

Information sharing around incidents or online content relating to suicide and self-harm

INTRODUCTION

In the last year there have been a number of examples of online content, challenges and games, relating to suicide and self-harm that have raised concerns around the risk of contagion among vulnerable groups, such as children and young people.

Due to the nature of your work, you may receive information about content of concern. We are contacting you for your support to assist with encouraging responsible information sharing, both within your organisation and to wider stakeholders.

If you receive information linking a death to a particular piece of online content or game it is important to consider whether this information has come from an official source, whether it is confirmed or speculated and whether it is appropriate to share more widely.

If the decision is made to share more widely because the content /game is deemed a significant risk, then it is critical to remind people of the risks around drawing unhelpful attention to this content. This includes information shared via email and other channels, via social media and publishing warnings.

It is important to promote online safety to young audiences, parents and adults who work with children and young people, and it is safest to approach this with general messages about online safety, without naming specific websites or games.

Naming specific online content or games is likely to draw further attention to these and significantly increases the risk of initiating widespread media coverage, which can inadvertently promote the content to young audiences.

As part of their work to support responsible media reporting of suicide, Samaritans continually monitors and assesses content - online and across mainstream media, which may constitute a risk of suicide contagion. Work is often being carried out with PHE, behind the scenes at an early stage, to address concerns around any risk posed.

Some further advice below:

- We encourage parents and adults who work with young people to talk to them about their online activity. Let them share what they're playing or looking at, rather than asking them if they are playing a specific game, as this may draw their attention to it.
- We encourage extreme caution on sharing online content with young people, that may be distressing or upsetting. If young people express any concern over material they have seen online, any interaction with others online, or posts or comments that friends or others have made, it is important to listen to them and offer support. Remember that there are various ways to report

inappropriate online material, which is felt to be harmful, for example, most social media platforms have mechanisms for reporting content for review and potential removal.

- Providing information and signposting to sources of support for young people is important at all times. It may also be useful to provide advice on how young people can support themselves and their friends.
- Increasingly people use the internet to participate in online activities and to share their thoughts and feelings.
- Samaritans, in partnership with Facebook has produced a guide on what to do if you are concerned about a friend. This information also applies to helping colleagues and students.

<http://www.samaritans.org/sites/default/files/kcfinder/files/help-a-friend-in-need.pdf>

- If you have concerns that someone is suicidal, useful information can be found here:

<http://www.samaritans.org/how-we-can-help-you/what-speak-us-about/if-you%E2%80%99re-worried-about-someone-else/what-should-i-do-if-i>

<http://www.samaritans.org/how-we-can-help-you/what-speak-us-about/if-you%E2%80%99re-worried-about-someone-else>

If you have any concerns or questions about intelligence or online content relating to suicide or self-harm or would like support in dealing with the media, please do not hesitate to contact Samaritans at mediaadvice@samaritans.org