Statement From Ask.FM Spokesperson Anastasia Pochetnaya:

Since ASKfm was bought out from the original founders in 2013 a huge amount of investment and technology has been deployed to prevent bullying and other safety matters on the service, below is a list of some of the key interventions we have taken and this has placed ASKfm as a key leader in online safety for young people, and particularly the technical innovation to identify user bullying and abusive content, and this includes taking action against users who are breaking the rules, and closing their accounts if necessary.

Specifically, I would highlight that this includes **automatic filtering of all Questions and Answers exchanged by user**s, including questions asked by other users that go unanswered and this has resulted in doubling the number of inappropriate Q&As being removed from the service.

ASKfm key safety measures to keep user safe on ASKfm

Action against users who break the community guidelines is taken and this can vary according to the breach of service – this can be from receiving a warning through to having the account terminated and removed. (At the moment, the **Safety Center** is updating the technical base and will be available again within a week.)

Improved easier access to safety controls for users on the service such as blocking users or blocking all anonymous questions. And robust reporting features making it easier for users to report any content or behavior that concerns them see tools for users https://safety.ask.fm/safety-tools/ (At the moment, the **Safety Center** is updating the technical base and will be available again within a week.)

There has been significant investment in technical and human moderation procedures, resources, and staff to remove offensive, hurtful, and any content that may be a threat to a child such as bullying, and including identifying sexual predators. And as highlighted above this involves automatic filtering of all Questions and Answers exchanged by users, including questions asked by other users that go unanswered and has resulted in doubling the amount of inappropriate Q&As being removed from the service.

Developed a comprehensive Safety Centre to assist teens, parents, and educators with a range of issues young people face online, partnered with a number of NGOs, and had the advice of an expert Safety Board in 2013 Onwards, made up of world-leading child safety experts from around the world. _(At the moment, the **Safety Center** is updating the technical base and will be available again within a week.)_

Cyber-bullying online

It is important to understand that a young person who is harassed or bullied online often stems from their real-life contexts such as a school where conflicts with known friends can spread to and escalate online. ASKfm attempts to prevent and respond to any reports of abuse, including bullying,

and established global 24-hour monitoring across 24 languages and a law enforcement officer to assist with any requests or investigations.

Also, a short video of our initiative together with Dr. Linda Papadopoulos as help to teenagers can be viewed here: https://youtu.be/oC2Nu9kash0

Anonymity Online

Anonymity online has been associated with cyber-bullying as some users believed they were fully anonymous and could hide behind this but this is not the case. If a user breaks the law since ASKfm does maintain account information, this can be used by law enforcement to trace people if required under a court order, it is important users understand this – they can use anonymity features on the App but must do so responsibly. See Dr. Justin Patchin's blog about anonymity here.

It is important to understand that ASKfm **users do not have to use the anonymous feature** on the APP and can control this see https://safety.ask.fm/safety-tools/#web2 *(At the moment, the Safety Center is updating the technical base and will be available again within a week.)*

Education

ASKfm has also invested in educational resources with the UK charity the Diana Award as part of their **anti-bullying pro** work to help users understand the importance of online anonymity being used responsibly see http://askfm.antibullyingpro.com Most recently this included a resource for young people to reflect about their behavior online and how it may support their identity and be themselves with Dr. Linda Papadopoulos see https://safety.ask.fm *(At the moment, the Safety Center is updating the technical base and will be available again within a week.)*

Support service built into ASKfm

ASKfm has also partnered with the Koko service in 2017, an online emotional distress-support and response service, to respond to the emerging phenomenon of users sending hurtful messages to themselves, also known as "self-bullying"

It automatically detects hurtful content and supports ASKfm in discovering and removing such content. The Koko application can also direct users to mental health support services of various kinds who can offer more personalized assistance to those in such distress

https://medium.com/@askfm/askfm-teams-up-with-koko-to-tackle-self-messaging-issues-6408d742a95f and https://itskoko.com this has been implemented on ASKfm in the US, UK and Australia.