

# FAQs about Samaritans Radar

## ABOUT THE APP

### ➤ **What is Samaritans Radar?**

Samaritans Radar is a free web application for use with Twitter, which privately highlights people who may be struggling to cope. It provides a second opportunity for subscribers to see potentially worrying Tweets, which might have otherwise been missed.

### ➤ **How does it work?**

The app uses a specially designed algorithm that looks for specific keywords and phrases within a Tweet. It then sends an email alert to the user with a link to the Tweet it has detected, and offers guidance on the best way of reaching out and providing support.

### ➤ **Who is the app aimed at?**

Samaritans Radar is primarily aimed at the 'Millennials' age bracket (typically grouped as 18-35 year-olds) on Twitter, as well as all Twitter users, and friends/relatives/acquaintances of the millennial group.

### ➤ **Can anyone sign up to Samaritans Radar?**

Anyone with a Twitter account can sign up to Samaritans Radar.

### ➤ **How easy is it to activate the app?**

Samaritans Radar is activated in two easy steps. If someone wants to stop receiving alerts, then they can easily deactivate the app, as easily as they activated it.

### ➤ **Is Samaritans Radar the only app that does this?**

Samaritans Radar is the first and only app of its kinds in the UK and ROI to both look for worrying Tweets and offer advice for subscribers to reach out and provide support.

## WHY SAMARITANS RADAR AND HOW WILL IT MAKE A DIFFERENCE?

### ➤ **Why did Samaritans develop the app?**

The app was developed because Samaritans know that people use social media to talk about how they're feeling, and that vulnerable individuals sometimes go online in the hope that someone will reach out to them. Also, Samaritans Radar has been developed following research that social media feeds can be effective indicators of real world performance. As a result, Twitter can be used as an important surveillance tool for detecting suicidal patterns.

### ➤ **What will it enable people to do?**

The app provides people with a second opportunity to see potentially worrying Tweets from their own Twitter feed, which might have otherwise been missed, giving them a chance to reach out. It also offers advice on how to provide support to someone people are worried about.

### ➤ **How will it make a difference?**

With 15 million Twitter users and 500million Tweets per day, it is very easy for a Tweet of concern or a call for help to be buried in someone's newsfeed. Samaritans Radar provides an online safety net, reducing the chances of a person's call for help being missed and giving others a second chance to respond. Research shows there is a strong correlation

between 'suicidal Tweets' and actual suicides and with Samaritans Radar we can turn a social net into a safety net.

User testing has also shown that the app gives subscribers peace of mind knowing that for most part worrying Tweets will be flagged to them.

➤ **What does Samaritans hope to achieve as a result of the app?**

Samaritans is doing a lot of work around supporting people in the online environment, and we want to be able to let people who are struggling know that they are not alone and that support is available. We want to encourage people to look out for each other more online – as a friend you are best placed to know when other friends are struggling to cope, so if you're worried about someone and want to help them, Samaritans Radar will help you to know when and how to respond.

➤ **Why do we need Samaritans Radar?**

There is a need because until we developed Samaritans Radar, there wasn't an app available which looks at Tweets as well as offering advice on how to reach out and support someone. The app is free and gives the subscriber peace of mind.

Samaritans plays a leading role in the UK and ROI on supporting vulnerable in the online environment, the app is one of many initiatives the charity is working on and is the first of its kind in the UK and ROI.

**THE BIGGER PICTURE:**

➤ **Is Samaritans Radar going to stop people having suicidal feelings?**

Samaritans Radar won't stop suicidal feelings, but it will help vulnerable people to realise that they are not alone and that support is available to them if they want it.

➤ **Are you encouraging people to treat high profile people on Twitter the same as their friends, if they think they might be struggling?**

The app is based on the idea that the target group on Twitter mainly follow their friends. However, it is important to remember that well-known and high-profile people can face the same problems and difficulties as regular people, so there is no reason to think they wouldn't be appreciative of some extra support from their Twitter followers.

➤ **Is Twitter the right platform for this - isn't Facebook a better platform as people are more likely to express their feelings there?**

This app is in its infancy and we will continue to develop it in time, which potentially may include extending it on to different social media platforms. For now the app lends itself to the public nature of Twitter and we know that the target group use this platform to communicate with friends.

While people also use Facebook to express their feelings, amongst the millennial group that we are targeting, there is evidence to show that this group use Twitter for this purpose a well:

- Millennials use Twitter to convey their identity and seek affirmation from peers.
- 56% of Millennials consider Twitter a sharing platform, and use it to document their lives in real time. This includes posting personal content, uploading photos, and starting Twitter conversations with friends.
- 67% of Millennials share "random thoughts", using Twitter as a pseudo stream of consciousness.

- The key groups among Millennials on Twitter are “sharers” (who share and engage with content) and “socializers” (who use Twitter to stay in touch with friends or keep others up to date with their lives).

