Monitoring for Safeguarding Risks

The 6 most important questions you need to ask about your monitoring system

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The range of safeguarding risks that children and young people in education may potentially face is broad, with mental health issues being particularly prevalent, but incidents are rising across all categories.

As such, accurate detection and assessment of harmful, inappropriate or illegal behaviours to ensure fast, early intervention and support, is vita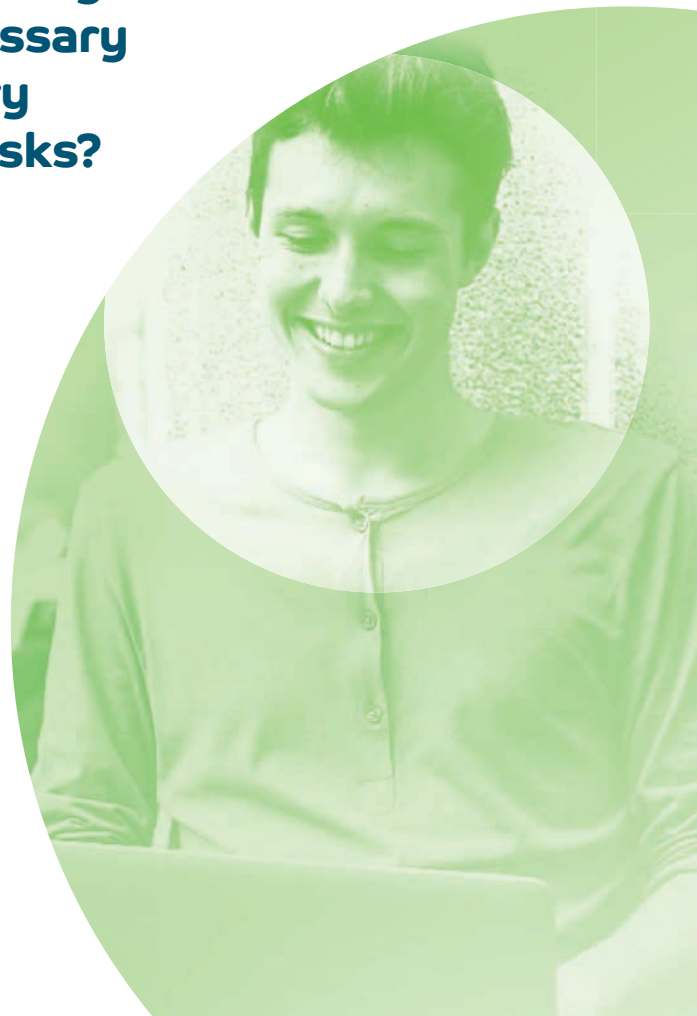l.Because of this, the Department for Education has now made monitoring for safeguarding purposes a statutory duty for education leaders, as defined by the latest "Keeping Children Safe in Education" guidance. It is also high up on the Inspectorates' agenda.

eSafe looks at the 6 most critical questions all schools and colleges should be asking themselves about their current system, to help determine whether it's fit for this purpose.

1 Does your current solution include expertise across the full range of behaviours that are necessary for spotting even the very subtle signs of serious risks?

The ability to identify and intervene early is critical for effectively mitigating many safeguarding risks. Which is why the Department for Education has stressed the importance of early detection.

Yet risk markers can often be incredibly subtle. They tend to form an overall pattern of seemingly isolated incidents over time - and the identification of a pattern or single incident that does require intervention needs dedicated time as well as specialist knowledge and understanding.

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✉ **"i totally get what your saying. we get essays some days which take me over 8 hours to do in for the next day. recently i went on holiday and i come back yesterday and now im doing an essay. Love school but its killing me."**

Would you be able to tell whether this is a typical rant about school life or a potentially serious safeguarding issue? eSafe could.

In this case, our further investigation revealed a pattern of behaviour that indicated someone suffering from anxiety. After we contacted the school, this led to:

- **Pastoral Care intervention, which confirmed the individual involved was suffering considerable anxiety**
- **A meeting with parents and referral to the school counsellor**
- **An allegation of physical abuse**
- **Referral to the Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH)**

? **Would you interpret the phrase 'I feel better' as a potential marker of:**

- **A mental health issue?**
- **Grooming?**
- **Self-harm?**
- **Drug abuse?**

While seemingly innocent, these words can actually be a sign of all of the above and should warrant further investigation.

When eSafe spots terms like this and links them with other activity that suggests a pattern, our expert Behaviour Analysts will review and interrogate all available evidence. By taking an in-depth look at all the contextual clues, eSafe can determine whether or not this is a genuine safeguarding concern that requires intervention.

Blackburn College's Andrew Pickles recalls when eSafe helped to identify a serious case of exploitation and grooming:

"eSafe highlighted a number of seemingly unrelated signs of risk, picked up over a period of a few weeks. When the student was active on their assigned laptop the signs and behaviour markers appeared in course work, on Social Media activity and in Google searches.

