Internet safety, suicide and self-harm:

How can we support people to have safe and positive experiences online?

Francesca Edmans - Digital Products Manager - Online Harms
f.edmans@samaritans.org

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Why is support around online activity needed?

With the internet being so readily available these days, it's highly likely that anybody self-harming /suicidal will use it.

People with lived experience

Self-harm and suicide content

☐ 75% of people had first seen self-harm content online aged 14 or younger

☐ 83% said they'd seen self-harm and suicide content without searching for it

Listen now
The Instagram suicide network
A teenager's phone helped uncover a vast network of young women who use Instagram to post about self-harm, their thoughts about killing themselves and even their suicide attempts.
Show more

Contains some upsetting scenes.
Molly Russell: Did her death change social media?
Available n... 24 minutes

HM Government
Online Harms White Paper
April 2019

INSTAGRAM EXTENDS BAN ON SELF-HARM IMAGES TO DRAWINGS AND MEMES AFTER MOLLY RUSSELL DEATH

What does good support look like?

Try to understand why it's important and what the underlying feelings/motivations are rather than just seeing the act

Make sure there's no judgement or shame in the reaction. It has to be their decision if they're going to give up viewing that content.

Person with lived experience

What kind of support do you think Layla would like from her counsellor around her online use?

- Would want them to ask the question

- To have the door opened to the conversation by the therapist so it takes the shame away

- **Keep talking to her**

- **For the counsellor to probe a bit more**

- **Not being too forceful**

- speaking in a way as a friend/counsellor, not just a counsellor

- Validation of her needs and support with keeping herself feeling safe.

- Face to face talking - Helping someone move away from the online world. Offline appointments.

- Taking the shame away, normalising talking about it

- Normalising it and making it part of every converation

- Knowing that it is normal to look online and gain support/comfort through meeting other people who feel the same as you - you are not alone

- Not to be shamed for using the online use - just to be curious about it and what helps/what doesn't help so much

- look at it through the perspective of the person who uses it

- Appreciate the role of internet in a persons life will be different - might depend on their experiences

- To not shut down the conversation or suggest that they shouldn't look online

- What is helpful and what isnt? Help identify that. What is the line?

- because it is normalised things that layla perceives as comforting might actually be harmful. It's important for her counsellor to know what she is looking at to

- Give advice on what you could do when it gets overwhelming

- When does it tip into not being helpful anymore

- Help with finding triggers - when does it tip into not being helpful anymore

- **Treat the internet like a relative**

- There is a "but" in real life. Good and bad things in life, same as on the internet. Like a family member, could be good or toxic

- learning the skills of how to deal with the internet

- Signposted to more helpful and 'safe' places on the internet

- Signposting to "reliable" information - the internet is full of a range of positive/negative and true/false information so it can be hard to know where to look

- signposting to online places - counsellor on the form. ways of interacting without showing your face. Don't just find it anywhere on the internet but finding a safer sapce

- Encourage meeting friends

- Signpost to online places where she might feel more comfortable ... verified places, somewhere that is monitored

- Boost helpful internet usage and reduce Layla's use of the harmful content
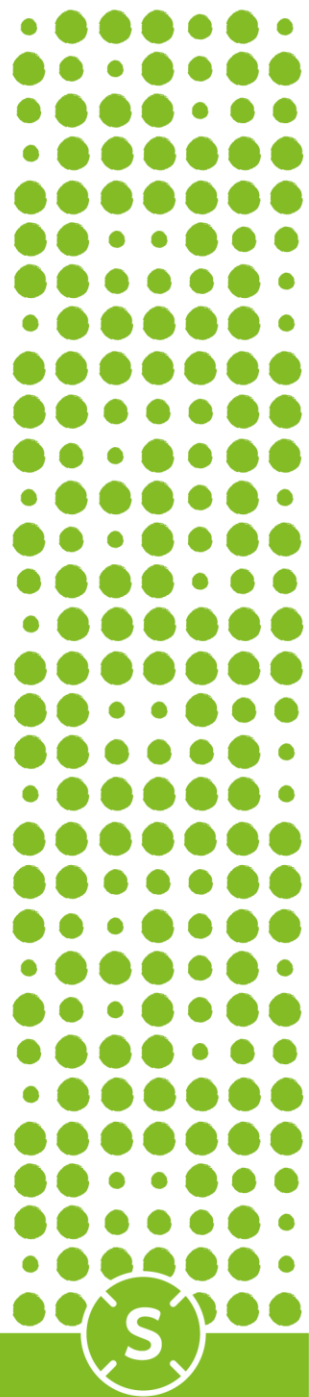
What are the barriers to support?

You feel like you're walking on eggshells. You feel you have to be careful when talking about someone's online activity.
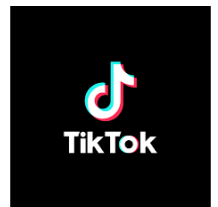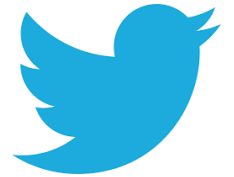
Practitioners

What's Samaritans doing ?

