



A Governor's Guide to Digital Monitoring

What is it? Why do Ofsted require it? How do you implement it?

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Introduction

Since the statutory guidance has changed around appropriate monitoring many governors are investigating digital monitoring for the first time.



This paper has been prepared to help you understand the rationale behind the guidance changes, what digital monitoring is and what role it plays in your wider safeguarding strategy.

Smoothwall are digital monitoring experts. We monitor almost one million students in the UK and more around the world, helping to keep them safe and their schools and colleges better equipped to initiate fast and effective support intervention when online risks arise.

If you would like a no obligation demonstration of digital monitoring please contact us at:

enquiries@smoothwall.com.

We are waiting to help.

1.0 Why the Statutory Guidance has Changed

In May 2021 the **UK Safer Internet Centre** revised their definitions of appropriate monitoring. It now advises that all settings with the exception of those with a very low risk profile and/or 1:1 supervisory set up should consider some form of digital monitoring.

The day after the UKSIC definitions were formalised, Ofsted published its findings of its Abuse Review. The review was commissioned by the DfE following the thousands of abuse testimonies submitted to the Everyone's Invited website.

The report went one step further than the UKSIC by concluding that in addition to the risks schools can spot with eyes and ears, there are more risks hidden from view in a child's digital world; and that an inability to spot these risks was placing pupils in danger.

The Abuse Review focused on sexual harassment and online sexual abuse but in fact the risks to students go much wider than this.

Ofsted recommend that:



Even where school and college leaders do not have specific information that indicates sexual harassment and online sexual abuse are problems for their children and young people, they should act on the assumption that they are.”

Ofsted / May 2021

Definitions of 'appropriate monitoring':

<https://www.saferinternet.org.uk/advice-centre/teachers-and-school-staff/appropriate-filtering-and-monitoring/appropriate-monitoring>

Abuse Review:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/review-of-sexual-abuse-inschools-and-colleges/review-of-sexual-abuse-in-schools-and-colleges>.

The Iceberg Effect

A child's digital world is a place that often excludes adults. Yet what a child says, does, shares or expresses in this world, **can expose them to harm**. It can also reveal concerns in other parts of their lives they are not willing or able to speak about.

These dangers and risks are often hidden from responsible adult view and include; online grooming, drugs, violent intentions, self-harm, suicidal thoughts, sexual image sharing of themselves or others, cyberbullying, abuse at home, gang membership, extremism and more.

These risks come to light via conversations in chat rooms and social media, interactions across messaging platforms, outpourings of feelings in Word or other documents, (even if the words are subsequently deleted), keystrokes into Google or other search tools.

It's an **iceberg effect** and it's a very real situation that's alive and thriving in schools right across the UK.

Digital monitoring reduces the iceberg effect by making invisible risks, visible.

When risks become visible DSLs can initiate faster interventions; they can remove students from imminent danger; they can minimise incident escalation; and they can gain vital insight into unsafe online behaviours to provide better education and awareness across the school community. Better education and awareness means greater understanding and mental resilience amongst students.

Offline risks
you can see



Changes in behaviour. Injuries/bruises, tip offs from peers, absenteeism.

Digital risks
you can't see



Online bullying or conversations about drugs/extremism/being harmed, hidden bruises/injuries, unspoken negative feelings and thoughts.



2.0 Monitoring Strategies

There are three main types of monitoring strategy open to schools/colleges.

