



# Department of Health & Social Care

*From Rt Hon Maria Caulfield MP  
Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for  
Mental Health and Women's Health Strategy*

*39 Victoria Street  
London  
SW1H 0EU*

PFD-1401677

Edwin Buckett  
Assistant Coroner  
Inner North London  
Poplar Coroner's Court  
127 Poplar High Street  
London E14 0AE

16 November 2022

Dear Mr Buckett,

Thank you for your letter of 18 March 2022 to the then Minister for Care and Mental Health Gillian Keegan, about the death of James Forryan. I am replying as Minister with responsibility for Mental Health, and thank you for the additional time allowed.

Firstly, I would like to say how saddened I was to read of the circumstances of Mr Forryan's death, and I offer my sincere condolences to his family and loved ones. The circumstances your report describes are very concerning. Preventing suicide is an extremely important part of my portfolio, and I am grateful to you for bringing this issue to my attention.

As you highlight in your report, it is true that suicide is the leading cause of death in the UK amongst people aged 20-34,<sup>1</sup> this is a concerning statistic and highlights the importance of doing all that we can to support individuals who may be experiencing harmful or suicidal thoughts. Every suicide is a preventable loss, and I assure you that it remains a priority for the Government and for me personally, that we take action to reduce suicide rates as far as possible.

To address your concern around websites promoting criminal offences and/or harmful content, we are taking urgent steps to protect users, and particularly vulnerable users, online. The Government is committed to tackling this and making the UK the safest place in the world to be online. Under the Online Safety Bill, in-scope companies that allow users to post content online or to interact with each other – including social media platforms and online forums – will need to remove and limit the spread of illegal content and activity online.

This includes illegal content that encourages or incites suicide online, with all companies in scope of the Bill expected to take swift and effective action against such content. Companies will need to have effective systems in place to prevent it from appearing on their sites. In addition, the Government has now confirmed that encouraging or assisting suicide will be listed as a priority illegal offence in the Bill, alongside other offences such as incitement to and threats of violence.

However, I am also aware that the implementation of legislation takes time, during which individuals, some of whom may be experiencing harmful or suicidal thoughts, will potentially

---

<sup>1</sup> ONS, Leading causes of death, UK: 2001 to 2018, March 2020:  
<https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/healthandsocialcare/causesofdeath/articles/leadingcausesofdeathuk/2001to2018>

be exposed to extremely harmful and inciting online content. In advance of the legislation coming into force, we are working with online platforms to encourage action to remove or reduce access to harmful suicide and self-harm material.

The Department works closely with the Samaritans who have in place a strategic partnership with suicide and self-harm prevention experts, which continues work with platforms to tackle harmful suicide and self-harm content and support vulnerable users of their platforms. This partnership is undertaking research to develop our understanding of harmful suicide and self-harm content, produce guidance for industry, and has established an advice and reporting service.

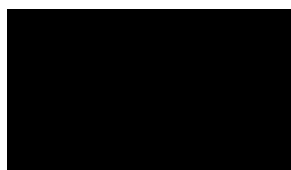
Samaritans have also released *Managing self-harm and suicide content online*<sup>2</sup>, a set of guidelines for sites and platforms hosting user-generated content, which sets out a framework of best practice principles to support platforms to manage self-harm and suicide content in a safe and sensitive way. The Government continues to engage with these stakeholders as part of wider suicide prevention work and the online safety framework.

We are also investing £57 million in suicide prevention through the NHS Long Term Plan. This will see investment in all areas of the country by 2023/24 to support local suicide prevention plans and establish suicide bereavement support services. We have also issued guidance to local authorities that highlights the importance of working across all local services, including the voluntary sector, to target high risk groups, including men and children and young people.

In addition, in 2021/22, we provided £5.4million to Voluntary, Community and Social Enterprise organisations to support the sector to continue to meet increases in demand as a result of the pandemic. This included funding to a number of organisations with a particular focus on addressing the needs of children and young people, including Papyrus, a national suicide prevention charity that works to prevent suicide amongst people under 35 by providing confidential support and advice to young people struggling with thoughts of suicide. The funding also reached a number of organisations focusing on suicide prevention amongst men.

I hope this response is helpful. Thank you for bringing these concerns to my attention.

Yours sincerely,



MARIA CAULFIELD MP

---

<sup>2</sup> [https://media.samaritans.org/documents/Online\\_Harms\\_guidelines\\_FINAL.pdf](https://media.samaritans.org/documents/Online_Harms_guidelines_FINAL.pdf)

CC:

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