expert willing to come and talk for a few minutes
- 3) To use both opportunities to raise funds, however modest, for the Samaritans and/or Mind.

**The problem:** men do not chat with each other about personal issues in the way women do and therefore have no regular forum for seeking health help if they need it. At the same time a macho attitude can make a man feel that he should not be reaching out for help on something as intangible as mental health. As a result, the proportion of males committing suicide without having reached out for help is much higher than in women.

**How to help:** men need to have better, more personal and more relevant communication about the services that are offered to them. A Google search reveals several organisations that can give counselling and other advice and they should be promoted. However, the web sites look formulaic and a bit frightening. If I were a man wondering whether I can get anonymous help I would be repelled by almost all these services' online presence. Phone a human being??? How embarrassing.

**Social media:** The importance of social media in most peoples lives has a negative effect for youth who find themselves bullied etc., but a positive effect on others because **Facebook Messenger** and **WhatsApp** provide secure platforms for confidential one-on-one text chat. Experience in many countries has shown that men

and women find they can see things in text chat that they would never dream of saying by voice to an online phone support counsellor.

**British support services seem to be lagging behind** foreign countries in terms of the more effective online communications paths used. Statistics show that online chat, that is, the caller having an online text chat with a support agent in real time and one-on-one has both reach and efficiency in bringing the right help to the sufferer. The advantages are a) response can be immediate rather than waiting for an email or someone to respond in a forum, b) many men are uncomfortable talking by voice about their problems and find text more neutral, c) apps like Facebook Messenger and WhatsApp, where the patient is text chatting to one person only, the support agent, are secure; every chat can be instantly deleted, leaving no trace to the ISP or authorities. Phone text messages(SMS)(which some UK support charities offer) are clunky, cannot be easily used on a tablet or PC with keyboard, and are traceable for ever.

Comparison: a service in Finland

The Finnish Association for Mental Health (FAMH) has 900 professional counsellors and trained volunteers in co-operation with other NGOs in centres around Finland working with people with mental health issues and crisis online and face to face. FAMH also runs online Crisis Center Tukinet

([www.tukinet.net](http://www.tukinet.net)) which has 1 million annual visits on the webpage. There were 15 500 online chat support conversations in Tukinet in 2018: 14 500 in... Sekasin-chat (Chat service for young people) 1000 in Solmussa-chat (chat service for adults). 8500 messages were written in support relationships and over 500 groups chat took place. ([www.mielenterveysseura.fi](http://www.mielenterveysseura.fi))



I was unable to find out on the web any comparable figures for online support in the UK and would be grateful for data if you have it. Are UK mental health support charities failing to adapt to the behaviour of young people quick enough?

**Can Marcus help on social media?** If I am helped with the correct messages I have a significant reach on Facebook, three web sites and Instagram. I can use messages in the next month, public postings, with a relevant image to ask my friends to share the message to all their contacts. This takes my reach of 3 to 5,000 up to mini tens or hundreds of thousands if the call to action is correctly phrased. Who is it that can tell me the phrasing to use to trigger such mass sharing?

I can use the same messaging on **one on one online chat**, in my case Messenger and WhatsApp. Again people respond better to a direct request rather than to a generic Facebook posting.

**Fundraising:** I could add an option on the Facebook and other postings for friends to donate to a professional charity. Is this effective? What does it deflect from the main objective which is to get a message to men that support is available?

**Local events.** In my local area is it effective to ask people to set up coffee mornings or evening drinks to hear about the issues and the ways of solving them? I feel I would **need professional support from someone who could speak** to such groups and answer questions from a position of authority. I have in mind using friends in special interest groups, in my case motor racing, horse-riding, student acting and maybe others to bring together a group of people who would have something in

common on which to start the meeting (and/or social media campaign). Is this affective? Certainly, the fact that I run three websites each with a Facebook page gives me some leverage across the fraternity of 2 to 5000 people.

