



Mental Health & Wellbeing

SEE INSIDE FOR:

- Groundbreaking research from RSSB
- The future of suicide prevention
- Mental health hero: Rizwan Javed
- Best practice for wellbeing from ORR

JACK BOSKETT.

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I knew something was wrong. I wasn't sure what to say, so I asked

"Hi, where can I get a coffee?"

And that's all it took

If you think someone might need help, trust your instincts and start a conversation. You could save a life.

If you don't feel comfortable speaking to the person yourself, find a member of staff or police officer. In an emergency, call 999.

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Welcome

What a journey the past year has been for us in the rail industry in terms of wellbeing.

Back in 2019 we knew we weren't doing enough in our industry to protect people's wellbeing. Pre-COVID, the suicide rate in our industry was 1.6 times above the national average and absenteeism due to health issues - mental and physical - was running at 4%. A survey we ran at Network Rail found that some 60% of its workforce had experienced mental health issues at some point. Given the significant health impacts of the pandemic, we could reasonably expect some of those figures to be higher today.

We've struggled as an industry to come to terms with this health issue since the first rails were laid in this country, with an attitude that health was an expendable casualty in our quest to ironically provide better journeys to make the lives of the general population less stressful.

But we're left picking up the pieces of that legacy, where accidents and traumatic events continue to leave a deep and lasting impact on the mental health of our people, whether it be witnessing serious injuries, or worse, on our train tracks, suffering the impact of occasional poor customer behaviour or being left with muscle and bone injuries due to the physical demands of the job.

We can't just sit by, shrug our shoulders and continue doing the same old thing, hoping things will miraculously improve. They won't.

That's why, with our colleagues at RSSB, suppliers and train operating colleagues, we came up with the idea of Rail Wellbeing Live, a focused cross-industry effort to bring together

people to talk about wellbeing, and ultimately improve the health and wellbeing of everyone who works in rail.

And that mission only became more crucial as COVID-19 swept in and created a mental and physical health crisis on a scale never seen before. Originally planned to be a physical event in 2020, of course with the advent of the pandemic, that quickly had to be adapted to a virtual event.

Through the power of the new virtual world, which grew exponentially as a result of COVID-19, we were able to reach some 13,000 people across more than 600 organisations, perhaps 10 times more than we would ever have been able to reach through a physical event, enabling more speakers, like mental health advocate and entertainer Ruby Wax, BBC *Breakfast's* resident doctor Dr Rangan Chatterjee and *Embarrassing Bodies* star Dr Dawn Harper, to join us.

We started with a series of warm-up events, Wellbeing Wednesdays, which ran on the first Wednesday of every month and introduced anyone who wanted to join to subjects such as musculoskeletal exercises for station and train staff, how to tackle fatigue or dealing with anxiety.

Then we had the main event in November, Rail Wellbeing Live. There were more than 140 sessions, and our mission was to bring fun and humour to what some can see as a very worthy and serious subject. People really responded to that, and our most attended event was Ruby Wax's, with 2,503 people tuning in to hear how to 'unfrazzle' your brain.

Other highlights included retired RMT General Secretary Mick Cash giving a deeply

personal interview about his mental health. Most of the content is still available to view at Rail Wellbeing Live on-demand. Indeed, there are a staggering 41 hours of speeches, Q&As, panel sessions and workshops now uploaded onto the Rail Wellbeing Live website (railwellbeinglive.co.uk) which I would encourage colleagues to go and check out. There's bound to be something there that will interest you, and ultimately, help improve your wellbeing.

And I'm delighted to say that, due to the overwhelming success of Rail Wellbeing Live, it is now an annual fixture in the industry calendar, with plans well-developed for this year's event on November 17-18. More details will follow soon on what to expect, but we'll be keeping it fun and virtual. So, wherever you work, on whatever shift, so long as you have a laptop or a mobile phone, whether company or personal, you can join us, and we really hope you do.

Our Wellbeing Wednesdays are still running too, and proving increasingly popular. Our last session involved Network Rail's Naomi Roycroft and GTR's Emma Pickard, speaking to Jonathan Prince from the Blue Ribbon Foundation about the top health concerns for men, lifestyle risks and how men can improve their health.

Don't forget to check in online - what you find might just help you become healthier and happier.



JOHN HALSALL
Chair of the Rail Wellbeing Alliance

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Stress analysis



RSSB Senior Work Psychologist JOANA FAUSTINO tells RAIL about the research being undertaken into the impact of mental illness in the rail industry - and what's being done about it

Great Western Railway staff go about their duties at Bristol Temple Meads on January 27. RSSB will shortly publish the results of the industry's first ever survey of mental health and wellbeing within the workforce. JACK BOSKETT.



“If a workforce is already stressed and then pushed even further then it will almost certainly have a negative effect.”

Joana Faustino, Senior Work Psychologist, RSSB

MIND to create two cost-effective, rail-specific and expert-led e-learning courses for line managers on Mental Health Awareness at Work and Managing Mental Health at Work.

RSSB is also encouraging companies and organisations to sign up to the Railway Mental Health Charter (RMHC).

