

Netflix suicide scene cut after deaths surge

Matthew Moore Media Correspondent

Netflix has agreed to cut a scene from a high school drama in which a teenager kills herself, after researchers identified a rise in real-life suicides.

The first series of *13 Reasons Why*, which was released in 2017, concluded with the character of Hannah Baker, 17, played by Katherine Langford, taking her own life.

Mental health campaigners criticised Netflix for showing the method of suicide, warning that it could encourage copycat attempts by vulnerable young viewers. Subsequent research

suggested that suicides among young Americans rose by nearly a third in the month in which the drama launched on the streaming service, although a direct causal link could not be established.

Netflix agreed to put up an extra warning at the start of the series but defended the programme's controversial subject matter, saying that it was prompting "important conversations" in families.

However, the on-demand service bowed to pressure from medical experts yesterday and announced that the graphic scene would be deleted. The



Katherine Langford plays Hannah in 13 Reasons Why

news came before the launch of the third series. Brian Yorkey, the show's creator, said: "It was our hope to tell a story that would help young viewers feel seen and heard, and encourage sympathy in all who viewed it.

"Our creative intent in portraying the ugly, painful reality of suicide in

such graphic detail in season one was to tell the truth about the horror of such an act and make sure no one would ever wish to emulate it.

"But as we get ready to launch season three, we have heard concerns about the scene from Dr Christine Moutier at the American Foundation for Suicide Prevention and others, and have agreed with Netflix to re-edit it."

The scene now cuts from Hannah looking at herself in the mirror to her parents discovering her death, removing the specific act of self-harm.

Netflix's decision was welcomed by a spokeswoman for the Samaritans.

"While covering difficult topics in drama can help to increase understanding and encourage people to seek help, it's important that this is done in a responsible way," Lorna Fraser said.

"Programme-makers should always seek advice from experts on the portrayal of suicide to ensure any risk to vulnerable viewers is minimised."

The *13 Reasons Why* television series is based on a 2007 novel by Jay Asher. The title refers to a box of cassette tapes recorded by the character of Hannah explaining why she chose to end her own life. The second series was released last year.