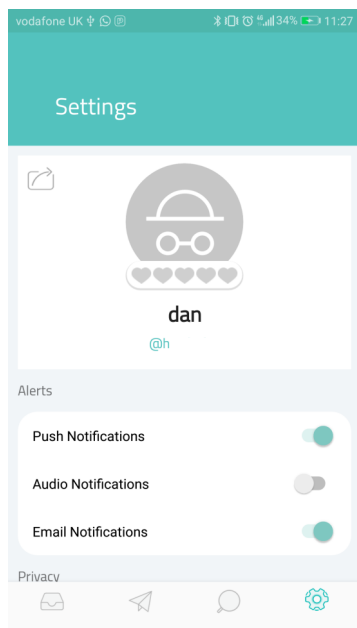# What is Sarahah

Sarahah (meaning Honesty in Arabic) is a social network/messaging app which enables users to send anonymous feedback. It is promoted as a tool for "discovering your strengths and areas for improvement by receiving honest feedback from your employees and your friends in a private manner." It has been widely criticised for its use for bullying.

Users create an account with a username and a profile picture. They can send messages to other users if they know their username and people can message them. The app doesn't allow you to post anything to your account and all messages are text based with no option to attach photos or videos.

Your username can be shared with friends through apps like WhatsApp, Instagram, Facebook or Snapchat. It can be attached to a snap on Snapchat to encourage users to send feedback on the picture or include it in your Instagram bio (which cannot be hidden). Anyone who knows your username can send you a message through the app or via a weblink (username.sarahah.com). Anyone who visits that weblink can send a message whether they have the app or an account. You cannot reply to any message you receive and the app wont tell you who sent it.

Sarahah doesn't have a friends or followers system like other social media apps but does include a search option enabling other users to find and message people, even if they don't know them.

Do age restrictions apply?

Yes. While the app itself does not offer any guidance on age in it's terms, the Google Play Store and Apple App store rate it as 16+

Are there any privacy settings/controls?

Sarahah only has 2 privacy controls available to users. You can stop your username appearing in the search results within the app and you also have the ability to turn off feedback from anyone who hasn't registered with the app.

The app will allow you to block a user but only if you know what that persons user name is. If you already have their username, search for them and push the block button. The flag next to it will also report their behaviour to the makers of the app.
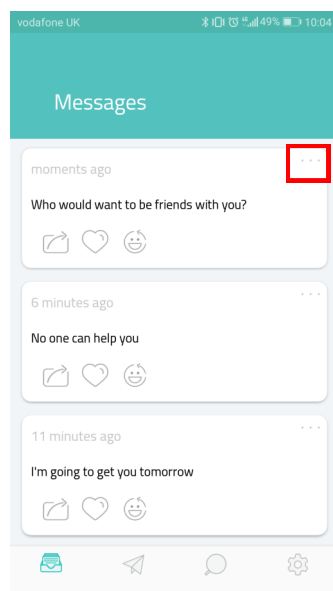
While messages sent anonymously have a block option, Sarahah does not make it clear how that works if it wasn't sent through the app.
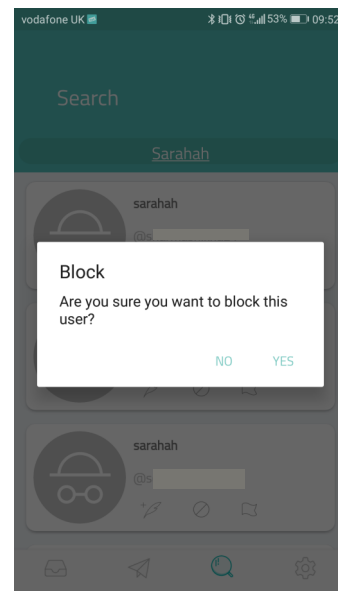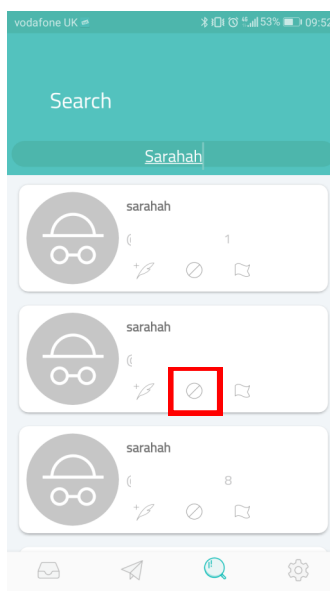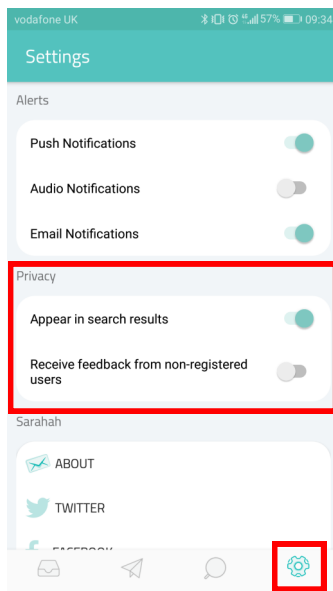
Things to think about