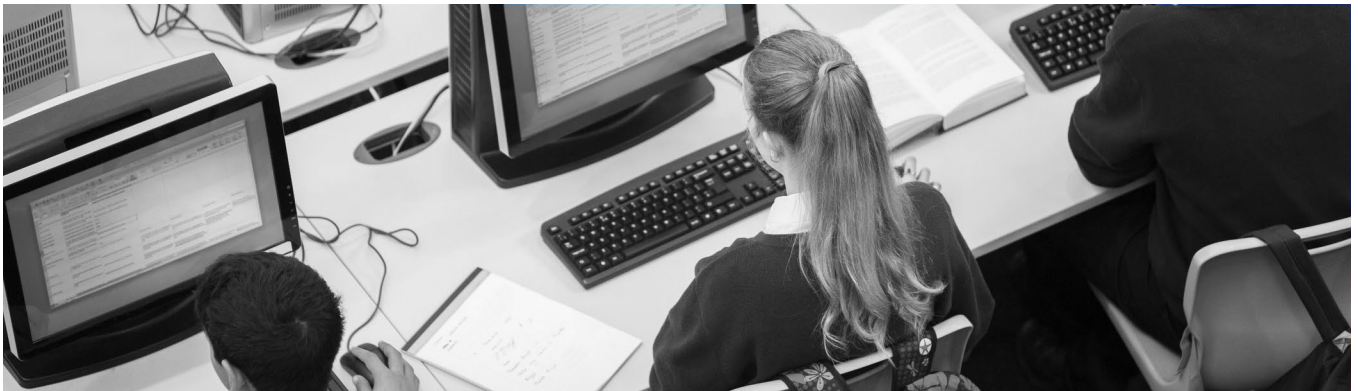
Physical

Active

Proactive

Physical Monitoring

Physical monitoring refers to staff physically watching students' screen activity – whether they are on the internet or using other technology



The description also refers to actively monitoring all screen activity during a lesson from a central console using appropriate technology. The UKSIC recommends physical monitoring in 1:1 scenarios and when assessments suggest low risk.



The pros

- If an issue arises, the teacher is there to deal with it immediately. It's an opportunity to inform the student of the risks as they occur as well as other class members where appropriate.



The cons

- Watching every screen in a class can be resource intensive and usually requires additional classroom support staff.
- Even with additional classroom staff it can still be difficult to see what's happening on all screens all of the time. Students often adapt screen behaviour when a teacher walks by.
- Desks should be placed within line of sight of the teacher or assistant. L shaped desks for example, that obscure screen visibility, should be avoided.
- It is ineffective on remote devices outside of the classroom.
- Concluding that a school is 'low risk' without the aid of digital monitoring to see what's happening online, could leave students in harm's way and allow events to escalate.

Active Monitoring

Active monitoring is a software solution that sits on the student's school-owned device and flags whenever there is a suspected risk to a student's wellbeing, health, or life based on their online behaviours.

Alerts (also known as 'events') appear in a dashboard for the school to process, grade and determine the appropriate intervention. The software itself is provided by a third party provider.



The pros

- Active monitoring is a great solution for a school that has or can make available an in-house team to assess and grade risks and to remove false positives.
- It can be a good option for Local Authorities or MATs wishing to operate a centralised monitoring service for their school communities.



The cons

- Active monitoring will raise many alerts every day and requires a properly trained, in-house team to process them and in a timely manner.
- Increases head count and the cost and administration that goes with it.
- Staff will review hundreds of alerts including false positives. Tired eyes can mean missed concerns.
- It can be more difficult to operate a 24/7, 365 days a year shift pattern with in-house teams.

Proactive Monitoring

Proactive monitoring is both a software and a service. As with active monitoring, the technology sits on the student's school-owned device and flags whenever there is a suspected risk to a student's wellbeing, health or life.

Unlike with active monitoring, proactive monitoring also includes AI and a team of human moderators working hand in hand on the school's behalf to identify genuine risks and grade their severity.

Risks are usually detected within minutes of the event happening and are commonly reported in a dashboard for the DSL to review. In the case of Smoothwall Monitor, if the risk is high the DSL or other nominated staff member will receive an email to alert them, or if it is very high, usually where there is a suspected risk to health or life, the school will receive a phone call directly



The pros

- It helps prevent at-risk students from going unnoticed or noticed too late.
- Students are protected 24/7, 365 days a year.
- It reveals inappropriate online behaviours to inform targeted education and awareness and encourage mental resilience amongst students.
- It saves the cost and administrative burden of employing dedicated teams to review risks.
- It saves valuable DSL time allowing them to focus on intervention and strategy, not administration.



The cons

- There is a cost associated with it.

Unlike with active monitoring, proactive monitoring also includes AI and a team of human moderators.

3.0 Implementation

Proactive and active monitoring technology is usually quick and easy to deploy and requires very little by way of IT support once installed. The school or college's own IT team will access a central portal before deploying an agent onto each school device.

Active monitoring

With active monitoring, implementation also requires appointing and training a dedicated team of moderators to review the alerts.

