

Samaritans Awareness Day

24 July 2023

**Police
Mutual**

Every year in July, Samaritans branches in the UK and Republic of Ireland hold local events to raise awareness of Samaritans, who are here to listen to anyone who's struggling to cope, at any time of the day or night.



Samaritans are encouraging people to become better listeners. **Samaritans Awareness Day** on 24 July is a great time to start and pledge to become a better listener. Click [here](#) for more details.

Taking care of your mental health is as important as taking care of your physical health.

Mental health problems affect around one in four people in any given year*. They range from common problems, such as [depression](#) and [anxiety](#), to rarer problems such as [schizophrenia](#) and [bipolar disorder](#)

Like adults, the emotional wellbeing of children and young people is just as important as their physical health. Good mental health will allow them to develop the resilience to cope with life's ups and downs and to grow into well-rounded, healthy adults.

For more details on supporting your children, read our Children's mental health guide [here](#).

It is important that we all as individuals do what we can to look after ourselves and each other. You may also have concerns about how others are coping.

Starting a conversation with someone around their mental health can feel daunting. You may be worried that you will say the wrong thing but remember saying nothing is far worse.

The more conversations we have about mental health the more barriers we can break down and the closer we'll come to ending mental health stigma and discrimination.

Here are some tips on helping others:

- Ask others how they are feeling.
- Ask someone twice how they are feeling, this will give them the opportunity to be honest and to realise that you genuinely want to know.
- Listen and don't judge, it's great that people are happy to talk to you about how they are feeling, so ensure you really listen to them.
- Ask how long they have felt this way. Ask if there is anything you can do to help.
- Ask what support they need. Provide them with details of professional organisations, who may be able to help.
- Treat them in the same way, don't change the way you act towards someone once you are aware of their poor mental health.
- Little gestures can have a big impact, this may be just meeting for a cuppa or going for a walk together.



Becoming a better listener can help you support loved ones who may be struggling to cope. You could help your loved ones talk about how they're feeling by improving the way you listen. It can also help improve your relationships with family, friends, and colleagues. Here are some tips on becoming a better listener.

Listen without being distracted – choose a suitable setting for the conversation and ensure you have plenty of time. Reduce distractions, by putting your phone away and focusing completely on the other person. If you're talking to someone on the phone, try doing it in a quiet place.

Listen without interrupting – try and remember that pauses are fine, you don't need to fill any silences. Be empathetic and take them seriously.

Body language – keep your body language open and non-confrontational and maintain eye contact.

Check in on loved ones – if you're concerned about a family member or friend, try to check in with them once or twice a week. Sometimes it can take a few tries to get someone to open up about how they're feeling, so don't give up.

Listen and communicate non-judgmentally – when we listen to another person it can remind us of elements of our own experiences. We then form opinions and make judgements on that basis. The more aware we become of this, the easier it is to pay attention to what the person is trying to say, instead of what we think they are saying. Communicating without judgment is essential to create a supportive environment. Summarising back what they are saying shows that you're listening.

Don't give advice – instead share sources of support, where necessary signpost to their GP and discuss self-care.

Research has shown that emergency services workers are twice as likely as the public to identify problems at work as the main cause of their mental health problems, but they are also significantly less likely to seek help. So it's even more important to look after your own mental health when working on the frontline.

Here are some tips:

Think about your purpose: Be clear about why you are doing this job.

Be clear on expectations: Make sure you know what is expected of you and whether it is realistic.

Keep your boundaries: Establish clear boundaries between work and personal life, don't take work home with you.

Talk to colleagues: Make time to talk to your colleagues about your experiences and share fears and concerns.

Value your own family and relationships: While work is important, your family and relationships need to be valued.

Exercise: Regular exercise can boost your self esteem, can help you concentrate, relax and increase your overall wellbeing.

Get plenty of sleep: Sleep helps regulate the chemicals in our brain that transmit information. These chemicals are important in managing our moods and emotions and an imbalance in those chemicals can result in us becoming depressed or anxious. Read our sleep guide [here](#).