**Poor response from national mental health charities.** I wrote to a 17 charities (Annex 3) which Googled well to “mental health men” but got only one properly-formulated response (see Annex 1). My outgoing email or online form response was... “I am not in need of help myself but I would like to try to help increase awareness, especially among men, of the need to talk to someone if their depressions are getting serious. I lost a younger brother to depression related issues in 2007. But how can I help? I see Mental Health Awareness Week Monday 13 to Sunday 19 May 2019 and have downloaded their pack. But the focus is on body Image this year, which is not a topic which switches me on. The issues suicidal men knowing they can get help may be more urgent. I am active on social media and run two non-related charitable associations, so I have people to talk to. How can I leverage this to get the message across? What would you advise?”. Unfortunately, most of the support charity web sites had poor contact mechanisms and responded with auto-responses which were of little use to me even after reading through their documentation.

**Mental Health Awareness Week: no leverage...** No web site of services listed by the NHS mentioned Mental Health Awareness Week on the front page except Mental Health Foundation

Overall, the question is where can my energy be best used and in what direction should it to be focused...

- a) helping UK support charities modernise their communications apps
- b) helping communicate the messages via my own social media?
- c) organising local events like coffee mornings or drinks?
- d) fund-raising online and at events
- e) providing case study material for PR-minded charities like the Samaritans.
- f) lobbying support charities to better use **Mental Health Awareness Week**

If you know this profession and the needs, your advice now would be most appreciated.

**End of body text**

### STATISTICS

Nearly 6,000 suicides occurred in the UK in 2017.

That figure means there is one death by suicide every two hours - and many more people are thought to attempt suicide. Statistics show that suicide rates across the United Kingdom as a whole have decreased over the past three years, with 5,965 suicides occurring in 2016 in the United Kingdom.<sup>1</sup> Scotland, however, saw a small increase in the past year to 727.<sup>1</sup>

Suicide is the leading cause of death among young people aged 20-34 years in the UK and it is considerably higher in men, with around three times as many men dying as a result of suicide compared to women. It is the leading cause of death for men under 50 in the UK. Those at highest risk are men aged between 40 and 44 years who have a rate of 24.1 deaths per 100,000 population.

One reason that men are more likely to complete suicide may be because they are less likely than women to ask for help or talk about depressive or suicidal feelings.<sup>3</sup> Recent statistics show that only 27% of people who died by suicide between 2005 and 2015 had been in contact with mental health services in the year before they died.<sup>4</sup>

Only 27% of people who died by suicide between 2005 and 2015 had been in contact with mental health services in the year before they died.<sup>4</sup> If appropriate and timely help and emotional support is offered to people who are experiencing deep unhappiness and distress, this can reduce the risk of them choosing to end their own life.

<https://www.mentalhealth.org.uk/a-to-z/s/suicide>

See also

<https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/birthsdeathsandmarriages/deaths/bulletins/suicidesintheunitedkingdom/2017registrations>

## Annex 2

**THE SAMARITANS** – a bright and effective response to me by email. I am in touch with her to whittle down to specific task I can provide to Catherine...

**Subject** : FW: Mental Health Awareness  
**Date** : Mon, 29 Apr 2019 12:01:00 +0100  
**Linked to** : Samaritans  
**From** : Catherine Allum <c.allum@samaritans.org>  
**To** : [marcus@bicknell.com](mailto:marcus@bicknell.com) <[marcus@bicknell.com](mailto:marcus@bicknell.com)>

Hi Marcus

Thanks for getting in touch with us.

It is great you would like to help support Samaritans.

I have a number of ideas, would you like to support us as a case study? This means if we get a press request for something we could potentially put you forward? Reading your note you could be a case study talking about what its like to lose a sibling? Would you be comfortable talking about this in public?

Another idea is to support our current campaign Real People Real Stories on your social media networks (see our Twitter and Facebook posts from 19.3.19 when we launched it), this will be finishing 5 May. More info on this here: <https://www.samaritans.org/support-us/campaign/real-people-real-stories/real-people-real-stories-press-pack/>

A final suggestion is that you can get in touch with your local branch of Samaritans and ask them about the opportunities they have available.