Proactive monitoring

The DSL or safeguarding team are trained on the system, (which in Smoothwall's case takes around 15 minutes).

They will access the portal to review alerts thereafter and of course receive more serious alerts directly via email or phone. The whole process can be completed in an afternoon.

With Smoothwall Monitor schools can also very easily integrate their solution with various record management systems including CPOMS, MyConcern and our very own Safeguard Record Manager. (The DSL can do this themselves.)

Any events which are alerted in Smoothwall Monitor will be automatically sent through to the record management system, giving DSLs a combined and more holistic view of each child's wellbeing.



Digital safety is not just a secondary school or college problem. **19%** of all serious risks detected by Smoothwall Monitor in 2020 were amongst **primary school children**.

4.0 Frequently Asked Questions

Definitions and use

What's the difference between web filtering and digital monitoring?

Where filtering blocks pupils from accessing inappropriate web content, digital monitoring detects risks based on keystrokes - regardless of whether they are on the internet or any digital document.

For example, a web filter would block access to a site containing pornography but wouldn't detect a child having an inappropriate conversation with an adult in a chat room, whereas monitoring would.

Web filtering and monitoring work hand in hand to provide a comprehensive digital safeguarding strategy.

We receive safeguarding alerts from our Smoothwall Filter, what's the difference?

The safeguarding portal within Smoothwall Filter will only provide an alert based on URLs accessed and any search terms used. It is not human moderated and does not provide context based analysis, including any screenshots that may show intent.

It also doesn't alert you to any risks shown by keystroke activity within non-browser apps such as: Microsoft Word, PowerPoint or Teams.

What does real-time monitoring mean?

Real-time monitoring refers to the action of capturing and alerting a school to a risk as soon as it happens. This allows DSLs and safeguarding teams to intervene at the earliest point and deliver appropriate support.

It also enables DSLs to understand any key trends in online behaviour amongst students which can then be used, in a timely manner, to inform and educate specific year groups or on a whole-school level.

For example if a previously unknown and dangerous website begins trending or an inappropriate image is being shared, school wide communication can happen the same day if required.

Definitions and use cont.

What does human moderation mean?

Human moderation refers to a team of analysts who grade and decide on the severity of any alerts captured by a digital monitoring solution. With Smoothwall Monitor, when a risk level is very high, the school's DSL is immediately contacted in person. Lower-level alerts are sent to the monitoring portal for DSLs to view and manage later.

Human moderators also remove any further false positives which Artificial Intelligence (AI) alone may not have picked up. This saves DSLs valuable time not having to trawl through multiple events.

With Smoothwall Monitor, our moderators work around the clock 24/7/365, to ensure schools are immediately notified of any urgent concerns or risks to life. This gives DSLs peace of mind that should a student be in danger they will be informed immediately

Does it work if a device is offline?

At Smoothwall, our digital monitoring solution works offline as well as online. This means if a child takes home a school device but isn't connected to the internet, the device will continue to be monitored, capturing screenshots and keystrokes.

As soon as an internet connection is re-established, Smoothwall Monitor will send any data through to our team of moderators to analyse.

Is digital monitoring more appropriate for older pupils?

No. Digital safety is not just a secondary school or college concern. 19% of all serious risks detected by Smoothwall Monitor in 2020 were amongst primary school children. These are children facing a risk who could have gone unnoticed or noticed too late. No child is exempt.

Ofsted and GDPR

Is digital monitoring a requirement by Ofsted?

UKSIC guidance advises schools, colleges and MATs to consider some form of digital monitoring unless they are a 1:1 setting or their risk assessment is low.

In our view a risk assessment focusing on physical and known factors alone and without the aid of digital monitoring to see below the water line (see 'Iceberg Effect' p5) could give a misleading conclusion and leave students in danger.

How much information can moderators see on a student?

In the case of Smoothwall Monitor – our moderators can see what the student has typed and screenshots of what they have viewed which have resulted in the alert.

Alongside this moderators also have access to a limited amount of information including the student's username (which in most cases is not the student's real name in the interest of privacy), and your organisation type, whether that be primary or secondary for example.

Should a moderator need to escalate a concern, only then will they be able to view the chosen contact information you have provided.

