SAMARITANS LAUNCHES GROUND-BREAKING TWITTER APP TO HELP IDENTIFY VULNERABLE PEOPLE ONLINE

#SamaritansRadar

Monday 27 October 2014
UNDER EMBARGO UNTIL 00.01 HOURS, WEDNESDAY 29 OCTOBER 2014

Samaritans, the leading suicide prevention charity, today (29/10/14) is launching **Samaritans Radar** - a free web application that monitors your friends' Tweets, alerting you if it spots anyone who may be struggling to cope. The app gives users a second chance to see potentially worrying Tweets, which might have otherwise been missed.

Created by digital agency Jam using Twitter's API, Samaritans Radar 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.

Samaritans recognises that social media is increasingly being used as an outlet for people to share their feelings. In addition, there are some who may go online in the hope that someone will reach out and offer support.

With more than 15 million Twitter users in the UK and an average of 500 million Tweets per day globally, Samaritans Radar provides an online safety net, reducing the chances of a person's call for help being missed. The first-of-its-kind app was developed with input from academic experts, to identify the phrases that vulnerable people use on social media.

The development of Samaritans Radar follows research which showed that:
- Twitter is [also] used for keeping in touch with friends and colleagues, sharing interesting information within one's network, seeking help and opinions, and releasing emotional stress (Elrlich & Shami, 2010; Zhao & Rosson, 2009).[1]
- Social media feeds can be effective indicators of real world performance.
- Twitter […] has a high user base and is a platform of personal expression.
- The 2013 study found that there is an association between rates of Tweets per users determined to be at risk for suicide, and actual suicide rates. **It therefore identified Twitter as an important surveillance tool for detecting suicidal patterns**.[2]

Joe Ferns, Executive Director of Policy, Research & Development at Samaritans, said: "We know

---

[1] Johnston, K., Chan, M.M & Hauman, M. (2013) Use, Perception and Attitude of University Students Towards Facebook and Twitter. The Electronic Journal Information Systems Evaluation, 16, 3, 201-211
[2] Jashinsky et al (2013) Tracking Suicide Risk Factors through Twitter in the US. Crisis

that people struggling to cope often go online looking for support, however, there is still so much we need to learn about why this happens and how we can make the online environment safer for vulnerable people. By not addressing this issue we run the risk of shutting these discussions down and driving them underground. Instead we need to use tools such as Samaritans Radar to encourage people to look out for one another online, helping them to reach out and offer support."

Patricia Cartes, Twitter's Global Head of Trust and Safety Outreach, said: "We are delighted to see Samaritans using Twitter to create the Samaritans Radar app. Twitter actively forges partnerships with organisations in the field of online safety and digital citizenship, and Samaritans has a longstanding reputation for supporting people in times of need. It is fantastic to see them extending this expertise and experimenting with new ways of supporting people in the digital space."

While the app is aimed at anyone using Twitter, the key audience for Samaritans Radar is the 'Millennials' group – otherwise known as Generation Y – which typically includes 18-35 year olds. They are 'digital natives' – growing up using new technology and the first generation to grow up with computers in their home. They are the most active age group across social platforms, and spend an average of just over three hours daily on social networks. This group is sometimes referred to as 'Generation Me', due to their self-interest and high expectations of their lives.

Samaritans Radar was created by digital agency Jam. It is completely free and activated in just two steps from the website www.samaritansradar.org. All alerts are sent to the subscriber's email address directly – never to their Twitter followers - and Radar doesn't post to Twitter on the subscriber's behalf.

Twitter's wider collaboration with Samaritans 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 reported account, to share recommendations and contact information for Samaritans.

<div align="center">

– ENDS –

</div>

For more information about the work of Samaritans, or about Radar, please contact Vicky Hartley in the Samaritans Press Office on 020 8394 8300 or email press@samaritans.org

Notes to editors:
- Samaritans is available round the clock, every single day of the year. We provide a safe place for anyone struggling to cope, whoever they are, however they feel, whatever life has done to them. Please call 08457 90 90 90 (UK) 116 123 (ROI), email jo@samaritans.org, or visit www.samaritans.org to find details of the nearest branch.