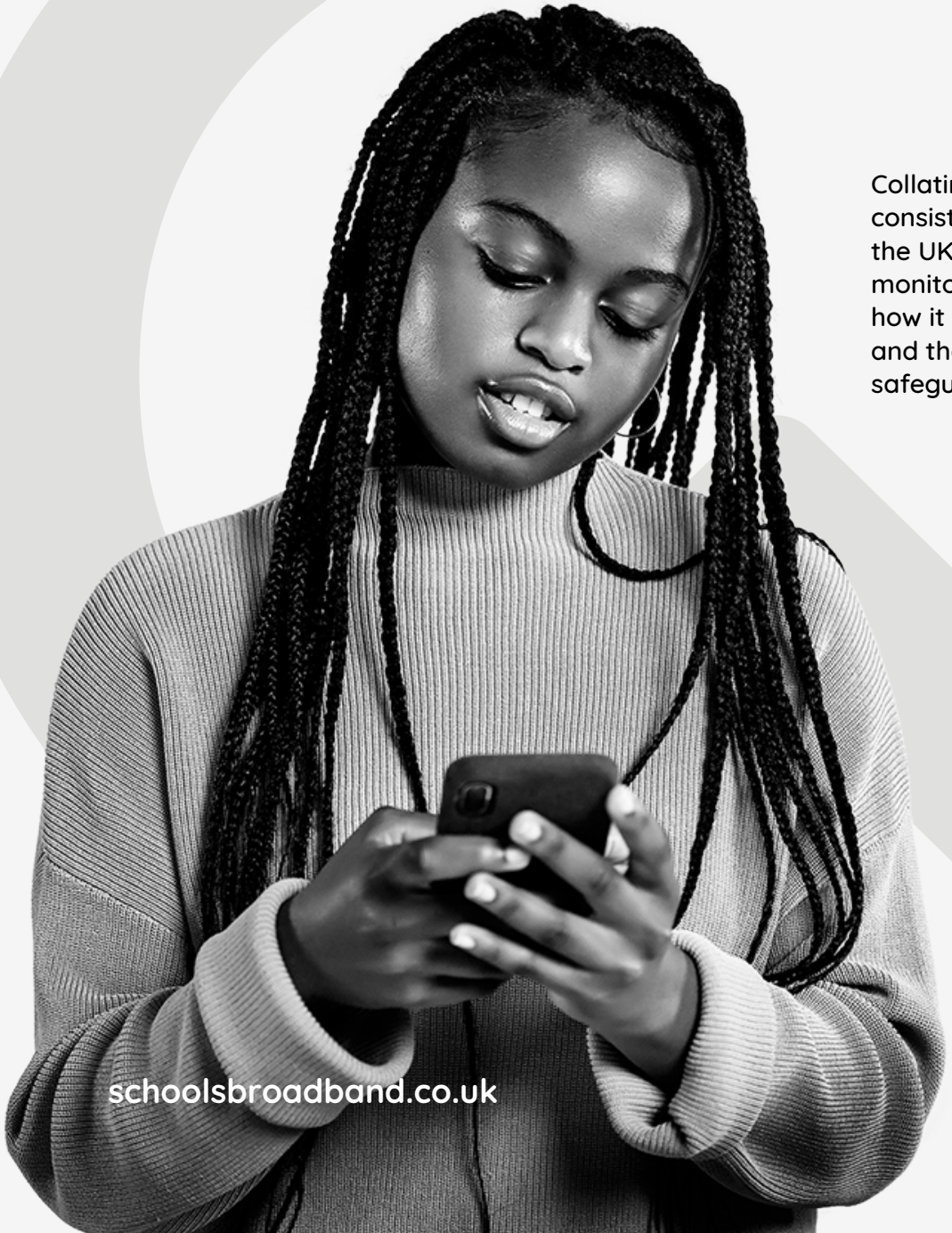
Digital Monitoring for IT Leaders

Your Key Questions Answered



Collating the questions consistently asked by ITs across the UK, we explain what digital monitoring is, how it works, and how it can help support them and their co-workers with their safeguarding responsibilities.

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About this Document

This document has been produced by Smoothwall's Online Safeguarding Experts to help school IT leaders and their teams better understand digital monitoring and decide, together with the DSL, whether it should become a part of their schools safeguarding provision.

