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Digital youth mental health news, research, resources, and developments.

Trigger warning: This newsletter contains material of a sensitive nature that may be triggering for some individuals. Help and support are available if you need it, you do not have to struggle alone: Phone NHS 111; Samaritans, 116 123; SMS: Text SHOUT to 85258 and Childline at 0800 1111.

Self-Harm

In the new Online Safety Act, self-harm content is identified as 'primary priority' in terms of the harm it could cause people.

To mark Self-Harm Awareness Day, held every year on the 1st of March, this month's newsletter therefore looks at how self-harm relates to social media. Including key messages, policy updates, resources, digital supports for self-harm, and further learning.

Key Messages

23% of 11-17-year-olds in the UK have seen self-harm content (Katz et al, 2023).

Girls, non-binary, and trans children are more likely than boys to view or share self-harm content (Bryce, 2023).

Benefits of accessing self-harm content:
- Reducing self-harm
- Self-harm recovery
- Social connection and help-giving
- Learning coping strategies, accessing support and information

Potential harms:
- Escalating/triggering self-harm
- Comparing own self-harm to others
- Learning about methods/ways of concealment
- Viewing graphic content

Policy Updates

- Self-Harm Strategy and Action Plan (2023-27) - Scotland's dedicated self-harm strategy and action plan which includes a focus on improving understanding of self-harm within the digital landscape.

- Making the Internet Safer For All - A new offence that makes it a crime to encourage/assist another person to self-harm, including online, came into effect in Scotland on 31st January 2024.

Resources & Reporting

Online Activity - Suicide and Self-harm - Resources from the Samaritans to support professionals in understanding why people engage with self-harm content and what to do when you come across online activity around self-harm.

Talking To Your Child About Self-Harm and Suicide Content - A conversation guide for parents/carers who are supporting someone with their online activity in relation to self-harm.

Report Harmful Content - Step-by-step instructions on how to make a report on some of the most popular social media platforms. They can also help if you have reported harmful content to a site and there has been no resolution, including content encouraging self-harm.

Digital Supports

Self-Harm Network Scotland - Online portal providing information and support for people who are living with self-harm aged 12+. Web-chat support is available.

[app] Calm-Harm - A free app that helps manage or resist the urge to self-harm.

[app] distrACT - Provides trusted information and links to support for people who self-harm and may feel suicidal.

R;pple - Free browser extension that signposts people who have searched for self-harm content to mental health support and advice.

Alumina - Free online support for young people aged 10-17 years old experiencing self-harm.

Further learning

Internet Safety, Suicide, and Self-harm - A free interactive e-learning module on internet safety, suicide, and self-harm that has been developed by the Samaritans.

"It's Not Safe and Consistent" - A report summarising the findings of an NHSGGC exploratory project that investigates the lived experience of young people using social media who have experience of self-harm.