EBay, post office and Ministry of Defense first to adopt Royal Mail's online safe space service to support victims of domestic abuse

18-09-2020

Earlier this month, Royal Mail Group launched the â€˜Online Safe Spacesâ€™ portal, which provides support for victims of domestic abuse. The Company is offering the software for free, to any organisation wanting to support the cause.

eBay, Post Office and Ministry of Defence are among the first organisations to adopt Royal Mail Group's 'Online Safe Spaces' portal, which helps abuse victims access vital support and advice.

The portal will be installed on www.ebay.co.uk and www.postoffice.co.uk, reaching a total audience of 32.1 million. It will also feature on the Ministry of Defence's internal website, for the benefit of their c.200,000 employees. Participating organisations have placed the Online Safe Spaces link at the bottom of their web pages, so it can be easily accessed by anyone needing to use the tool.

'Online Safe Spaces' is a discreet portal, which leaves no internet history trace, and is being offered by the Company upon request to any organisation for free, to support victims of domestic abuse. The service has been developed in collaboration with the charity Hestia and its 'UK SAYS NO MORE' campaign, alongside leading abuse experts from the University of Bristol.

The portal opens in a pop-up window, which can be installed on both internal and external websites. The service provides support, advice and helpful contact numbers for those at risk of domestic abuse. It also provides quick exit options for the person seeking information.

Royal Mail Group has worked with the national 'UK SAYS NO MORE' campaign to ensure that the 'Online Safe Spaces' provides a host of helpful links and information, including; when to dial 999, national helplines, local support groups and further useful links. It also includes a questionnaire to determine the participant's risk of domestic abuse.

The initiative was developed by Royal Mail Senior Legal Advisor Charlie Ryan and Hawkrose Ltd MD Rob Fern, following their involvement in the Financial Times Innovative Lawyers – Global Legal Hackathon Challenge*. The challenge asked participants to produce the most pioneering solutions to societal

problems posed by the Covid-19 crisis.

The term 'Safe Spaces' aligns with the current 'UK SAYS NO MORE' campaign, which provides physical Safe Spaces in retail premises for victims of domestic abuse. Participants so far include Boots, Superdrug and Morrisons.

Minister for Defence People and Veterans Johnny Mercer said: "Domestic abuse has no place in society and I'm pleased the Ministry of Defence is one of the first organisations to adopt the Royal Mail's 'Online Safe Spaces' portal – an excellent initiative that provides support and advice to those at risk of or falling victim to abuse.

"We are determined to clamp down on all types of unacceptable behaviour in defence, and this portal will sit alongside other initiatives such as our 24/7 bullying and harassment helpline."

Zeenath Khan, Senior Director, People, at eBay, said: "Refuge, the UK's largest domestic abuse charity, reported a 700% increase in calls to its helpline during the peak of lockdown. With one in every two households in the UK shopping on eBay, we're proud to support the Royal Mail by featuring the link to the 'Online Safe Space' portal on our site, and hope that we can play a part in helping victims seek help swiftly and discreetly."

Steve O'Reilly, HR Director at Post Office, said: "We're proud to support such an important initiative so the millions of visitors to our website have the opportunity to find out more about how to get support in situations of domestic violence. For those that are suffering from abuse we hope that the portal will provide the information they need to seek help."

Sally Ashford, Chief HR Officer, Royal Mail Group said: "The 'Online Safe Space' portal has been developed to help victims of domestic abuse access vital online support if they need it. By placing the link on high traffic websites like eBay and Post Office.co.uk, we hope that victims will be able to use the service discreetly if required, without placing themselves at further risk. We hope that the portal will inspire affected individuals to feel confident enough to seek help."

Lyndsey Dearlove, Head of UK SAYS NO MORE at Hestia said: "Lockdown restrictions due to Covid-19 have provided opportunities for businesses to respond to domestic abuse for both their staff and customers through their digital platforms. By adopting Online Safe Spaces, eBay, Post Office and Ministry of Defence are helping to ensure more victims of domestic abuse can access the vital support they need, when they need it. We know that when businesses take action, it saves lives, and we are pleased to have these organisations join Online Safe Spaces."

Source: Royal Mail

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