Resourcing

How much does digital monitoring cost?

Digital monitoring solutions range in price depending on the number of pupils, the quality and range of monitoring, whether it uses real-time risk grading, is 24/7, is moderated by humans or AI, and other factors.

How are other schools budgeting for it?

Sources of funding vary from school to school but can come from the risk / safeguarding budget, or the general / ICT fund. Some MATs have adopted curriculum led IT budgeting which has freed up funds to invest in safeguarding including monitoring. If you need to make an internal request for funding Smoothwall has published a document to help you make your case.

You can download it for free at:

<https://www.smoothwall.com/education/how-to-create-a-case-for-funding/team-of-moderators-to-analyse>.

Is it possible to trial monitoring before committing?

Yes. With the growth in online dangers and the changes in statutory guidance it is vital that governors understand digital monitoring technology and are able to make informed decisions. For this reason Smoothwall makes our digital monitoring solution, 'Monitor' available free of charge for a period of time. (Up to 30 days.)

This allows us to monitor your pupils 24/7 while the DSLs and their teams learn about the technology first hand, in their own live settings. For more information please contact us at:

<https://www.smoothwall.com/education/contact-us>

Our safeguarding team is already overstretched. Won't monitoring add to their workload?

If you opt for active monitoring and don't make sufficient provision for alert processing then workloads will increase. Proactive monitoring, on the other hand, does all the sifting and grading of alerts and contacts the DSL with anything that needs their attention. In the case of Smoothwall Monitor full contextual analysis is also provided so the DSL can respond promptly and appropriately. It is a time optimiser, not a time waster.



Smoothwall digitally monitors nearly one million UK students. The risks our moderators have shared with DSLs have saved lives. **It's that simple!**



5.0 Contact us for More Help

To help you understand digital monitoring we run a number of help initiatives. **All completely free and without commitment.**

Free online training sessions

These sessions are tailored to your school, college or MAT. Lasting up to 90 minutes they explain the facts around digital monitoring, show it in action and answer questions from your safeguarding team. They are ideal for governors, heads, DSLs, ITs, and DPOs.

Book yours at: <https://www.smoothwall.com/education/monitoring-free-training/>

Live Learning Programme (LLP)

Our Live Learning Programme is an opportunity to deploy the full Smoothwall Monitor solution including full human moderation and 24/7 pupil protection free of charge for up to 4 weeks. Thousands of schools have successfully completed an LLP already.

Contact us now: <https://www.smoothwall.com/education/live-learning-programme/>

General questions

For any other questions, including pricing, please contact us at [smoothwall.com/education/contact-us](https://www.smoothwall.com/education/contact-us)

About Smoothwall Monitor

Smoothwall Monitor is a multi-award winning proactive monitoring solution that protects nearly one million students in the UK and more around the world.

It works in real-time to alert DSLs and safeguarding teams in schools, colleges and MATs to risks as they happen.

Smoothwall Monitor works like an extra pair of eyes and ears for DSLs enabling them to see below the water line to the hidden dangers that reside in a child's digital world.

Our moderators work 24/7/365 separating genuine risks from false positives and equipping DSLs with the information they need for a fast and appropriate intervention - within seconds of an event.

Speed of response can save, change and enhance lives. It's that simple.

What a child says, types or shares in their digital world can expose them to risk. It can also reveal dangers happening elsewhere in their lives that they are unwilling or unable to speak to an adult about.

Risks include cyberbullying, stated intentions to cause harm in a chat room, inappropriate image sharing, sexual violence, inappropriate conversations with an unknown adult, drugs, gang membership, terrorist related searches or conversations, admissions of abuse at home. The list goes on. If a student types into a browser, Microsoft document, or social media platform anything that suggests they may be at risk, we'll see it; we'll assess it and if it's serious we'll tell you about it, within minutes.





smoothwall[®]
by Qoria

Smoothwall is the leading provider of digital safeguarding solutions in UK education. For more information, visit our website or get in touch with our team of experts.

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Qoria

Smoothwall is part of Qoria, a global technology company, dedicated to keeping children safe and well in their digital lives. We harness the power of connection to close the gaps that children fall through, and to seamlessly support them on all sides - at school, at home and everywhere in between.

Find out more
www.qoria.com