Online Excellence Programme

- Research and insight programme

- Influencing policy and practice

- Supporting industry to manage self-harm and suicide content

- Increasing the support available to users

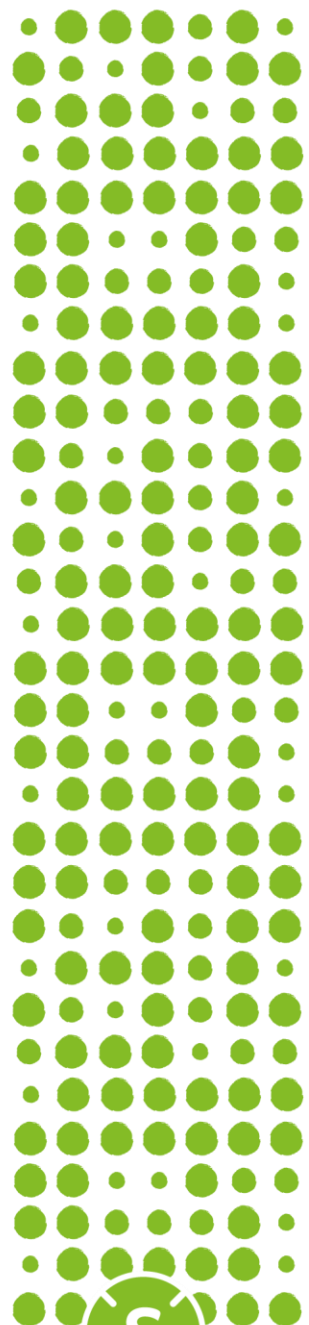# Who does Samaritans support?
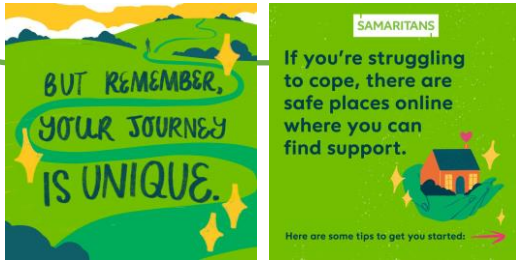

Users and peers

Parents and carers

Practitioners

Industry and regulators

What is Samaritans doing?

Online Safety Training for young people

Social media resources to help young people look after themselves and each other online.

Guidance for Parents

Guidance on when and how to talk to your child about their online use.

Guidance for Practitioners

E-learning course and digital resources to help practitioners support the people they work with to stay safe online. Developed with Tees Esk and Wear Valley Mental Health Trust

Advisory service

Contact us for support if you're worried about online content around suicide and self-harm

Industry guidelines

Practical tips for platforms and sites on managing suicide and self-harm content

View Practitioners resources

https://www.samaritans.org/internet-safety-practitioners

The online harms advisory service

Who we can support

Our online harms advisory service can be used by anyone who

- wants to report worrying content

- needs advice on how to keep their users safe (for example on their website or social channels)

- Is worried about someone else – for example practitioners, parents or other supporters

How we can help

- Report concerns about specific websites or types of harmful content, such as online challenges and hoaxes.

- Developing or advising on the creation of bespoke resources

- Reviewing platform policies around self-harm and moderation processes.

Get in touch

- Email: onlineharms@samaritans.org
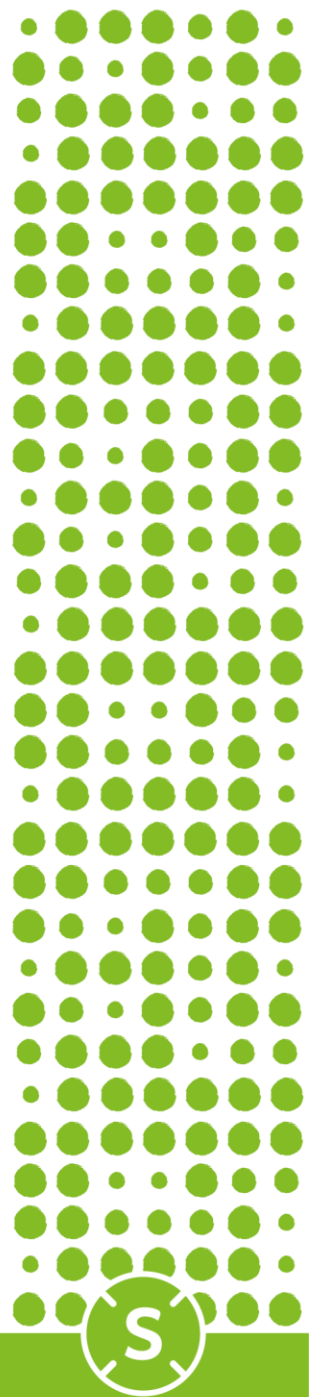
Thank you

For more information or advice on issues around internet safety, contact:
onlineharns@samaritans.org

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