➤ **What if Samaritans Radar detects someone who is suicidal but their friends don't see the alert(s), and that person takes their own life?**

In this situation you wouldn't have seen the alert with or without Samaritans Radar. Samaritans Radar just increases your chances of seeing it. It would still be up to you to decide what to do based on the Tweets you've seen and your relationship with that person.

➤ **Will the app put too much responsibility on the subscriber to take action or save a life?**

Just because you are aware about something does not automatically mean you have a responsibility to respond. Samaritans Radar is an application, a web tool, that flags content and lets you decide what to do next. However, we believe that people who voluntarily sign up for Samaritans Radar genuinely care about the wellbeing of their Twitter friends and will take action should they receive an alert.

➤ **Will Twitter friends see that the subscriber has received an alert?**

Samaritans Radar is activated discretely and all alerts are sent to the subscriber alone via email – never to Twitter connections and it will not show up on any Twitter feeds.

➤ **Surely Samaritans Radar will end up flagging a number of organisations which talk about suicide and mental health - as opposed to an individual - which could deem the alerts irrelevant?**

Samaritans Radar has a 'white list' of Twitter handles which belong to organisations which regularly Tweet using words that the app would normally flag. As such the app is programmed to ignore Tweets from these organisations. If subscribers follow an organisation and would like to add them to the whitelist, they need to send an email to [radar@samaritans.org](mailto:radar@samaritans.org) and that organisation will be added within 72 hours.

Unfortunately, the same cannot be done for individuals that subscribers wish to ignore as it is important that Samaritans Radar is able to flag their Tweets if they need support.

➤ **Isn't Samaritans Radar a bit intrusive?**

Samaritans is all about choice, and so we are giving people the choice to reach out to help others in need, in the same way that we give people choice to Samaritans' helpline if they want to.

➤ **Are there any further projects in the pipeline between Twitter and Samaritans?**

Twitter's support of the app comes alongside the start of a wider collaboration with Samaritans which includes a referral process which works in two ways: Twitter has Samaritans listed within their Help Centre as the go-to organisation for suicide prevention in the UK and ROI. When somebody gets reported as suicidal, the Twitter Trust & Safety team verifies the report and if they deem it accurate, they get in touch with both the reported and the reporting account, to share recommendations and contact information for Samaritans.

**TECHNICAL:**

➤ **Isn't there a data privacy issue here? Is Samaritans Radar spying on people?**

All the data used in the app is public, so user privacy is not an issue. Samaritans Radar analyses the Tweets of the people you follow, which are public Tweets. It does not look at private Tweets.

➤ **Is it a mobile app? Would I need to download it from iTunes?**

It is a web app, meaning you can access it on your desktop or mobile by going to a URL (e.g. [www.samaritansSamaritans Radar.org](http://www.samaritansSamaritans Radar.org)); there is no need to download anything to your smartphone. You sign up once and won't need to ever return to the web app, unless you want to switch your Samaritans Radar off and stop receiving alerts.

➤ **Where will all the data be stored? Will it be secure?**

The data we will store is as follows:

- Twitter User ID – a unique ID that is associated with a Twitter account
- All Twitter User Friends ID's – The same as above but for all the users friends that they follow
- Any flagged Tweets – This is the data associated with the Tweet, we will store the raw data for the Tweet as well
- Count of flags against a Twitter Users Friends ID – We store a count of flags against an individual User
- To prevent the Database growing exponentially we will remove flagged Tweets that are older than 30 days.

### **CASE STUDY QUOTES**

**Jennie Harrison**, 24, from Leeds, says: "Samaritans Radar made me aware that there are people on my Twitter feed who might be going through a tough time, and gave me the opportunity to support them. Because of the app I was able to reply to a Tweet of concern that I might have otherwise missed, with words of encouragement, in the hope I could help the person in question."

**Jenny Meads**, 62, from Essex, says: "I think Samaritans Radar is brilliant. One of my Twitter contacts has depression and one of the ways they cope is by being very active on Twitter. Samaritans Radar reassured me that I wouldn't miss an important clue that they were on a downward spiral. When I did pick up a worrying Tweet I simply made sure I reached out in such a way that they were reminded that I - and Samaritans - were there if needed."

**Josh Savage**, 27, from Birmingham, says: "I do believe Samaritans Radar makes a real difference. For someone like me following a large number of users, it would be very easy to miss a worrying Tweet, even from a close friend. I have reached out to individuals on a couple of occasions on Twitter, in one case I sent a public reply, as many others had. This user then thanked his followers with a subsequent Tweet saying he was touched by people's concern. On another occasion, I sent a direct message – hopefully it gave them some reassurance that people, and strangers, did in fact care. I think just being there for someone, and them knowing you are there, can be enough to help sometimes."