Collating the questions consistently asked by ITs across the UK, we explain what digital monitoring is, how it works, and how it can help support them and their co-workers with their safeguarding responsibilities.

1. Why do we need digital monitoring?

Although the eyes and ears of teachers will always be a vital part of student safeguarding, this method alone cannot help schools identify those students who may be suffering in silence.

Not all children experiencing difficulties speak up. Nor do they all manifest any outward signs of distress. They can often choose not to confide in an adult if they are feeling scared, or uncomfortable, if they can't find the words or don't want to cause a fuss. In the case of grooming or radicalisation children may not even realise they are in danger at all.

As classrooms continue to shift onto virtual learning platforms, spotting unusual behaviour or anything out of the ordinary is harder than ever before.
The good news is a vulnerable child can often be spotted through their digital behaviour. The words they type, the websites they visit, the chat room conversations they have, the images they share can all reveal hidden risks. And this is where digital monitoring comes in.

In the last 12 months alone Smoothwall Monitor alerted DSLs to pupils facing an immediate risk to health or life every 45 minutes. These are children their schools believe without digital monitoring, and through no one's fault, could have gone unnoticed, or noticed too late.

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2. How does it work?

Digital monitoring sits on the student device and flags any signs of risk. With Smoothwall Monitor, this monitoring happens in real-time. When a risk is detected, a screenshot is taken, and AI grades the risk. Low risks go to the dashboard for the DSL to view next time they log in.

Higher risks go to our team of highly trained human moderators who assess their severity. If they are deemed genuinely serious, they will contact your school by email or, in the case of a possible risk to health or life, by phone 24/7.

That means your school has a dedicated, highly skilled virtual and human team, looking for invisible risks and protecting your students, round the clock.

3. How is it deployed?

Deployment will vary based on the solution you choose. It can be as easy as flipping a switch, or a simple client download, depending on your current filtering provider. At Smoothwall, deployment is simple and straight forward.

Cloud-based, our digital monitoring software can easily be installed onto devices remotely using any software distribution tool such as Group Policy, SCCM or Intune, or Google G-Suite.

4. How much time does it take to set up and manage thereafter

In the case of Smoothwall Monitor, set up can be completed in a matter of minutes. Once your IT team has rolled out the software, DSLs will be able to access the platform and add in any contact details of staff members who are to receive and manage safeguarding alerts.

5. Will it have an impact on our school IT systems?

It's useful to check with vendors that their software is discreet and that you have the necessary capacity to run it on your school network.

Smoothwall Monitor has no discernible impact on device or network performance; it works silently in the background. Users will not be aware that monitoring is taking place or that any captures have been taken.

6. Does digital monitoring require a lot of maintenance?

A good monitoring solution will require little or no maintenance throughout your contract term. With Smoothwall Monitor, new client versions will be released throughout the term which you can choose to upgrade to as and when it is most convenient.

If your chosen solution is managed, such as Smoothwall Monitor, the vendor will usually update all keywords, phrases and behaviours that you may want to be alerted to. If the solution is unmanaged, either IT or the schools DSL will be required to add this to the solution. That means your school has a dedicated, highly skilled virtual and human team, looking for invisible risks and protecting your students, round the clock.

7. Is digital monitoring compatible with all types of devices?

This will depend on the vendor and the type of monitoring solution you choose to deploy. Smoothwall Monitor is compatible with Windows, MacOS and Chromebook devices.be installed onto devices remotely using any software distribution tool such as Group Policy, SCCM or Intune, or Google G-Suite.

8.We already have web filtering in place, isn't that enough?

Web filtering block pupils from accessing inappropriate websites. Digital monitoring goes one step further by looking for indicators of risk in the keystrokes a child makes into a device. A child can often reveal a problem by talking about it online with another person, or by expressing how they are feeling by typing words into a document. They may be sharing inappropriate images of themselves or others, or having inappropriate conversations.

Whether a user types into a browser, Microsoft document, or a social media platform, digital monitoring will capture the word/s even if they are immediately deleted, or never submitted or sent.

9. 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 won't 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.

10. Who in the school is responsible for the management of monitoring?

In the case of Smoothwall Monitor and in most school settings the IT team will deploy Monitor and the Designated Safeguarding Lead, Child Protection Officer, or safeguarding team, will manage it thereafter. The demand on IT time is minimal.

