

What is Text About It ?

Text About It (formally called 50808) is a free nationwide anonymous 24-hour messaging service, providing everything from a calming chat to immediate support. Text About It provides a safe space where texters are listened to and supported by trained volunteers. We can be reached by traditional SMS or texters can contact us on WhatsApp.

What do we offer?

We offer a safe, non-judgmental space where people can text us about anything that is making them feel down. This is not just a platform for those in crisis situations such as being in physical danger from others or to themselves. We have supported many people who are struggling with relationship breakdowns, bereavement, feeling stuck in a rut, loneliness or simply feeling down and wanting to talk it out with us.

How do we help?

People who reach out to us will be texting back and forth with a trained volunteer who will empathetically listen and respond with supportive messages as the issue is explored. The texter and volunteer will converse about thoughts, feelings or behaviours around the issue and develop resolution goals to help the texter feel empowered to take action.

Who contacts us?

We are contacted by people of all ages across Ireland, for example:

- Children/teenagers being bullied or having problems in school or the family home.
- People dealing with loss, be it a relationship or the death of a loved one.
- Older people who are lonely and want someone to talk to.
- People experiencing panic attacks or anxiety, and depression.
- People who are struggling due to isolation and loneliness.
- People living with psychiatric conditions who are seeking additional support.
- Those who are experiencing suicidal thoughts, and some who are actively suicidal.

Our volunteers provide a safe space to meet our texters where they are at, encouraging them to express how they're feeling. We support them in moving from what we call a "hot" moment to a "cool calm" space of mind.

How could volunteering with Text About It benefit me?

If you are the type of person who is motivated to help create positive change in mental health across a community and has some free time, we want to hear from you! By participating in our specialised

training programme, you will be fully equipped to be that friendly listening ear on the other end of a text conversation. You will be able to meet the texter where they're at and support them in developing goals towards feeling better.

From giving as little as 2 - 4 hours a week, you can help change someone's day for the better, although you are more than welcome to give up to 12 hours weekly if you have the time. You may also receive lovely feedback messages of warmth and gratitude from texters you've engaged with and from supervisors on the platform who observe you doing a great job.

Not only is this a personally rewarding venture, volunteering with us will bring you into a wonderful community of 300 volunteers, supervisors and platform staff who will support you with everything you need. We are currently working on a new integrated support platform called MIGHTY which will be the learning and community hub for our CVs. This is where all of our most up-to-date content will live. In one place you can join social groups, access learning modules, set notifications and be signposted towards whatever support you need on the platform.

If you are between jobs or taking a career break, volunteering with us would also add a sparkle to your CV, demonstrating a kind and compassionate part of your personality and your drive to stay engaged within the community. You will develop a range of professional skills, all of which can be accomplished remotely online, at the hours of your choosing. We now offer personalised references for people who reach or exceed the 200 volunteering hours commitment we ask for before training commences. If you are retired and considering donating some of your time to the greater good, we would love to have you on board! Blending your invaluable life experience with our training to greatly help people could open a wonderful new chapter of your life.

I'm interested! Tell me more...

The training program

Given the cost and professional dedication in training new volunteers, we ask you to consent to committing to at least 200 hours on the volunteering platform before training commences. You do not need any professional background or prior training, just an openness to the practice of non-judgemental listening and a desire to be kind and compassionate to others.

There is an online 30 hour training course that is self-paced over 6 weeks. It is a remote role that only requires a stable and secure internet connection from a laptop or PC. Material is delivered through text segments and videos, with quizzes at the end of each module to ensure you understand the learning objectives. You will learn how to optimally converse via a text-based service, our 'Five Stages' conversation template, how to empower the texter rather than giving direct advice and how to risk assess for suicide and crisis management to name but a few skills.

You will gain access to certified training such as:

- Children's First certificate
- LGBTQIA+ Awareness and Inclusion training

You will also receive specific training that has been developed in conjunction with Pavee Point, on how to support members of the Traveller community.

The volunteering platform

Upon training completion we will guide you every step of the way in communicating with your first texter. Highly trained supervisors can advise on best practice where you may be unsure on how to reply to a novel conversation situation and will offer debriefing after tough conversations. We emphasise the importance of good self-care practice before and after volunteer shifts to help you feel grounded and confident to continue this great work.

You will choose the days and times you are available to take shifts. If you complete at least 4 hours on the platform each week you will complete the 200 hour commitment we strive for within a year. However, we would love for you to continue with us as your contribution is so valued by us and those that reach out to Text About It.

A testimonial from one of our volunteers

“My name is Donna and I’m a volunteer with Text About It. I did my training over the summer of 2022 which I found to be extremely detailed and well explained. If I had any questions I could easily reach out to my coach who was only too happy to help. I learned a great deal about effective communication and how to specifically approach a number of issues in a gentle and caring manner. When I began my volunteering in late August, I was nervous and closely consulted my notes for the first while as I conversed with my texters. Within a few shifts, with the support of platform supervisors, I felt more confident in conversing on my own and before long, I no longer needed the notes to consider every reply.

Receiving positive feedback from supervisors of my development and especially from texters who felt better after our conversations was the most rewarding feeling I’ve ever felt in my life. I first signed up to volunteer knowing this would look great on my CV and a sense that I would feel good giving back a bit to society. But the return has been much greater than that.

Through volunteering with Text About It, I came to realise that we don’t have to wait until we have specialised degrees and further education to be able to communicate and support people who need help. With this amazing free training and support, you can start volunteering within months! What I have learned here goes beyond what any book can teach; the art and reward of human connection in practice.

I would enthusiastically encourage anyone willing to give some of their time to volunteer with Text About It to do so, the impact it will have on your life goes beyond any professional or CV benefits...it feels inherently good inside.

Read about volunteering with us here: <https://text50808.ie/volunteer>

Sign up here: <https://signup.crisistextlineie.org/>