Eat well: A balanced diet that is good for your physical wellbeing is also good for your mental wellbeing. Your brain needs a mix of nutrients to stay healthy and function well. Read our healthy eating guide [here](#).

Avoid alcohol: The numbing effects of drinking are only temporary and can often lead to mental health issues. It's advised that if you do drink, that you stay within the governing bodies recommended unit guidelines.

Keep in touch: It's good for you to catch up with friends and family face to face or over the phone.

Take a break: A change of scenery or pace is good for you.

Do something you're good at: Enjoying yourself can help beat stress

Care for others: Supporting others uplifts you as well as them.

Ask for help: If at times, life gets too much for you, it's important that you speak to someone, this may be a family member or trusted friend, your GP or a professional organisation, see the list at the end of this guide for details.

Mental health conversations have the power to make a big difference, but sometimes these conversations can bring up some difficult things that people may not have spoken about before. This might mean that they need some support.

If you feel a loved one, colleague or yourself need additional support, contact a GP, a counselling professional or one of the organisations listed here:

[NHS](#) [Samaritans](#) [Mind](#) [AnxietyUK](#) [Mental Health Foundation](#)

It's important to start talking about money worries before your situation gets worse. Talking about money will give you the confidence to get help and find out who can best advise you on any problems. It can give you a great sense of relief to share your problems, so you're not facing them alone. It's important to seek professional advice as soon as possible and not wait until it's more difficult to find a solution.

Worrying about money can negatively affect your mental health and for those people experiencing mental health problems it makes it harder to manage their finances. Problem debt can also be linked to suicide. For more information read our suicide awareness guide [here](#).



Police Mutual Services

Our Care Line Service provided by Health Assured can offer advice and information, helping with a range of concerns including emotional support.

Take a look at the e-portal or download the APP.

Health & Wellbeing e-portal

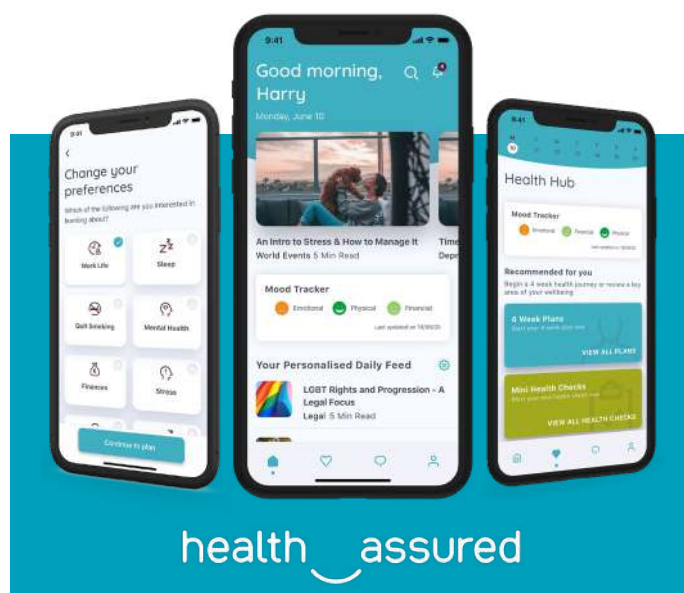
<https://healthassured.eap.co.uk>

Username: policemutual **Password:** careline

We've teamed up with **PayPlan****, one of the UK's leading free debt advice providers, who offer free and confidential advice to anyone in serious financial difficulties.

They're able to advise you on a range of debt solutions suited to your individual circumstances, helping to protect you and your family with a sustainable way to manage your debt.

Get free and confidential help to combat your debt, call **PayPlan**** on **0800 197 8433**.



Download the **Health Assured App** and register today - your code is **MHA107477**

Police Mutual

To read more of our wellbeing guides take a look at our Wellbeing Hub [here](#).

Call us 01543 441630
Visit policemutual.co.uk

We're open from
9am - 5pm Mon - Fri

*Time to Change. Attitudes to Mental Illness 2014 Research Report

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