

Key messages on the role of Social Media:

- Can spread inaccurate and harmful information, contributing to contagion
- Can promote a sense of social connection and support for those affected
- 'Trolling' can exacerbate the grieving process and increase risk
- Appoint a dedicated moderator for online content (to promote life-affirming content, remove offensive content)

Social media – what to post. Think 'Papageno Effect':

- ✓ Use social media to signpost to sources of help, support and other life-affirming content
- ✓ Use social media to promote suicide prevention messages
- ✓ Use social media to promote a sense of social connection and support for those affected

Unexpected exposure:

- Users can create content for one social media platform which is then recycled on others. Content is also edited before being recycled, potentially taking it out of its original context
- Social media platforms have different features and ways to communicate and reach users
- As a result, we must always be wary of unexpected exposure to suicide-related content



Algorithms and AI:

- Social media platforms have become increasingly reliant on algorithms to push engagement and reach as wide a userbase as possible
- Quick-bite content is designed to keep users engaged for longer, resulting in reduced attention span. This often causes more frequent toxic dialogue, and the sharing of articles without pausing for thought, each working to amplify the Werther effect
- Some social media sites promote comments which are the most engaged in, which are frequently negative

Reporting a death by suicide or suspected suicide:

- Use facts, not rumours
- Do not romanticise, sensationalise, glorify or vilify the death
- Do not include details of any suicide note
- Do not include details of the method
- Do not include speculation over the motive

Be vigilant about those who may be struggling with mental health, keep creating new positive content and re-posting links to available helping resources and specialist services for the bereaved. A sample response (PHE, 2019):



If you or someone you know is feeling desperate help is always available. The best way to honour [person's name] is to seek help if you or someone you know is struggling. If you're feeling lost, desperate or alone please get in touch.

[Insert local and national helplines and support organisations]

Everyone grieves in their own way and in their own time. Many people find contributing to sites comforting and helpful. **Share positive stories, particularly stories of those with lived experiences of suicidality who 'choose life' and continue to post details and links to support groups and specialist services for the bereaved.**

How to respond to negative comments:

- ✓ Remove where possible
- ✓ Block notifications if necessary
- ✓ Ask that others be respectful of the feelings of others and operate with empathy and kindness
- ✓ Respond with facts, correct mistakes

Counteract by posting with supportive comments and encourage others to re-post. Consider using these sample responses:



We understand that in the wake of _____'s death, feelings of shock, anger, and confusion may be expected. Expressing these emotions is part of the healing process; we recommend [insert contact details of place / service where people can talk / write openly or negatively if needs be e.g., counselling service]. We ask that all who comment consider the bereaved and demonstrate respect and empathy. Please pause and consider who may read and be further affected by your comments

[Insert local and national helplines and support organisations]



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If you or someone you know is feeling desperate help is always available. Please seek help if you or someone you know is struggling. If you're feeling lost, desperate or alone please get in touch.

[Insert local and national helplines and support organisations]

A Note to Schools, Colleges, Universities:

Samaritans have created [a tool kit](#) for the creation of a crisis plan for schools.

Universities UK have created [a document](#) for crisis and postvention planning.

In the event of a suspected suicide, the school should be able to respond within 48 hours. This is crucial in order to maintain school routine, manage expressions of grief and reduce the risk of suicide contagion.

Additional links:

Help is at hand Support [after suicide handbook](#).

[Finding the Words - How to support someone who has been bereaved and affected by suicide](#).

National Suicide Prevention Alliance Responding to suicidal content online: [Best-practice guidelines](#).

Samaritans Media [guidelines](#).

World Health Organisation Media [Guidelines](#).

Signposting

National Organisations

[Samaritans](#) - Confidential support for people experiencing feelings of distress or despair. Helpline: 116 123

[Mind](#) – Mental Health Charity. Helpline: 0300 123 3393

[Survivors of Bereavement by Suicide](#) (SOBS). Helpline: 0300 111 5065

[Local Support Groups](#)

[PAPYRUS](#) – Prevention of Young Suicide. Helpline: 0800 068 4141

[CRUSE Bereavement Care](#). Helpline: 0808 808 1677

[The Compassionate Friends](#) – Supporting Bereaved Parents and Their Families. Helpline: 0345 123 2304

[Rethink Mental Illness](#) – Support and advice for people living with mental illness. Helpline: 0300 5000 927

[SANE](#) – Support for people affected by mental illness, their families and carers. Helpline: 0300 304 7000

[Child Bereavement UK](#). Helpline: 0800 0288 840

[British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy](#) (BACP) – BACP is a membership organisation that sets standards for therapeutic practice. Their online directory can be used to locate a professional counsellor, who will usually charge for their services.

Local Groups/ Organisations

[Let's Talk](#) – Depression and Anxiety Services in Hull. Tel: 01482 247111

[Mental Health Response Service](#) – Hull and East Riding. Tel: 01482 301701

[Rapid Response Service](#) – North East Lincolnshire. Tel: 01472 256256

[West Yorkshire and Harrogate Suicide Bereavement Service](#). Tel: 0113 3055800

[Together Bereaved by Suicide Support Service](#): Hull, East Yorkshire, Lincolnshire, North East Lincolnshire

Online Support Resources

[Support After Suicide Partnership](#)

[National Suicide Prevention Alliance](#)

[National Bereavement Alliance](#)

[Childhood Bereavement Network](#)

[Suicide Bereavement UK](#)

[If U Care SHARE Foundation](#) - Prevention, intervention and support after suicide

Further Reading

Bell, J. & Westoby, C. [Suicide Exposure in a Polymediated Age](#). In: *Frontiers in Psychology*, 2021.

Bell, J. & Westoby, C. [The Aftermath of a Suicide: Social Media Exposure and Implications for Postvention](#). In: *Suicide Risk Assessment and Prevention*, ed. M. Pompili, Springer, 2022.