Best wishes  
Catherine

Catherine Allum  
Media Officer

Please note: I work Mondays and Tuesdays, please contact Emma (email:

[e.mcmahon@samaritans.org](mailto:e.mcmahon@samaritans.org)) my job share Wednesday to Friday

Samaritans, The Upper Mill, Kingston Road, Ewell, Surrey, KT17 2AF

Telephone: 020 8394 8251 | Switchboard: 020 8394 8300 | Mobile: 07483028747 | E-mail:

[c.allum@samaritans.org](mailto:c.allum@samaritans.org) | Web: <http://www.samaritans.org>

Facebook: [www.facebook.com/samaritanscharity](https://www.facebook.com/samaritanscharity) | Twitter: [www.twitter.com/samaritans](https://www.twitter.com/samaritans)

## Annex 3

The NHS web site lists the following support organisations

<https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/stress-anxiety-depression/mental-health-helplines/>

### Mental health helplines

#### Anxiety UK

Charity providing support if you've been diagnosed with an anxiety condition.

Phone: 03444 775 774 (Mon to Fri, 9.30am to 5.30pm)

Website: [www.anxietyuk.org.uk](http://www.anxietyuk.org.uk)

Marcus: no one-on-one online chat offered

#### Bipolar UK

A charity helping people living with manic depression or bipolar disorder.

Website: [www.bipolaruk.org.uk](http://www.bipolaruk.org.uk)

Marcus: no one-on-one online chat offered

#### CALM

CALM is the Campaign Against Living Miserably, for men aged 15 to 35.

Phone: 0800 58 58 58 (daily, 5pm to midnight)

Website: [www.thecalmzone.net](http://www.thecalmzone.net) Visit the [webchat page](#)

Marcus: no one-on-one online chat offered

Response: form email, nothing relevant.

#### Men's Health Forum

24/7 stress support for men by text, chat and email.

Website: [www.menshealthforum.org.uk](http://www.menshealthforum.org.uk)

Marcus: not able to find the chat line readily. Poor service function.

#### Mental Health Foundation

Provides information and support for anyone with mental health problems or learning disabilities.

Website: [www.mentalhealth.org.uk](http://www.mentalhealth.org.uk)

Marcus: no one-on-one online chat offered

Mental Health Awareness Week runs from 13 to 19 May. This year's theme is Body Image – how we think and feel about our bodies. Visit [mentalhealth.org.uk/mhaw](http://mentalhealth.org.uk/mhaw) to find out more and to see how you can get involved.

Marcus: That theme does not resonate with me nor would it with many men.

Events Team sent a holding email 25 April, nothing since

<https://www.mentalhealth.org.uk/a-to-z/s/suicide>

## Mind



Promotes the views and needs of people with mental health problems.

Phone: 0300 123 3393 (Mon to Fri, 9am to 6pm) 01494 463364

Website: [www.mind.org.uk](http://www.mind.org.uk) [supporterrelations@mind.org.uk](mailto:supporterrelations@mind.org.uk)

Response: holding email sent 25 April, then useful but generic email from **Ish Ladak** Supporter Care Coordinator (no resources)

Chat lines only open in office hours (thereafter referred to the Samaritans).

Fill out form on the website, get Bev team lead at High Wycombe for initial assessment. £15-£45 per session. Same time every week. Some evening slots. Waiting list till slot comes available. 50-60 minutes. 10 sessions to start with. 260 Desborough Road. Near LIDL. Spoke to Lucy replacing Katy. Kaya based in Aylesbury 07930 729606.

## No Panic

Voluntary charity offering support for sufferers of panic attacks and obsessive compulsive disorder (OCD). Offers a course to help overcome your phobia/OCD. Includes a helpline.