Launched in May, the charter was developed by RSSB in collaboration with the industry's Mental Wellbeing Group and builds on work developed by Southeastern's Mental Health Lead Manager Lee Woolcott-Ellis.

The charter aims to provide the perfect framework and targeted actions for companies to promote, manage and support workforce mental wellbeing.

It is reviewed annually in order to encompass industry feedback and to ensure it remains aligned with best practice.

Faustino adds: "It can be quite daunting for companies to begin practically improving wellbeing and they might not always see why it is worth investing time and resources in it. That is why we have worked with Southeastern to provide a wraparound framework that is not difficult to implement and is very easy to understand.

"It provides a series of clear actions that shows companies where they are in their mental health journey, as well as further measures to implement that are relevant to them and which are both evidence-based and cost-effective."

Last but not least, Faustino says it is important to see mental health as one aspect of overall workforce health and as a part of a much wider industry health and safety strategy.

Leading Health and Safety on Britain's Railways identifies 12 key areas where health and safety need to be improved and is supported by Network Rail, train and freight operating companies, the supply chain and companies from all other parts of the rail sector.

Underpinning the strategy is the principle that a healthier workforce will deliver a safer railway.

A key mechanism to improving health and safety is also to improve the quality of people's work and by ensuring they have rewarding jobs that give them a sense of purpose, community and financial stability.

Faustino concludes: "People sometimes look at health and safety as different things, but if you have staff who are unwell then they will not work as effectively to deliver high-quality, efficient and safe services. You can't disentangle them both.

"If we want a better, safer railway then we need to holistically look at the health and wellbeing of staff, support our workforce and reduce the risk factors.

"Mental health plays a big part in that, and we now need to match a lot of great intentions with a better understanding of the problems and direct evidence-based actions to help manage it."

■ For more information on the above tools and resources available from RSSB and on the Railway Mental Health Charter, visit: rssb.co.uk/mental-wellbeing

Further reading

■ Supporting mental wellbeing during the pandemic - RAIL 908.

Interventions to reduce mental health issues

Work-related violence (WRV) and trauma is one of the 12 key areas identified in the industry's health and safety strategy and is also an established risk factor in triggering poor mental health.

Data gathered by RSSB points to a high prevalence of WRV in rail, with a report published in 2018 revealing that some 94.1% of frontline staff have experienced workplace abuse and more than 25% have experienced a physical assault.

Equipped with this data, the industry has spent the last three years collaborating to develop initiatives and evidence-based interventions.

This includes research into the use of body-worn cameras while also improving post-event care and support.

Faustino adds: "We know that WRV is a big issue following the survey we did

in 2018. But what we also found was that companies were generally doing their own thing to tackle it which was rarely evidence-based and meant that we had no consistency.

"We wanted to collate the best evidence possible on what strategies worked and to identify some effective interventions. What we discovered was that WRV is a complex phenomenon that should be tackled with a well-rounded plan."

A research project commissioned by RSSB to identify further promising workplace interventions and to review existing WRV training and incident management processes was published in May.

In addition, RSSB's *Annual Health and Safety Report* has shed light on how the risk of suffering WRV has been affected by the COVID-19 pandemic.

It is well established that mental health issues are all around us and that they can affect people in all walks of life.

In fact, NHS England estimates that one in four adults experiences a diagnosable mental health problem in any given year, making it the largest single cause of disability in the UK.

It follows, therefore, that rail employees experience issues, especially in light of the extraordinary stresses and strains posed by the Coronavirus pandemic.

We also know that poor mental health among rail employees is compounded by the challenges that are more specific to working in this sector, and the particular demands and working conditions that are often required.

RSSB Senior Work Psychologist Joana Faustino explains: "We have some data on how mental health has contributed to long-term sickness and absence, but companies don't generally collect any other data on mental health. That makes it much harder to compare the rail sector with other workforces and to have an overall industry understanding.

"But if we look at the unique stresses that come with shift work, performing public-facing and safety-critical roles, and potential exposure

to traumatic events, we know that they can all create issues from the ways in which people work and what is expected of them.

"We know that, theoretically, all these factors can have a direct impact on mental health, and we know that the exposure to these factors can increase the risk of developing mental health difficulties."

Attempts to quantify this risk have hitherto been difficult given the paucity of robust data. To help remedy this situation RSSB conducted the industry's first ever mental wellbeing survey between mid-August and late December 2020.

In partnership with the University of Surrey, RSSB has examined the exposure of the industry's workforce to psychological hazards and the prevalence of mental ill-health. It has also considered the impact of COVID-19 and any new working conditions that it has created.

According to Faustino, the results will be crucial in informing the industry's existing health and wellbeing strategy and in enabling more targeted interventions to be made to support those most at risk.

The survey had the support of the three largest rail unions and is due to report in late August or September.

"We should soon learn far more about the prevalence of poor mental health and gain a firm indication of how widespread it is in rail," she adds.

"People have struggled during the pandemic, but if a workforce is already stressed and then pushed even further then it will almost certainly have a negative effect. However, we will learn more from the survey and once we have overall industry data.

