SAMARITANS

Supporting the wellbeing of users online

This information sheet provides guidance for sites and platforms hosting user-generated content on supporting the wellbeing of their users. All sites and platforms should seek to promote helpful content, especially when potentially harmful self-harm and suicide content is being shared by users. Helpful content can help to shift the conversation and mood in the online community and can also encourage help seeking.

Promoting positive content online

To support the wellbeing of users, sites should establish ways of promoting positive and helpful content on their sites.

Examples include:

- Messages encouraging help seeking
- Content to raise awareness and dispel common myths or fake news
- Stories of hope, support and recovery
- Tips on self-care and looking after your wellbeing
- Information and signposting to available support

Promotion of this content can be achieved in various ways, such as developing **campaigns,** offering **free ad space** for trusted support organisations and by **reviewing how content is served** to users through search features.

Sites should also consider ways of promoting additional supportive content in response to emerging issues, such as:

- **When harmful content is being shared widely** – such as online hoaxes, games and challenges, or false information about self-harm and suicide.
- **When there are increases in self-harm and suicide conversations online** – such as after high-profile suicides or media portrayals in films, soaps or series.
- **Peak times when users may experience distress** – such as times where users are most likely to post about suicidal feelings eg, during anti-social hours or weekends.

This can shift the conversation and mood and encourage users to seek help.

Signposting

Signposting to trusted support services is essential to ensure users in distress are directed to available support. Sites and platforms with high volumes of users should check before signposting to voluntary services to ensure the service has capacity to cope with potential demand.

Basic signposting

At a minimum standard, all sites and platforms should provide basic signposting, including:

- Emergency and non-emergency services.
- Support that can be accessed 24 hours a day, every day.

- Trusted helplines and services specialising in the provision of support for self-harm and suicide.
- Encouraging users to speak to family, friends or other people they trust.

Gold standard signposting

To provide a better level of signposting, sites should:

- **Acknowledge the barriers to help seeking** users may face. Reaching out for support can be difficult and users may have tried to get help before and had negative experiences. Try to remind users that support is available, and things can change for them.

- **Provide relevant signposting** specific to the issues faced by the user.
- **Signpost to support in a range of formats,** such as face to face, online, phone, email and text services.
- **Signpost to local support** where possible, as well as national organisations.
- **Be realistic** about support options and how they can help.

All companies must review signposting regularly to ensure accuracy of contact numbers, URLs, addresses and opening times.

Note: users in high levels of distress can feel overwhelmed if provided with too much information. **Try to keep signposts to two or three at any time.**

Embedded support

Providing embedded support on sites and platforms can make it easier for users to seek help by minimising the steps required to access support.

Examples include:

Information resources – covering topics such as staying safe online, how to support others online, how to look after your wellbeing and support available for self-harm and suicide.

Self-care activities – such as breathing exercises, mindfulness exercises, and distraction techniques.

Instant support features – such as the ability to talk to trained staff or volunteers experienced in self-harm and suicide support. Platforms who are unable to offer instant support features should establish effective ways of connecting users in distress to expert organisations providing crisis intervention support.

Parent controls and resources – allowing parents and carers to help their child to stay safe online.

How Samaritans can help you

For further support and advice on responding to self-harm and suicide content online, please see our website or contact the Samaritans' Online Harms Advisory Service at onlineharms@samaritans.org Email monitored Monday–Friday, 9am–5pm.