

Rt Hon Elizabeth Truss MP
Prime Minister
10 Downing St.
SW1A 2AA

10th October 2022

Dear Prime Minister,

Suicide and self-harm prevention in the Online Safety Bill

We are writing to urge you to ensure that the regulation of harmful suicide and self-harm content is retained within the Online Safety Bill.

Our organisations work to improve mental health, prevent self-harm, reduce the number of people who die by suicide, and provide treatment to people who need clinical support.

While the internet can be an invaluable resource for individuals experiencing feelings of self-harm and suicide, online content can also act to encourage, maintain or exacerbate self-harm and suicidal behaviours. Although suicide and self-harm are complex and rarely caused by one thing, in many cases the internet is involved: a **2017 inquiry into suicides of young people found suicide-related internet use in nearly 26% of deaths in under-20s, and 13% of deaths in 20-24 year olds.**¹

The Online Safety Bill is a major opportunity to make the UK the safest place to be online, as set out in the Conservative Party's 2019 manifesto, by reducing access to harmful content relating to suicide and self-harm.

We consider the types of suicide and self-harm content that is legal, but unequivocally harmful, includes (but is not limited to):

- Information, instructions, and advice on methods of self-harm and suicide
- Content that portrays self-harm and suicide as positive or desirable
- Graphic descriptions or depictions of self-harm and suicide.

We have been pleased to see continued commitment from the Government to protecting vulnerable children as it considers modifying the Bill. But susceptibility to harm from suicide and self-harm content does not end when people reach the age of 18. Anyone, including young adults aged 18-24, can be just as vulnerable to harm from this type of content, especially given the way that everyone's mental health can fluctuate. It is therefore vital that the Bill protects people of all ages from legal but extremely harmful suicide and self-harm content on large and small platforms.

¹ *The National Confidential Inquiry into Suicide and Homicide by People with Mental Illness (NCISH) (2017)*

We urge you to commit to returning the Bill to Parliament as soon as possible in a form which protects the public from all extremely dangerous suicide and self-harm content. With every day that passes, we lose an opportunity to save lives.

Yours sincerely,



Mark Rowland
CEO
Mental Health Foundation



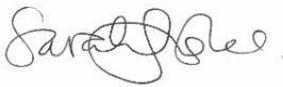
Julie Bentley
CEO
Samaritans



Ged Flynn
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PAPYRUS – Prevention
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Sarah Hughes
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Emma Thomas
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Professor David Strain
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Catherine Roche
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Victoria Hornby
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Innovations



Matthew Smith
Co-Founder & Chief
Operating Officer
If U Care Share
Foundation



Brian Dow
Deputy Chief Executive
Rethink Mental Illness

cc Rt Hon Michelle Donelan MP, Secretary of State for Digital, Media, Culture and Sport

Rt Hon Dr Thérèse Coffey MP, Secretary of State for Health and Social Care

Damian Collins MP, Minister for Tech and the Digital Economy