"Companies are already doing a lot to support employees, but rarely do we see any strategies come from hard data and that is something we would like to change. We will be able to share the overall data but develop it for some of the participating individual companies so that we no longer need to have a one-size-fits-all approach to mental health."

Faustino sees this more evidence-based way of tackling mental ill-health and wellbeing as a natural progression from the impressive efforts that have already been made to raise awareness and reduce stigma.

While talking about mental health is important and must be welcomed, Faustino says that the industry must now avoid falling into a pattern of raising awareness without backing it up with relevant actions.

No room for complacency

The rail industry's long-standing partnership with Samaritans has achieved some impressive results to date, but continues to adapt to meet the considerable challenges ahead. PAUL STEPHEN reports

A Great Western Railway service approaches Par on September 11 2020. Suicide remains a significant problem for the railway, but for every fatality an estimated six lives are saved by successful interventions from rail staff and passengers. PAUL BIGLAND/RAIL.

in the same year, it can be said that for every life lost another six were potentially saved. The lifesaving efforts of rail staff have been further increased by public-facing campaigns, including Small Talk Saves Lives, which was launched in 2017 to encourage passengers to trust their instincts and to have the confidence to approach and engage with people who could be having suicidal thoughts.

In terms of the latest contract, Peters told RAIL last summer how there was recognition from all parties that while the partnership was yielding impressive results, it nonetheless needed to evolve to meet several new and significant challenges (RAIL 908).

Primarily, this involved structural changes to the industry related to the devolution of Network Rail, and which provided a golden opportunity for local Samaritans branches to more closely work with NR's devolved route and regional businesses.

In accordance with this new way of working a dedicated rail team has since been recruited by Samaritans.

Its 13 personnel includes five regional development leads that are split across the various regions of the UK and which are deeply embedded to work closely with the local branches, BTP officers and NR route teams.

Meanwhile, there are also two full-time trainers, a data analyst and a dedicated media manager to co-ordinate suicide prevention activities among stakeholder communications teams and to extend the reach of industry campaigns.

The team is led by Head of Rail Olivia Cayley, who was brought into the newly created role to take a more strategic view of the partnership. As well as managing the rail team she is also responsible for relationship building, stakeholder management and guiding the vision of the partnership.

She tells RAIL: "Because of the new programme structure, 80% of the rail team were new starters when I joined Samaritans last October. There have been some big changes to have a regionally devolved team that can work and live in the areas they serve.

"The new model is crucial because suicide is not a static or stagnant issue. Until then we mainly had people based at our HQ in Surrey, which isn't a negative thing, but we were never going to have a team that could fulfil its potential if everyone was based in the same part of the UK."

She adds: "I knew nothing about rail previously and I've been on a massive learning curve, but the more I've learned in this sector the more fascinated I've become. I've already experienced so many people who want to get behind this cause and who have now become real experts.

"It's obvious to me that Samaritans and the rail industry have now

On April 1 2020, the rail industry's relationship with Samaritans entered into a new era with the renewal of a highly successful ten-year partnership.

Although entirely unforeseen, the start date of the new contract was given added prescience by coinciding with the UK's descent into its first nationwide Coronavirus lockdown barely a week earlier.

With physical and mental health immediately thrust to the top of the agenda, it was perhaps fortunate that efforts to improve wellbeing, enhance suicide prevention and

de-stigmatise mental health problems in the rail industry had begun much earlier.

Those roots can be traced back to 2010, when an initial five-year contract was signed between Samaritans and Network Rail.

Described by Samaritans' former Strategic Programme Manager Neil Peters as "groundbreaking" and a "reimagining of corporate partnerships" (RAIL 908), it was formed to reduce the number of suicides on the railway, which had remained fairly static despite a steady decline in the overall rate across the UK.

Former Network Rail Suicide Prevention

Programme Manager Ian Stevens MBE described before his retirement last summer how the rail industry had previously taken a far more passive approach to suicides on the network and had been almost exclusively focused on erecting physical barriers and trying to 'engineer the problem out' (RAIL 915).

Samaritans, therefore, began to provide bespoke training to rail staff and to British Transport Police officers in identifying vulnerable people, preventing suicides, and dealing with their aftermath. Meanwhile, an integrated programme of activity was launched

to place Samaritans' posters and helpline details at stations and high-risk locations.

The partnership quickly evolved into a cross-industry programme which threw its weight behind national campaigns to increase awareness of Samaritans support services.

The number of trained rail staff had reached 10,000 by the time a second five-year partnership was signed in 2015. That number had then surpassed 20,000 when the third and current contract commenced in 2020.

The effectiveness of the partnership has been considerable, with some 2,200 interventions recorded in 2019-20 alone. Although there were still 283 fatalities recorded on the railway



“ It's obvious to me that Samaritans and the rail industry have now become allies. ”

Olivia Cayley, Head of Rail, Samaritans

► become allies in this space, rather than Samaritans simply leading all this work as was, perhaps, the case 11 years ago.”

