

Online content relating to suicide and self-harm

Information for professionals working with children and young people – *summary of the recommendations from Public Health England*

In the last year there have been several concerns about online social media content, challenges and games, which relate to suicide and self-harm. This poses a particular risk for children and young people, as this type of content may become viral.

Promoting online safety

It is important to promote online safety to young audiences, parents and professionals working with children and young people. We encourage parents, carers and professionals to talk to children and young people 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.

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.

If the decision is made to share information more widely to colleagues 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 e.g. sharing via email, or publishing warnings via social media.

Providing information and signposting to sources of support for young people is important at all times. Samaritans, in partnership with Facebook, has produced a useful guide on [what to do to help a friend](#).

What to do when a child or young person expresses concern

It is important to listen and offer support to children or young people who express any concern over:

- material they have seen online;
- any interaction with others online; or
- posts or comments that friends or others have made.

Most social media platforms have mechanisms for reporting content for review and potential removal.

If you have any concerns that an individual is suicidal, Samaritans provides information on [what to do if you know someone who is feeling suicidal](#).

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.

If you have any concerns or questions about online content relating to suicide or self-harm, or would like support in dealing with the media, please contact Samaritans at mediaadvice@samaritans.org.