

Advice on responding to harmful viral content and challenges



In recent years, harmful online viral challenges relating to self-harm and suicide have caused widespread concern. These challenges may contain detailed descriptions or methods of self-harm or graphic content depicting self-harm and suicide.

This content has the potential to cause serious harm if attention is drawn to it.

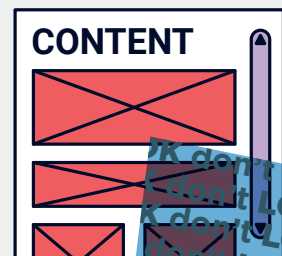
Limit the spread¹. Your first instinct may be to share or issue a warning but this may unintentionally increase curiosity driving more children and young people to search for the harmful content².

Careful consideration must be given prior to publishing or sharing any specific warnings or alerts to the public to avoid drawing greater attention to harmful online content.

Advice for families and practitioners

It is important to talk to children and young people about how to stay safe online. However it's best to avoid naming specific online games or challenges.

If you receive warnings about any online content relating to self-harm and suicide, **think carefully about what you share**. Avoid drawing attention to it and unintentionally advertising it to children and young people.



What to do if you become aware of harmful online content

- **Talk to children and young people about their online activity.** Let them share what they're playing or looking at, rather than asking them about the harmful content, which may draw their interest to it.
- **Avoid sharing online content with children and young people that may be distressing or upsetting.** If they express concern or worries about online content, it is important to listen to them and offer support. Provide practical strategies to manage harmful content such as; turning off the screen and coming to talk to you.
- **Report any content that concerns you.** Use the Report Harmful Content service for advice and support. The Samaritans have advice about reporting content that worries you.
- **Provide information and signpost to sources of support for children and young people.** It may be useful to provide advice on how children and young people can support themselves and their friends.
- **Contact the Samaritans online harms team at onlineharms@samaritans.org** for advice for professionals with concerns about suicide and self-harm content and visit the Samaritans website for guidance on discussing suicide safely online.
- **Read the Welsh Government guidance 'Responding to issues of self-harm and thoughts of suicide in young people'** to support practitioners and professionals.
- **Visit Keeping Safe Online on Hwb** for advice, resources and support on a range of online issues.