Since the start of the new contract in 2020 there have also been some key personnel changes on the Network Rail side, following Ian Stevens MBE’s retirement last August.

Having held the role for the past eight years, Stevens has now passed the baton on to NR’s Suicide & Trespass Lead Louise McNally, who shares suicide prevention responsibilities with Route Crime Manager Becky Bray.

McNally explains: “I’ve been at NR for seven years working in Public and Passenger Safety. I initially managed the Level Crossing Risk Reduction Programme then took on Trespass Prevention. My role was then extended in March to take in suicide prevention, because there is a lot of crossover with the work we do around trespass and the communications and educational campaigns and stakeholder relationships that are involved in that.

“Suicide prevention activity is split with Becky Bray on the operational side, while the tie-up between suicide and trespass is also reflected out on the routes where the same person is usually responsible for both, because of its obvious synergy.”

Just like Cayley, McNally also admits to having been on a steep learning curve since stepping into her suicide prevention role just four months ago.

Her observations on the maturity of the industry in this area are also strikingly similar.

She adds: “The thing that stands out is that people know what they’re doing around training, interventions and providing trauma

support. The volume and wealth of suicide prevention work is quite wide-ranging.

“Samaritans has been instrumental in getting the industry to really understand the problem and to maintain its level of intervention. The fact it has now fitted into our devolved structure is also really important and is an extension of being embedded in local areas and offering more tailored support, instead of just a broad national strategy.”

Devised in the pre-pandemic world, the new contract and its partner organisations were quickly required to flex and adapt to the fresh demands posed by the lockdown.

The pandemic forced the cancellation of many fundraising activities, while up to a third of Samaritans volunteers were required to self-isolate at one point or another.

Meanwhile, the rail industry’s Million Hour Challenge volunteering initiative was also heavily disrupted (see panel, below).

Training courses that had hitherto been delivered face-to-face needed to be moved online, while members of Samaritans’ dedicated rail team and office-based employees at NR switched over to remote working.

Carefully planned passenger-facing communication campaigns were also cancelled or delayed, owing to the sudden collapse in passenger numbers.

But all that is about to change following the lifting of the final COVID-19 legal restrictions in England from July 19.

To restore momentum in suicide prevention and to cater for an anticipated upturn in mental ill-health as the country readjusts to

The next phase of the passenger-facing and highly effective Small Talk Saves Lives campaign is due to launch in the first half of August.
CHRIS O’DONOVAN/SAMARITANS.



MILLION HOUR CHALLENGE

Launched in March 2019, the Million Hour Challenge (MHC) was the brainchild of HM Chief Inspector of Railways Ian Prosser CBE and former Network Rail Chief Executive Mark Carne CBE.

Its premise was simple - to generate a million hours of volunteering for Samaritans during Control Period 6 (April 2019-March 2024) and to raise some £2.5 million to support the charity’s existing and future activities.

The initiative is open to all 300,000+ people working in the rail industry and its supply chain, and it was estimated that each person would have to volunteer just three hours and 20 minutes of their time over the five-year period for the MHC to be completed.

MHC hours can be accumulated by participating in fundraising and mental health awareness events and by attending Samaritans’ Managing Suicidal Contacts and Trauma Support training.

Rail staff are also encouraged to volunteer directly with Samaritans not only as listeners but to consider bringing to bear their professional expertise in other areas such as project management, IT and communications.

The MHC was designed not only to increase the financial and human resources

available to Samaritans but to also spread the personal mental health and wellbeing benefits that are known to be associated with volunteering.

According to Prosser, who is himself volunteering with Samaritans as a trustee in his home town of Cambridge, the MHC has suffered from the unforeseen practical and operational difficulties that emerged during the Coronavirus pandemic.

Typical fundraising activities were cancelled as a result of lockdown measures, while the flow of volunteers was also heavily disrupted by a natural avoidance of face-to-face contact and the need to self-isolate.

Prosser says: “There has been a definite impact in terms of volunteers, and we will have a review in the next few weeks on where to go next with the MHC. I don’t want to lose any momentum, so it’s important that we can now readjust.

“We are very keen to get the outreach started again post-pandemic and to make a strong push as soon as restrictions are lifted - because it’s important to get that reconnection. Fundraising will be particularly critical as an area where we need to help Samaritans as their services are in increasing demand.”

Both Olivia Cayley and Louise McNally

are also involved in discussions among the MHC steering group that will consider how the rail industry can best support Samaritans following the disruption wrought by the pandemic.

McNally says: “There have been some obvious impacts on our ability to hit the targets we’ve set. While we want to get as many people involved as possible and promote volunteering and fundraising opportunities, we want to find a more efficient way to do it in the new environment we are working in.”

Cayley adds: “It’s a sense check and a moment to pause and reflect. This is the right time to take stock so that we can direct the resources we have into the right outputs.”

■ For more info: millionhourchallenge.com

living in the ‘new normal’, the latest phase of Small Talk Saves Lives is scheduled to launch in the first two weeks of August.

This will involve a new digital campaign that is currently being worked up with a creative agency, plus the return of community roadshows at various points around the network.