Phone: 0844 967 4848 (daily, 10am to 10pm)

Website: [www.nopanic.org.uk](http://www.nopanic.org.uk)

Marcus: no one-on-one online chat offered. It appears you have to be a member!!!

## OCD Action

Support for people with OCD. Includes information on treatment and online resources.

Phone: 0845 390 6232 (Mon to Fri, 9.30am to 5pm)

Website: [www.ocdaction.org.uk](http://www.ocdaction.org.uk)

Marcus: no one-on-one online chat offered

## OCD UK

A charity run by people with OCD, for people with OCD. Includes facts, news and treatments.

Phone: 0845 120 3778 (Mon to Fri, 9am to 5pm)

Website: [www.ocduk.org](http://www.ocduk.org)

Marcus: no one-on-one online chat offered

## PAPYRUS

Young suicide prevention society, for people under 35

Phone: HOPElineUK 0800 068 4141 (Mon to Fri, 10am to 5pm & 7 to 10pm.

Weekends 2 to 5pm) Text **07786 209697**

Website: [www.papyrus-uk.org](http://www.papyrus-uk.org) Email [pat@papyrus-uk.org](mailto:pat@papyrus-uk.org)

Marcus: no one-on-one online chat offered

Response: holding email received 25 April. Nothing further.

## Rethink Mental Illness

Support and advice for people living with mental illness.

Phone: 0300 5000 927 (Mon to Fri, 9.30am to 4pm)

Website: [www.rethink.org](http://www.rethink.org)

**Marcus: no one-on-one online chat offered**

## Samaritans



Confidential support for people experiencing feelings of distress or despair.

Phone: 116 123 (free 24-hour helpline)

Website: [www.samaritans.org.uk](http://www.samaritans.org.uk) Email [jo@samaritans.org](mailto:jo@samaritans.org)

**Marcus: Tweet chat (parties) are featured but not simple online one-on-one chat**

Response: holding email 25 April followed by personal response below

Hi Marcus

Thanks for getting in touch with us. It is great you would like to help support Samaritans.

I have a number of ideas, would you like to support us as a case study? This means if we get a press request for something we could potentially put you forward? Reading your note you could be a case study talking about what its like to lose a sibling? Would you be comfortable talking about this is in public?

Another idea is to support our current campaign Real People Real Stories on your social media networks (see our Twitter and Facebook posts from 19.3.19 when we launched it), this will be finishing 5 May. More info on this here:

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A final suggestion is that you can get in touch with your local branch of Samaritans and ask them about the opportunities they have available.

Best wishes, Catherine

Catherine Allum, Media Officer

Chiltern Samaritan Amersham, 149 Station Road, Amersham HP6 5DJ

<https://www.facebook.com/samaritanscharity/> is not enabled for Facebook Messenger.

It seems crazy that such a valid and widely-adopted communication method is denied to sufferers



## Services not listed by NHS

### Centre for Mental Health

[contact@centreformentalhealth.org.uk](mailto:contact@centreformentalhealth.org.uk)

Satu Satuleinen will put me in touch with a manager.

**Childline** – for children and young people under 19

Call 0800 1111 – the number won't show up on your phone bill

### Crisis text line

On <https://www.crisistextline.uk/faqs> it says " IS THERE ANY OTHER WAY TO REACH CRISIS TEXT LINE BESIDES TEXT? We are **not** yet available on messaging apps in the UK. We apologise for any inconvenience and invite you to use SMS to reach a Crisis Counsellor."

Wow. What's keeping them from introducing a new service which has no incremental cost?

**Depression and Suicidal Help for all** on Facebook

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/300147313515025/>

This is a closed group and the sufferer would have to join the group before messaging them for help. This makes no sense. What on earth would encourage them to make the page closed???

**The Silver Line** – for older people

Call 0800 4 70 80 90

### Time to Change

[info@time-to-change.org.uk](mailto:info@time-to-change.org.uk)

Response: form email received 25 April with web links, some possibly relevant.

Neither motivating nor useful.

