



## **Samaritans and GAA Partnership – Samaritans Volunteers visiting local clubs**

Two years ago the GAA joined forces with Samaritans in a focused bid to tackle the stigma around mental health, and to encourage GAA members throughout Ireland to feel comfortable about seeking help. The two organisations were seen as a perfect fit for one another as they both have a nationwide presence and are very much volunteer led. Each has a wide range of members of all ages and walks of life, and are concerned with the health and wellbeing of the people of Ireland. Volunteers from both organisations have worked side by side to develop this partnership into an effective union that encourages GAA members of all ages to talk about their mental health and how they are feeling.

This partnership has since flourished with a lot of great work being done on both sides. The GAA has helped promote the Samaritans service and in turn, Samaritans have made themselves available to help educate local clubs about what we do and why we do it.

The liaison officers can deliver a short talk to clubs about Samaritans, looking after your mental health, and how and why people contact us. When they talk to players, coaches, club members, they stress that Samaritans is available to anyone who is struggling to cope and that a caller does not necessarily have to be suicidal to make contact, though some are. Most of the calls and emails are from people who may be lonely, confused, anxious and/or afraid for any number of reasons, including bullying, money problems, relationship issues, work/school/life pressures, etc. No matter the problem we feel that a person can benefit greatly from being given the space to talk about their concerns, to someone who really wants to listen.

This service is available 24 hours a day, every day of the year and it is free to call on 116 123.

If you feel your club would like to avail of one of these visits, contact the liaison officer directly to arrange a time and date. The talk can be given before/after a training session to a group of players, or to a larger audience of players, club members and parents depending on what you would like. The officer will come out to the clubhouse or changing rooms and chat about why people contact the Samaritans, why it is so important to look after your mental health in sport as in life, and the different ways you can talk to Samaritans in a confidential and non-judgemental environment.

Hopefully, through clubs embracing this great initiative and the publicity work of some of the GAA's high profile players, more and more of our friends and family will know that there is always a Samaritans volunteer waiting to listen, day or night, every day of the year. And through all of us bringing mental health out into the open, the sometimes difficult task of asking for help will not seem so daunting.

Samaritans is available round the clock, every single day of the year. They provide a safe place for anyone struggling to cope, whoever they are, however they feel, whatever life has done to them. Please free-call 116 123 in the Republic of Ireland or Northern Ireland or contact [jo@samaritans.org](mailto:jo@samaritans.org)

### Samaritans Liaison Officer

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