Network Rail is also exploring ideas for a separate and so far unnamed campaign to improve wellbeing at stations, earmarked for this autumn.

Cayley says: “There have definitely been a few positives from the last few months, including the fact we’d never delivered training online before, but we switched over in about three weeks. But we are all now being very vigilant about footfall and cautious around the return of rail passengers because we can’t

predict the future.

“This makes the messaging around Small Talk Saves Lives all the more important, and we’re hoping that the new global empathy

“Suicide is not inevitable, and we must continue to look after each other just as we have been doing during the pandemic.”

**Olivia Cayley,
Head of Rail, Samaritans**

around mental health is something we can leverage.

“Suicide is not inevitable, and we must continue to look after each other just as we have been doing during the pandemic.”

McNally adds: “The pandemic has had a profound impact on mental health and it’s more important than ever that we continue to look out for one another as we emerge from lockdown. But we know that demand for mental health services has shot up, so while we are coming out of the pandemic we do have real concerns for the future and are thinking about how we respond.

“For example, Network Rail is currently in the early phase of exploring campaign ideas to re-frame the station environment as more positive places at the heart of their communities and not somewhere to

► consider taking your own life. The idea is to find ways to make them happier places and to give them a healthier feel that's full of life, community and connection.

"There are also other benefits to be had around deterring anti-social behaviour and vandalism and an opportunity to get more stations adopted by Community Rail Partnerships and other community groups."

Looking even further ahead, Cayley says there will be an increased focus on identifying and offering support to vulnerable people 'upstream' and further away from the physical rail network itself.

This could incorporate greater use of more targeted data on a local level, plus other emerging tools in the field of suicide prevention, such as digital monitoring which can detect 'increased chatter' about suicide on social media and internet forums.

Cayley says: "Small Talk Saves Lives and other campaigns have been key milestones that we've just kept building on, but what's much harder to quantify is the massive culture change that has taken place in an industry that knew it was an issue but now has people who are so passionate.

"But we are not going to rest on the success of the first ten years. We are trying to be more innovative and are having conversations about how we can get ahead of the data and use it to inform how we do things tomorrow, next year and beyond.

"Our existing activities are now fine-tuned and are working brilliantly, but we have to continue looking at a problem that we have long been trying to address but not yet solved.

"Part of that will be this shift towards catching people upstream and before they

COMMITMENT SET IN STONE

Depot driver Bessie Matthews has found a rock-solid way of raising money for a Samaritans campaign. STEFANIE FOSTER finds out more

Throughout the whole of July, ex-train guard-turned-depot driver Bessie Matthews has been auctioning off unique railway paintings in aid of Samaritans... all of her paintings are on individual pieces of carefully treated ballast.

Bessie was searching for a creative way to raise funds for the charity's Samarathon campaign, which encourages people to walk, jog or run 26.2 miles during the month of July. She took part in the challenge for the first time last year, raising a total of £1,064.68 by walking an incredible 322.42 miles in

July 2020. But this year, she wanted to do something more creative and unique...

Says Bessie: "This year, I thought I'd let myself off and just walk the 26.2 miles, but I still needed a twist.

"I came up with the idea of writing the name of anyone who donated to me on a pebble and I would carry them with me every day of July. This is to signify being there and

Each of the 31 ballast paintings is unique and has been hand-painted using acrylics, marker pens and even coloured Biro onto a piece of carefully treated ballast collected from Bessie's local station car park. Bessie starts by giving each piece of ballast a 'bubble bath' in disinfectant. She then primes it with Gesso to create a canvas-like surface. She sketches out the scene and then adds colour and detail. When she's finished, Bessie adds a sealant over the top and gives the 'extra wobbly' rocks a soft foam base. BESSIE MATTHEWS.



ready to 'carry' people through their good and bad times, just as Samaritans does.

"I expressed this idea to a colleague and a week later, they had kindly donated a sandwich bag full of tiny nuggets of ballast."

In a strange eureka moment, the idea of Bessie's Ballast popped into her head, and she started trying out different techniques to paint railway scenes onto the pieces of ballast. After posting a few pictures of her project on Twitter, she was surprised to discover how popular they were and decided to auction the pieces off on eBay.

Each of the 31 individual paintings has

been listed on eBay for just 24 hours, with the auctions set to finish at the end of July. At the time of writing (July 12), Bessie had already raised £791 from the sale of her ballast paintings, with some fetching nearly £100.

Alongside the Bessie's Ballast auctions, Bessie has still been writing the name of anyone who donates to her Samarathon Just Giving page onto a tiny piece of ballast and carrying them with her throughout the month. By July 12, she had already raised a staggering £1,120 in just 12 days.

This is a personal labour of love for Bessie, who witnessed a distressing incident in

The first 17 pieces of ballast to be auctioned. RAIL was only allowed to publish pictures of paintings that will already have been auctioned before this issue went to press because Bessie has been keeping the design of each piece a secret until auction day, to add to the exclusivity of each one. BESSIE MATTHEWS.

July 2018 when she was a guard for Greater Anglia.

"It changed my perspective on a lot of things," says Bessie.

