

# Solidarity in a Crisis

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**certitude**  
[www.certitude.org.uk](http://www.certitude.org.uk)

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## Background to the Project

Solidarity in a Crisis (SiaC) is a peer led service offering a range of peer support activities to people experiencing a mental health crisis. Certitude launched 'Solidarity in a Crisis' on April 1<sup>st</sup> 2012 in Lambeth as part of the 'Living Well Collaborative' vision to develop and grow community resilience through peer support. In December 2014 the service was extended to offer an out of hours crisis line 7 days a week across Lambeth, Southwark and Lewisham.

The service is co-designed and co-delivered by people with lived experience of mental health support needs and carers. The team offers telephone and community meetings with an aim to support individuals in crisis by way of sharing empathy through similar lived experience and an opportunity to engage with like-minded people.

## Case for Change:

The prevalence of both common mental health problems and serious mental health illness is approximately twice as high in South East London compared to the national average. This results in comparatively high numbers of emergency mental health admissions.

Peer support can benefit the system as a whole by decreasing hospital admissions while having the added benefit of greater perceived empathy and respect that peer supporters have for the individuals they help.

The need for more robust out of hours crisis services is emphasised in the Crisis Care Concordat, which is clear that people should have access to the support they need 24hrs a day, 7 days a week.

## The Solution:

### Out of Hours Crisis Line

The out of hours team provides crisis support over the phone or in person. By sharing their experience and providing social support to people in distress, peer supporters aim to promote recovery, enhance feelings of belonging and hope to those in distress; whilst helping to prevent people reaching crisis point. The service operates 7 days a week in Lambeth, Southwark and Lewisham Monday to Friday 6pm – Midnight & Saturday & Sunday 12pm – Midnight.

### A&E Peer Support

The team works with A&E psychiatric liaison teams from Kings College and Lewisham Hospitals who will refer individuals presenting to A&E, who may want and agree to receive peer support over the phone and/or in person. Peer supporters will arrange 1:1 community support meetings for a limited time period (2-3 meetings). Operating times: Monday to Friday from 12pm to 6pm.

### Paranoia & Hearing Voices Group

Led by peer supporters, this support group meets once a week from 6pm – 8pm, to connect, befriend, discuss and share experiences of paranoia and hearing voices. The group brings together people from a wide range of backgrounds and age groups (over 18 years only) to share lived experience in a non-judgemental, empathic and safe environment. Peer supporters have completed the facilitator groups training delivered by Camden Mind.

### Crisis Prevention workshops

Co-designed and co-delivered by the SiaC team, the workshops are aimed at people with lived experience, families, carers and professionals. The workshops provide an opportunity for learning and raising awareness of crisis prevention and self-care from a service user/lived experience perspective. Doing so whilst increasing mental health literacy and challenging stigma and discrimination. These informal sessions, last approximately 1.5 to 2 hours.

## Impact:

Between January to October 2015, the service received 1104 calls on a wide range of issues.

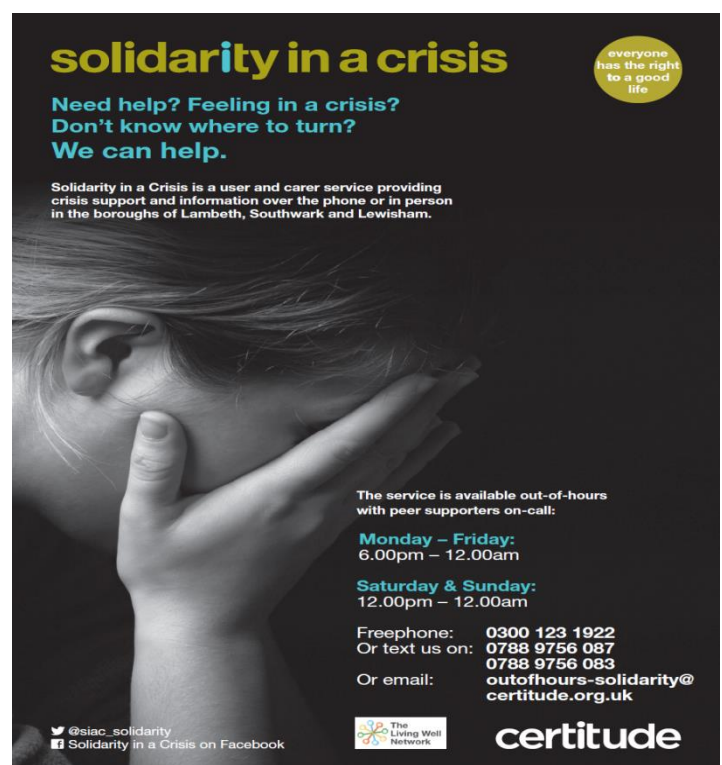
**Reduced A&E admissions:** A number of repeat callers have been identified as using and depending on a number of mental health services including A&E. The work of the team has been paramount in preventing and minimising A&E admissions for some callers.

**Suicide prevention:** Peer supporters who receive callers of people at risk of self-harm and suicide contact 111 or 999 to access emergency services.

**Resilience and self management when facing long term crisis:** Callers have fed back that the support of the peers has enabled them to manage and better cope with crisis. They see the crisis line as a coping strategy for their ongoing mental health support needs.

**Providing referral options for health professionals:** Health professionals are referring people they work with to SiaC as a way of maintaining ongoing support and contact out of hours.

**Confidence building and career pathway opportunities for peer supporters:** For most, SiaC has been a stepping stone in their own journeys of recovery, from slowly getting back into employment, to learning new skills and undertaking career development opportunities.



**solidarity in a crisis**

Need help? Feeling in a crisis?  
Don't know where to turn?  
We can help.

Solidarity in a Crisis is a user and carer service providing crisis support and information over the phone or in person in the boroughs of Lambeth, Southwark and Lewisham.

The service is available out-of-hours with peer supporters on-call:

**Monday – Friday:**  
6.00pm – 12.00am

**Saturday & Sunday:**  
12.00pm – 12.00am

Freephone: **0300 123 1922**  
Or text us on: **0788 9756 087**  
**0788 9756 083**  
Or email: **outofhours-solidarity@certitude.org.uk**

@siac\_solidarity  
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The Living Well Network

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