Online Abuse

The greatest risk present to Sarahah users is the abusive behaviour of others. As seen with similar apps and websites in the past (such as Ask.FM), these types of services can be easily abused—A study conducted in 2017 by Netaware found that many teens feel anonymous services facilitate bullying behaviour such as name calling, intimidation and death threats.

If your child wants to use Sarahah, talk to them about why they want it. What are their friends experiences? Why do they want to use it? Are their other apps which might serve the same purpose?

As users on Sarahah are not accountable for their comments (no-one will know who wrote the message) it is important that they understand the risk of abusive messages through the service could be quite high. Talking to our children about why people might choose to send negative comments (even if it was intended as a joke) could help them understand more about their own responsibilities to be positive online.
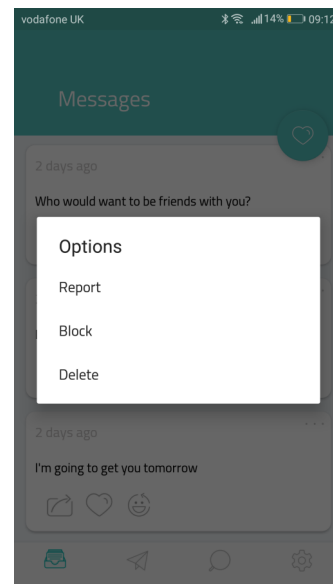
Encourage them to screenshot abusive messages to share with trusted adults and to block/report the message. This can be done by going to the messages and clicking on the 3 dots at the top right, selecting either report, block or delete.

Communication

Communication with children and young people is key. Knowing what apps they use and why they use them can help adults to understand the risk and help them manage it. But talking about it can be difficult.

Young people are more likely to confide in a friend than an adult as they fear how we will respond and what our actions would be – ban the app, confiscate the device or take them off the internet completely. Explaining what we would do if something went wrong and why we would react in that way may encourage them to be more open about what might worry them online. It is of the utmost importance that children and young people understand that it is not their fault that someone behaves in an abusive manner towards them and that they don't have to put up with it!

Bullying can isolate an individual and social media apps can sometimes make it feel like the whole world is against you. Telling a trusted adult like a parent/carer or teacher is vital and can sometimes lessen the impact of the negative feedback they receive. If a child or young person feels that they don't have anyone to talk to, they can always ring a service like Childline on 0800 1111 or by visiting their website www.childline.org.uk

Want to learn more?

Share Aware campaign:
https://www.nspcc.org.uk/preventing-abuse/keeping-children-safe/share-aware/

Information on Sarahah from NSPCC and O2:
https://www.net-aware.org.uk/news/sarahah-news/

If you have concerns about the immediate safety of a child, you can call Lincolnshire Police on 101 or, in an emergency, dial 999