"And knowing that Samaritans has prevented thousands of similar incidents really strikes a chord with me.

"They are so important and I wish I could do more for them."

■ To view the auctions and bid on your favourite, visit www.ebay.co.uk/usr/bessiesballast. All proceeds from the sale of the paintings will be donated to Samaritans.

■ To donate to Bessie's Just Giving page, visit: <https://samarathon.samaritans.org/fundraising/bessie-goes>.



“ This is to signify being there and ready to 'carry' people through their good and bad times, just as Samaritans does. ”

Bessie Matthews

A British Transport Police officer patrols Milton Keynes station on July 2 2020. Since 2010 Samaritans has trained more than 22,000 rail staff and BTP officers with the skills to help someone at risk of suicide on the network. JACK BOSKETT.



get to the railway, through data analysis and our local working with agencies like local authorities and the BTP."

Another impending change will be a full structural overhaul of Network Rail as a result of the Government's rail reform package and the publication of the *Williams-Shapps Plan for Rail* in May.

It is expected that legislation will be passed between now and 2024 to create the new Great British Railways public body which will fully absorb NR and all its activities.

As part of the establishment of the new body, the Government has pledged to publish

a 30-year strategy for GBR to outline its key investment and strategic decisions.

McNally says this new strategy will provide an opportunity to galvanise and cement suicide prevention activities within the heart of the industry and the new structure that emerges.

She concludes: "We won't see any changes immediately, but it [GBR] will give us another opportunity to step back and look at mental health and wellbeing in order to put it at the heart of a new strategy.

"Outside of Network Rail this programme touches every part of the industry and so many people are so passionate about it. It would

therefore be difficult to do anything different or to make it any less of a priority.

"This industry never sits still so we are keen to take that knowledge and determination and put it into the next phase of suicide prevention."

Further reading

■ Answering the call - RAIL 908

■ Vital connections - RAIL 908

■ "I'm told that I will have saved people's lives" - RAIL 915

■ How your actions can save a life - RAIL 933

Guardian angel

MTR Elizabeth Line Duty Customer Experience Manager RIZWAN JAVED has been credited with making an incredible 29 lifesaving interventions since joining the rail industry in 2015. He tells PAUL STEPHEN how attending Samaritans' Managing Suicidal Contacts course in the first few days of his career has made all the difference

30-year-old Rizwan Javed will not just be a familiar face to users of Ealing Broadway station, where he has been employed by MTR Elizabeth Line (MTREL) for the past six years.

That is because he has also risen to national prominence after recently appearing on prime-time morning television and in several print and online publications.

Having already won widespread acclaim within the rail sector - including winning the Samaritans Lifesaver Award in 2018 - he is only too willing to bring his remarkable lifesaving exploits to the widest possible audience.

Although rather modest, and softly spoken in person, Javed says he's "overwhelmed" by the amount of media interest he has received. And he has an enormously powerful story to tell.

"It's been a bit of a crazy journey for me, but I think I've just been in the right place and

at the right time to have been involved in 29 lifesaving interventions and to have made such an impact," he tells *RAIL*.

"Ever since I did the Samaritans' suicide prevention course in almost my first week working on the platform, I've made up my mind to approach everyone and anyone if it doesn't look right.

"It's MTREL policy to ensure that all new starters go on the course as part of their induction, and I would encourage any other operator or organisation in the rail sector to get involved too."

For every life lost on the railway, six lives are potentially saved by rail staff and members of the public noticing a person at risk.

Much of this success stems from the rollout of Samaritans training since 2010, but also the launch of campaigns to empower non-rail staff to act, including Small Talk Saves Lives.

Javed recalls his first intervention during his first two weeks of working on the railway.

He admits he felt nervous about saying the right thing and perhaps making things worse, but was able to draw on the skills and guidance he had been given to spot the signs of a vulnerable person and to strike up a conversation.

He explains: "I approached cautiously and just started up a conversation about the weather, or something like that. In short, it was freezing, so that was a natural talking point and it helped me to gain trust.

"I listened to what the man had to say, kept a calm demeanour and then led him to a place of safety. I don't think it's always what you have to say but how you do it which makes all the difference."

He adds: "We're all built with the skills to talk and listen, but I can see how suicide prevention can panic people. That's why I'm so glad I did the course which taught me that anything said is better than nothing.

"A person feeling suicidal is at the lowest point in their life and you need to interrupt those thoughts. You really can't make it any worse. It's just a matter of having the confidence to approach a vulnerable person in a crisis."

Speaking to *MyLondon*, Javed described how "distressed facial expressions" and commuters "removing their clothes" are among the signs he has been taught to look out for. Other behaviours include standing alone and not boarding any trains, although people are advised to trust their instincts and to respond to anything that looks out of the ordinary.



Rizwan Javed appears on ITV's *Good Morning Britain* on May 13 to champion the lifesaving training provided to him by Samaritans. ITV.



Rizwan receives his Samaritans Lifesaver Award at the Rail Staff Awards 2018. COURTESY OF MTREL.

