

Working with Samaritans to support Listeners in Stage 4 regimes

Listener schemes are more important than ever now, but many are suspended or operating with reduced capacity because the number of active Listeners is lower than usual.

Training and support visits by Samaritans volunteers are permitted where local circumstances allow, and the local branch is able to maintain them. Where they are not possible it is important to continue to work closely with Samaritans to support Listener schemes. You will need to consider infection control and cohorting issues as you follow this guidance.



Work with your local Samaritans branch

Safety teams should be in regular contact with the local branch prison support officer. Encourage honest and open dialogue so that any issues (on either side) can be identified and addressed.

Make sure you follow the guidance on the respective responsibilities of each partner at https://intranet.noms.gsi.gov.uk/__data/assets/file/0014/701510/Listener-scheme-Checklist.pdf

If you have any problems that can't be resolved between the prison and local branch, involve your group safety lead who can liaise with the Samaritans regional prison support officer.

Work with Samaritans to refresh promotional materials around the prison.



Facilitate support for Listeners from Samaritans

Wherever possible arrange for Samaritans to continue support visits.

Many Listeners have been operating with increased workloads and reduced levels of support, and this will have had an impact emotionally.

It is vital that we put in place arrangements for them to debrief with Samaritans volunteers and encourage them to do so. This is very important for new Listeners too, so make sure this is factored in when planning recruitment and training.

If support visits are not possible, other means of support (private video/phone calls) should be provided at no cost to Listeners.



Recruiting and training new Listeners

Promote the scheme, encourage residents to volunteer and make sure that you are using the latest application form.

Where possible use phone or video interviews with Samaritans volunteers.

Discuss training options with the local branch:

If visits are possible, consider how best to facilitate training in a Covid-secure way.

If visits are not possible, consider how best to facilitate remote training using local IT and in a Covid-secure way.



Manage the scheme safely

Discuss with local branch the capacity of the Listeners, ensuring that the scheme is not trying to deliver too much.

Where necessary, think about managing demand on the service, by limiting access to particular times, or to people supported by the ACCT process.

Telephone access to Samaritans must be consistently available and promoted as an alternative to a Listener.

Work with Samaritans to make sure that individual Listeners do not take on too much, and take regular time off. A rota system may be helpful.

For further guidance on the Listener scheme and working with Samaritans, go to <https://intranet.noms.gsi.gov.uk/support/safety/samaritans>
The Listener application form is available here: <https://intranet.noms.gsi.gov.uk/groups/safety/new-listener-application-form>

CONTACT US: safercustodypolicyandlearning@noms.gsi.gov.uk
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