While each incident was 'low level' in its own right – it was only because eSafe gave us visibility of all the behaviour, in context, that this serious risk was detected and acted upon."

eSafe's Behaviour Analysts are both highly qualified and experienced in detecting the early markers of safeguarding risks. It's what they do, day in day out.

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Does your system monitor users when they're connected and not connected to your server – outside of education hours, in the evenings, weekends and holidays too?

NEWS HEADLINE
22.12.16
Supply teacher caught watching porn while he taught a class of 11 year olds

Safeguarding threats are frequently detected through behaviour that happens offline – for example, consuming documents from USB drives, or creating documents in Microsoft Word for sharing and wider circulation.

Would your monitoring solution scan a user's own USB drive for markers of inappropriate and illegal behaviours?

Did you know?

Those looking at pornography will sometimes save content in seemingly innocently named folders on your school or college's directory.

But would your system detect this? Unlike other solutions, eSafe can scour the entire directory to detect inappropriate or illegal material that's been 'hidden' within such folders.

Havering Sixth Form College has relied on eSafe to protect users for the last 6 years. Mental Health & Deputy Safeguarding Officer John Davis can still recall one of the first serious incidents the service detected.

A female student had been writing an emotionally charged letter to her Mum using Microsoft Word, in which she revealed she'd been raped. Despite the device used being offline, eSafe picked this up and alerted John and his care team who were able to quickly intervene.

It was the first time the student had talked about her ordeal and, thanks to eSafe, the college was able to provide the support she needed, including access to a trained female member of staff.

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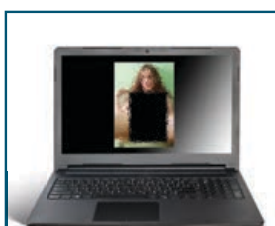# 3 Can your system monitor static and moving images users may be viewing or sharing?

The ability to do this is vital to any successful monitoring system. Often more serious safeguarding risks, such as grooming, abuse and radicalisation, are evident on webcam and encrypted applications like Skype, and are increasingly detected through image monitoring alone.
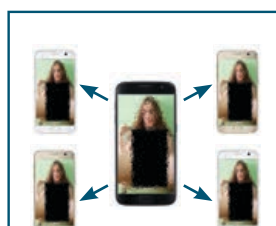
This means that if your current monitoring system relies on text and metadata to identify imagery, it will be unable to detect the overwhelming majority of images that are illegal or inappropriate.

eSafe's unique Pure Image Detection Technology monitors static imagery, video, streaming and webcam activity.
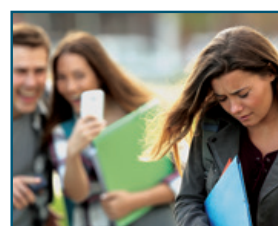
95%
of child abuse imagery has no accompanying text

A typical pattern of behaviour when early intervention doesn't happen:

1 A user sends an indecent image to a single recipient.

2 The indecent image is shared extensively by the recipient.

3 The user is threatened or bullied on social media.

4 The user becomes anxious and depressed.

5 The user turns to drugs as a form of escapism.

6 The user's mental health suffers and they start to self-harm.

While sexting is clearly a safeguarding issue in itself, this behaviour can often be a warning sign of other potential risks too.

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Is your system's detection software updated dynamically, to reflect current and emerging behaviour trends?

Detection software must be continuously refreshed. After all, risks can only be detected when the terminology associated with the behaviours is actually in the library.

Think about how quickly the language we use develops and how trends come and go: the pace of change means we're adopting more words, phrases, abbreviations and slang terms faster than ever before and, because of social media, these are moving around the world within days and weeks.

That's why eSafe's Insightlab team works tirelessly to keep our Threat Libraries up to date, adding new terms and phrases every day and removing those that become redundant. Our own extensive research, and collaboration with our clients and specialist agencies, ensures that we can identify the local, national and international behaviour trends and all the associated markers to enable us to do this.

We automatically update our software to keep it up to date - so you don't need to wait for upgrades or software releases.

? When did you last update your markers for spice?

In the month of December 2017 we added 2254 words to our Threat Libraries. Proof that if you're not refreshing your Threat Libraries every day they will quickly become out of touch with what's really going on.

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Is your system multi-lingual and multi-cultural?

For over 1m children and young people in education in the UK, English is a second language. And the markers of safeguarding risks will often be unique to a specific culture and ethnic community.

Our combination of intelligent detection software, expert human behaviour analysis and dynamic threat libraries (which include behaviour markers across multiple languages), means eSafe is unique in being able to detect risks in any language and script. Importantly, our multi-lingual monitoring team have a rich knowledge of different cultures, enabling them to interpret and assess the true meaning of words, phrases, slang and text speak in different languages.

Would your system detect and correctly interpret this Cantonese script?

"仆街啦你! 白痴仔!"

It translates to "Fall over in the street, you are an idiot!" While it might not appear particularly offensive, the cultural meaning of this can be offensive and a term of abuse that's indicative of threatening or bullying behaviour.

It's important to be able to recognise this for what it is, as it has a far greater meaning than just calling someone an idiot. It is a marker for potentially threatening behaviour, so intervention would be necessary.