In another incident in which Javed successfully talked someone to safety, he added: "I was on a night shift and a young lady walked in. As I was going back to my office, I noticed the same person looking distressed. These signs rang alarm bells for me, and I had to react quickly.

"Initially I phoned the signalmen who control our line, and I got a line block in place. I then ran over to the individual and made conversation - it wasn't easy initially and it was hard to engage.

"She had various thoughts but eventually I talked her into a place of safety. After communicating with her for an hour, I called the British Transport Police who were going to come and assist her and provide support."

A week later the woman returned to the station to thank him for his help. According to Javed, the Samaritans training has also brought him some valuable personal benefits by encouraging him to increasingly talk about mental health with his friends and family.

He says that having honest conversations about his own mental health and that of others has helped to break the taboo status that has persisted in many cultures, including in his own British Asian background.

"It's definitely helped to spread awareness to my household and among my co-workers and has also opened me up," says Javed.

"In that respect, I think those 29 people

have helped me more than I have helped them, and I now appreciate all those things I used to take for granted.

"Working with Samaritans has helped me to help myself, to help others and, if you're reading this, it could help you to help others too."

Although Javed has never sought any praise for his actions or work as an ambassador for Samaritans' Managing Suicidal Contacts course, he appreciates the recognition and publicity it generates for suicide prevention.

Most recently, in early June, the inspirational Londoner was the subject of a media campaign by *MyLondon* for him to be awarded an OBE or MBE.

Javed becomes mildly embarrassed at being labelled as a hero but is happy to accept his well-deserved limelight if it results in more lives being saved.

“I’ve been fortunate to have had an impact on 29 lives. I’ll continue to do that whether there’s an MBE or not.”

Rizwan Javed, Duty Customer Experience Manager, MTR Elizabeth Line

More than 22,000 BTP and rail staff have now completed the free-to-attend half-day Managing Suicidal Contacts course and Javed would now urge all other frontline staff to do the same.

He adds: "I've been overwhelmed with the response, but I think the press attention has definitely served its purpose to spread the message. I've had so many messages that have made me cry, from young kids feeling inspired and from people with mental health issues, reaching out to me. It goes such a long way to show that people love and care.

"In terms of being a hero, it's just me doing my job and I've been fortunate to have had an impact on 29 lives. I'll continue to do that whether there's an MBE or not.

"I'm Riz and I just want people to be inspired. Being a hero is not important to me when all of us are capable of making a difference." ■

■ To attend Samaritans' Managing Suicidal Contacts training, rail staff should speak to a line manager or email: railcompanies@samaritans.org

■ If you have been affected by anything in this article or elsewhere in this supplement and need support, then Samaritans volunteers are always there to listen, without judgement, 24 hours a day and 365 days a year. Call for free on 116123, or visit samaritans.org/

Further reading

■ How your actions can save a life... - *RAIL* 933

Thoughts... and deeds

HM Chief Inspector of Railways IAN PROSSER CBE explains how safeguarding its employees' mental health has never been higher on the agenda at the Office of Rail and Road

In its role as the independent rail regulator, the Office of Rail and Road (ORR) has long been calling for the industry to go much further and faster in managing occupational health, including mental health and wellbeing.

In his foreword to the ORR's *Annual Report on Health and Safety Performance on Britain's Railways 2019-20*, HM Chief Inspector of Railways and ORR Director of Safety Ian Prosser CBE described it as a "particular concern" for the rail sector, where the rate of suicide in the workforce is some 1.6 times higher than the UK average, and more than half of workers have experienced mental ill-health.

He added: "It is obviously very important to focus on our staff's mental wellbeing... by talking about it more we can reduce the taboo, change our culture and ensure that people know and accept that many of us have mental health issues."

While only covering the first few weeks of the Coronavirus pandemic, the report urged the sector not to lose any focus over the ensuing months as the outbreak threatened to lead to many people becoming increasingly isolated and in need of support.

But as well as the ORR calling on others, issuing guidance and monitoring the industry's response, Prosser now tells of how the organisation itself has been committed to practising what it preaches and becoming a beacon of best practice.

This has perhaps never been more apparent than in the last 16 months as ORR's inspectors have transitioned to working remotely wherever possible and restricting physical

inspections and interactions to only where strictly necessary.

Prosser explains: "In recent years we've been pushing the entire health agenda in rail as people increasingly realise its impact on the functioning of organisations and the people who work for them. I think the penny has now dropped that mental health is a huge part of that and is a very big issue."

"When I became HM Chief Inspector 13 years ago health had been on the back burner for a long time, and both ORR and RSSB had limited resources applied to this area. It's taken a long time to get to where we are now, and I think it might take another ten years to get to where we really need to be, but the pandemic has definitely caused some real issues that need to be addressed."

"As we come out of this it will be a case of training people, gaining momentum and making the most of the initiative we currently have."

According to Prosser, one of the most effective measures that ORR has implemented internally since the start of the pandemic is to expand its peer-to-peer support.

It builds on the introduction of mental health first aiders that had already become firmly embedded within the organisation (more opposite).

