

By **Tony Bonnici**

MEMORIAL internet pages dedicated to the Bridgend suicide victims have been closed to prevent copycat deaths, the Daily Express can reveal. The UK's leading tribute website Gonetoosoon.co.uk said it was removing the messages posted online in memory of the tragic youngsters.

The site's creators said they had to act responsibly following the recent deaths of 17 young people in the South Wales town, all in apparent suicides.

It is thought many comments left by well-wishers on the site – which allows mourners to create online books of remembrance – could be romanticising death and encouraging other youngsters to consider killing themselves.

Terrible

Web users trying to access the dedications are now being redirected to a page explaining that it has been taken down.

It reads: "As you may be aware it has been suggested that memorials to the Bridgend youngsters may be encouraging other young people to consider taking their own lives.

"Gonetoosoon believes if there is the slightest possibility that this is the case we have no choice and must act responsibly.

"We have also decided not to include details of any future apparent suicides within the Bridgend area for the time being." It adds that those

Tribute web pages shut to halt copycat suicides



TRAGIC: Anthony Martin, 19, who hanged himself at home and the Gonetoosoon site's announcement

needing someone to talk to should call the Samaritans.

Terry George, founder and creator of the website, said last night he had become concerned at suggestions such websites encouraged copycat deaths.

"In the two years that Gonetoosoon has been up and running we have had nearly 25,000 memorials," he said.

"This is the first time since we started that anything like this has happened. We felt that the only responsible thing we could do was to close down the sites, at least for the short-term.

"We hope that by taking this lead other social networking

sites will follow our lead and hope that this terrible situation will resolve itself."

It was believed the 17 deaths in just 13 months were linked via social networking websites like MySpace and Bebo. But police have now ruled this out.

Government figures yesterday revealed how the suicide rate in Bridgend rocketed by four times its usual rate in 2007, particularly among 15 to 29-year-olds.

An inquest was yesterday opened into the death of the 16th victim, Kelly Stephenson, 20. She is believed to have hanged herself within hours of

her cousin Nathaniel Pritchard, 15, last week. His inquest is due to be opened today as is that of another girl, Jenna Parry, 16.

Last night, a grieving mother urged Bridgend's youngsters to talk through their problems.

Tracy Roberts' son, Anthony Martin, 19, was found hanging in April last year at home. Ms Roberts, 38, said he should have been given more help after becoming depressed when he was made redundant.

"If any youngsters out there are feeling that way, please, please, talk to your parents or a friend. It's so important that they get help," she said.



INQUEST: Kelly Stephenson, 20, who died last week

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