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Do your monitoring reports provide the baseline that's needed to plan and measure the effectiveness of your intervention strategies?

Effective safeguarding requires continuous measurement of the outcomes of interventions. And so the reporting element of your system has an important role in providing a baseline of behaviours for this measurement, helping to illustrate the effectiveness of interventions as the baseline changes over time.

With software-based monitoring solutions, the reported data will often contain the significant volume of "false positives" that will have been picked up and fail to give a true picture of the underlying incident baseline.

However, with eSafe, the monthly, termly and annual reports provided only reflect incidents that have been certified as genuine by our specialist Behaviour Analysts.
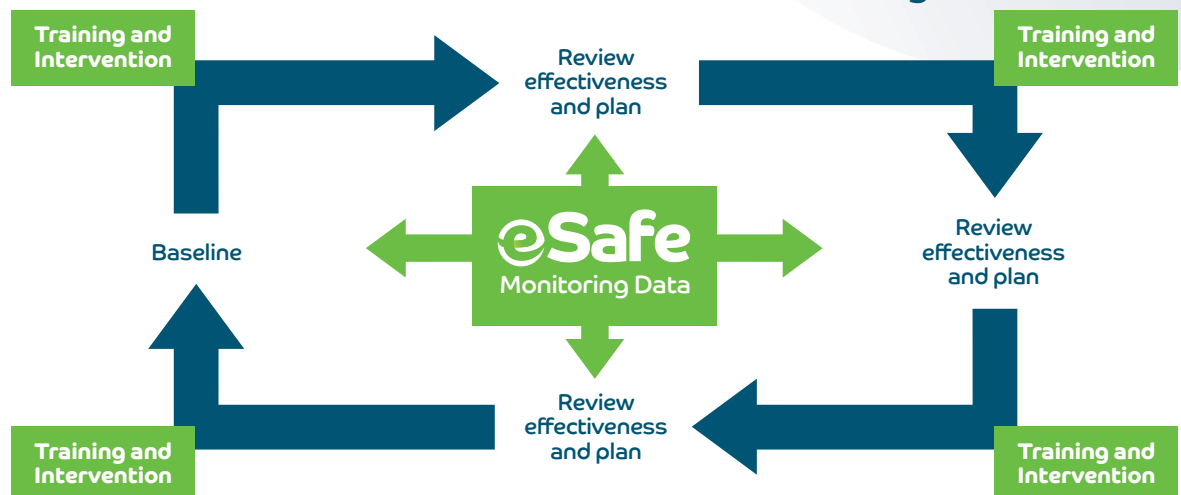
This means the baseline of behaviour and safeguarding risk is accurate; enabling you to correctly assess the effectiveness of interventions and plan future strategies accordingly.

> **New College Nottingham had this to say about eSafe:**
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> "Our work with eSafe was commended in our recent Ofsted inspection with examples of fast and effective interventions demonstrating impact on our learners and their safety and emotional well-being."

eSafe provides the baseline that's needed to plan and measure the effectiveness of intervention strategies

The most forward-thinking schools and colleges take a holistic view on safeguarding strategy; one which encompasses everything from spotting and acting on early risk signs to proactively promoting good emotional health and wellbeing for all.

By choosing eSafe, educational leaders can use the data gathered to focus their efforts where they are most needed; shaping the pastoral agenda to suit their own particular challenges around culture and attitudes.

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eSafe is the only monitoring system to combine **intelligent detection software,** expert human behaviour analysis and dynamic threat libraries **to identify threats others can't.**

Intelligent detection software

eSafe's innovative software surpasses other solutions by detecting the widest range of safeguarding risks with forensic accuracy. Using the principles of Artificial Intelligence (AI), eSafe has learned from multiple examples of genuine and benign incidents over its 9 year history to pinpoint risk markers in their earliest stages and can:

- **Detect threats in any language**
- **Interpret slang and dialect**
- **Search static and moving images**

Expert behaviour analysis

Artificial Intelligence currently needs multiple examples of genuine and benign safeguarding incidents to be able to identify patterns and learn, by which time it may be too late. That's why eSafe's highly-skilled Behaviour Analysts are trained to detect the earliest signs of inappropriate or harmful behaviour, reviewing all incidents flagged by our detection software to determine whether they are genuine.

- **Multi-lingual expertise - language not a barrier**
- **Threat levels accurately assessed and graded**
- **Genuine risks distinguished from false positives**

Dynamic threat libraries

Threat libraries are intended to catalogue all the markers of risk. But sometimes, as soon as that list of terms and phrases is compiled, it can already be out of date. That's why the team in our InsightLab works tirelessly to keep our Threat Libraries as accurate and up to date as possible.

They do this by:

- **Researching and collaborating with our own clients as well as specialist agencies to identify local, national and international behaviour trends**
- **Exploring emerging markers and safeguarding threats**
- **Adding new terms and phrases daily and removing redundant terms and phrases frequently**
- **Automatically updating our software, so you don't need to wait for upgrades or software releases**

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REAL PROTECTION