This increased support has come from new initiatives like Tea & Talk sessions and virtual 'water cooler/kitchen chats' where staff are encouraged to talk about their feelings and to have casual conversation in much the same way that they might within an office environment.

Meanwhile, senior leaders and management



HM Inspector of Railways Kathryn Gibb is one of 15 voluntary mental health first aiders at the Office of Rail and Road. ORR.



“All organisations should be treating mental health in exactly the same way as they would have first aiders for physical health.”

Ian Prosser CBE, HM Chief Inspector of Railways

have been encouraged to use cameras for video calls and to have regular check-ins with staff working remotely.

E-learning modules have been launched to increase managers' understanding of managing mental health at work while employees have also been encouraged to share tips for wellbeing and coping strategies on an online audience interaction platform called Sli.do.

Last but not least, employees at all levels of the organisation have been invited to write blogs about their personal experiences of the pandemic and the added challenges it has brought to sustaining their wellbeing and mental health.

Prosser adds: "All organisations should be treating mental health in exactly the same way as they would have first aiders for physical health. Having our own mental health first aiders is a valuable part of 'walking the talk' and being an exemplary company, in this respect."

"At ORR we've also had a big focus on making sure we stay connected with our people. Our Tea & Talk sessions have proven to be particularly popular, and we've also increased the number of all-staff briefings where we talk about mental health."

"We've also worked closely with MIND to increase the provision of e-learning modules

on mental health awareness and will be collaborating with Samaritans on this too. We've created a new role for a Diversity & Inclusion Manager and will be rolling out Fair Treatment Ambassadors, which are an important part in improving the culture on mental health."

"I'd also like to mention the blogs, because having someone senior talking about their struggles is really powerful and it's a great credit to colleagues like (ORR Director of Economics, Markets & Strategy) Dan Brown for taking part (see panel) and leading by example."

HM Inspector of Railways Kathryn Gibb is one of approximately 300 staff to work at ORR across its six UK offices. She is also one of the organisation's 15 volunteer mental health first aiders whose role is to provide a listening ear to any colleagues in need of support and to signpost them to appropriate professional help and other resources.

She explains how the role is reactive, should anybody approach her for support or is just in need of a confidential chat. But she must also be proactive and is trained to spot the signs and symptoms of mental ill-health.

Gibb adds: "The role is just like a conventional first aider in that we are there

to provide the initial response to someone experiencing any issues. That's not always been very easy in the pandemic when you're only seeing a snapshot of people and we have had to rely on them coming to us."

"We are not counsellors, and we don't have the same rigour of training as a healthcare professional, but we do have the skills to spot indications and to guide people towards further support."

Gibb and her fellow mental health first aiders have all attended the internationally recognised training course provided by Mental Health First Aid England. Its mission is to empower people to notice the signs of mental ill-health and to encourage them to break down barriers and listen in a non-judgemental way.

She explains: "We looked at different types of mental health illness and learned to recognise the warning signs. For example, someone might seem withdrawn and quiet, or they might start turning up for work late or taking less care in their appearance."

"But sometimes it could be the complete opposite and they become uncharacteristically effervescent - which is why lockdown has been so hard as you might not pick up on these things when everybody is working remotely."

Gibb adds: "How to listen actively without

An excerpt from *My Year in Mental Health*, by ORR Director of Economics, Markets & Strategy Dan Brown



"This time last year I was worried about the impact of working from home on my team. Thanks to a bad hip injury I couldn't do serious exercise, couldn't see friends and family and there was no prospect of a holiday. The absence of structure to my day meant I was working long hours, looking after myself badly and searching for my hits of dopamine in the wrong places."

"Although it might have been sunny outside, inside I could see the clouds gathering. I knew that I needed to re-balance somehow for the new environment, but it was a slow process of establishing a new balance."

"The transition to a changed state had been too sudden, and impossible to prepare for. I think that holds some lessons for how to prepare for the rest of this year, as we anticipate switching again to a new form of normality."

"We all need to make our own judgements about the pace of readjustment that we feel comfortable with as we break free from our institutionalisation at home."

jumping in with solutions is also a big part of the training, as is looking at ways to approach people confidentially and to judge when people do and don't want to talk."

As well as looking for the signs of deteriorating mental health and wellbeing, Gibb also observes some positive effects from the pandemic.

She believes that colleagues have benefited from having an improved work/life balance while many of the new peer-to-peer support initiatives have had high levels of engagement and gained widespread approval.

She predicts that initiatives like the blogs, the Sli.do tips and the Tea & Talk sessions will become permanent fixtures as the ORR and its employees adjust to working in the post-pandemic world.

She concludes: "Our monthly Tea & Talk sessions have been very well attended because they are very informal, and we do fun things like 'chairobics'. I think they will stay in some form as we move towards a hybrid and more flexible way of working that is part in the office and part from home."

"I know that many colleagues have spoken positively about not losing half a day to commuting and from spending more time with family. I'm sure that there will also be some nervousness and anxiety about returning to the office and the 'new normal', but everyone is encouraged to speak to their managers or our team of mental health first aiders." ■