### Mental Health First Aid and The Charlie Waller Memorial Trust

<https://www.dickmoore.org/>

I contacted him after the others, 1 May 2019.

**MentalHealthAwarenessAndPositiveMentalHealth** on Facebook

[www.facebook.com/MentalHealthAwarenessAndPositiveMentalHealth/?\\_tn\\_=%2Cd%2CP-](https://www.facebook.com/MentalHealthAwarenessAndPositiveMentalHealth/?_tn_=%2Cd%2CP-)

[R&eid=ARD7K9\\_vf2EBITJrC\\_0bh7hArb0KCW5NdeDnBqmHIAoHWOzPMIe0lzFAOSzamaFGSm- RGiANuSbT6Yp](https://www.facebook.com/MentalHealthAwarenessAndPositiveMentalHealth/?_tn_=%2Cd%2CP-R&eid=ARD7K9_vf2EBITJrC_0bh7hArb0KCW5NdeDnBqmHIAoHWOzPMIe0lzFAOSzamaFGSm- RGiANuSbT6Yp)

Facebook Messenger not enabled!!!

**!!Mental Health Matters!!** on Facebook

<https://www.facebook.com/mentalhealthmatters/>

I messaged them 15h40 1 May. As at 5<sup>th</sup> May NO RESPONSE RECEIVED!

**My Depression and Suicidal Thoughts** on Facebook

<https://www.facebook.com/mydepressionandsuicidalthoughts/>

I have messaged them at 15h37 1 May. As at 5<sup>th</sup> May NO RESPONSE RECEIVED!

### **SANE**

Emotional support, information and guidance for people affected by mental illness, their families and carers.

SANEline: 0300 304 7000 (daily, 4.30 to 10.30pm)

Textcare: comfort and care via text message, sent when the person needs it most:

<http://www.sane.org.uk/textcare>

Peer support forum: [www.sane.org.uk/supportforum](http://www.sane.org.uk/supportforum)

Website: [www.sane.org.uk/support](http://www.sane.org.uk/support)

Marcus: no one-on-one online chat offered

### **Suicide.** On Facebook

<https://www.facebook.com/ifeellikeendingitall/>

I have messaged them at 15h07 1 May. As at 5<sup>th</sup> May NO RESPONSE RECEIVED!

### **Suicidal.** On Facebook

<https://www.facebook.com/Suicidal-1433622390278579/>

I have messaged them at 15h35 1 May. As at 5<sup>th</sup> May NO RESPONSE RECEIVED!

### **Suicidal P** on Facebook

<https://www.facebook.com/suicidalp>

I have messaged them at 15h49 1 May. As at 5<sup>th</sup> May NO RESPONSE RECEIVED!

### **YoungMinds**

Information on child and adolescent mental health. Services for parents and professionals.

Phone: Parents' helpline 0808 802 5544 (Mon to Fri, 9.30am to 4pm)

Website: [www.youngminds.org.uk](http://www.youngminds.org.uk)

Marcus: no one-on-one online chat offered

## Annex 4

Further notes on social media and messaging

Satu Sutaleinen, Finnish Mental Health Association 1May2019...

“also worth mentioning, in Finland youth don’t use Facebook that much. Adults do. Social media platforms used among 13-29 year old are (in order of popularity) WhatsApp, YouTube, Instagram, Snapchat, Spotify, Facebook, Facebook Messenger, Pinterest, Steam ja Discord. 89 % uses WhatsApp, YouTube 88 % and Instagram 79 %

“youtube has comments, as do instagram and snapchat is totally conversations (voice messages / videos)

“**discord** is what Sekasin Gaming uses, very popular among players, we have 10 500 youth there on our server. that was Sekasin Discord Server - 10 500 youth has joined that server. Different Service than sekasin chat. 10 500 members on that server. It’s like community. You join servers. Servers have different #channels you can write or talk in

“Sekasin chat has 23 people on queue at the moment, the average queueing time for the past month has been 1 hour