11. Where is the data stored?

It's vitally important to ensure the safety of your sensitive data. Vendors should be able to show evidence of where your data is stored. At Smoothwall, data privacy is a top priority and data is stored in secure Microsoft Azure data centres in the UK. All Smoothwall employees are DBS checked, even those who don't visit schools.

12. Who is accountable for following up on the alerts captured?

This will usually depend on the school's staff set up, but in most cases, it is the DSL/s, Child Protection Officer/s or safeguarding team's responsibility for monitoring and addressing any safeguarding alerts and concerns.

13. Is monitoring scalable for larger organisations, including MATs?

If the digital monitoring solution is cloud-based you should expect it to scale to the needs of your organisation. If your chosen solution is reliant upon a local appliance, you may find you require a larger appliance further down the line. As a cloud-based solution, Smoothwall Monitor is able to scale easily as your needs change.

14. Can digital monitoring integrate with other digital safety solutions such as filtering or record management?

With Smoothwall Monitor you can integrate with various record management systems including CPOMS, MyConcern and our very own Smoothwall Record Manager. Any events which are alerted in Smoothwall Monitor can automatically be sent through to these record management systems. The combined data gives DSLs a more holistic view of each child's wellbeing.

15. Will digital monitoring still work if pupils take devices offsite?

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.

16. Would we need to seek parent's permission to monitor their children?

As digital monitoring is only installed onto school owned devices, we understand there is no technical requirement to seek the permission of parents. However, we would encourage schools to make parents aware.

17. How expensive is monitoring?

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 moderated by humans or AI, and other factors.

As a cloud-based solution, Smoothwall Monitor is able to **scale easily** as your needs change.

18. What outcomes can we expect from monitoring

As well as being able to identify and provide crucial support to vulnerable children who may be suffering in silence, digital monitoring can also provide other benefits.

KCSIE outlines a requirement for the need to teach students how to use the online world in an effective and safe way. Digital monitoring can help schools to create wider, more enriched learning environments by allowing pupils to make some aspects of the internet, such as social media, more accessible.

The education for a connected world framework also identifies the need to explore different online aspects including bullying, privacy and security, online relationships and more. By using the technology that students use at home for these concerns, students can explore the specific ways to stay safe at school.

19. Is monitoring a requirement for Ofsted?

In line with government legislation, Ofsted now asks you to provide evidence of active monitoring. Where digital monitoring itself isn't a requirement, a technology-based solution can help you meet and exceed Ofsted requirements in a number of ways.

Some of these include:

- Demonstrating far reaching effective arrangements to identify children at risk.
- Identifying children at risk (both the obvious and not so obvious) allowing you to intervene early and provide the appropriate support.
- Highlighting risks and concerns in real-time giving you a comprehensive picture of the risk landscape within your school, which can be used to leverage safeguarding education.
- Providing a full evidence-based picture of your safeguarding provision whilst reducing the number of false positives, supporting and facilitating, not adding to, existing resource requirements.

20. What sort of schools are using digital monitoring?

Digital monitoring is suitable for all education settings including primary, secondary, FE and HE. Schools that have 1-2-1 schemes in place find it particularly useful as it offers the reassurance that should a child be left alone without a teacher, parent, or carer, they are still protected.

21. Why should I consider Smoothwall over other vendors? Is there a difference?

As well as 24/7/365 human moderation, Smoothwall Monitor has a very simple and intuitive interface where alerts are displayed clearly allowing DSLs and safeguarding teams to easily access data and evaluate concerns. Using single sign- on, it can be accessed securely, anytime, anywhere, and on any device providing both security and ease of use. It is real- time. And the use of AI to initially grade risks means that our trained moderators are looking at the more serious risks, not every risk. This keeps them sharp and focused with no risk of 'tired eyes'.

Contact Us

We hope this document has helped answer any questions you may have about digital monitoring.

If you have any further questions about Smoothwall Monitor or would like to arrange a short demonstration, please contact us at **info@schoolsbroadband.co.uk**

We'd be delighted to help.

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Smoothwall is the leading provider of digital safeguarding solutions in UK education. For more information, visit the Schools Broadband website or get in touch.

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Schools Broadband is a leading provider of connectivity, safeguarding and security solutions tailored specifically for education. Committed to excellence in education technology since 2007, our services are designed to keep children and networks safe and to ensure schools, Multi-Academy Trusts, and Local Authorities meet KCSiE and DfE regulatory requirements.