Smoothwall Filtering and Monitoring Solution for South Tyneside Schools

Overview

Filtering

South Tyneside ICT in Schools Team offers a managed filtering solution using the Smoothwall solution. Smoothwall is an industry standard solution and is used by thousands of schools, trusts and Local Authorities across the country. As a group of schools we have chosen Smoothwall for its proven record with ourselves. It is robust and offers a secure and manageable solution for schools. At contract renewal we benchmark our filtering solutions performance against other products and a decision is made to move forward on the basis of consultation and a rigorous evaluation process with a preferred provider.

It was announced on 31st February 2024 that Smoothwall are one of only three suppliers to be accredited under the new filtering accreditation scheme accredited by The UK Safer Internet Centre (UK SIC). The newly introduced accreditation scheme builds on the appropriate filtering and monitoring guidance provided by the UK Safer Internet Centre since it was first published in 2016.

Monitoring

Schools taking their support from the ICT in Schools Team implemented the new Smoothwall Monitoring solution in early 2023 as a replacement for E Safe which had been used for a number of years.
User activity is auto moderated in real time, alerting any risks and allowing for early intervention. Reports are sent to those staff who have been allocated a role to play by the DSL in each school. Schools have their own procedures for dealing with any activity that has been flagged.

All schools were trained in the use of the solution in March/April 2023 and as well as regular updates directly from Smoothwall, the ICT in Schools Team host a termly session that they host alongside the Smoothwall Monitor Team. These sessions look at any developments in the product and allow for Smoothwall to share any trends and patterns they have identified in the data, as well as a forum to share good practice.

All desktops, laptops and Chromebooks will have Smoothwall Monitor added to them by default. Monitoring all of the iPads is not possible and depends upon the age of the iPad.

Current situation

iOS of at least 14	iPads are in Jamf and can be monitored with Smoothwall Monitor
iOS of at least 11	iPads cannot be monitored but can be managed in Jamf
iOS below 11	Cannot be monitored and cannot be managed through Jamf

Please note this will change continuously and currently is accurate as of 13/2/24

How do schools monitor iPads which are too old to accept Smoothwall Monitor?
- The first obvious answer to this is that schools should consider purchasing new devices to replace their old ones. Apart from not being able to run Smoothwall Monitor, the chances are they will also not be able to have the most recent versions of the Apps you use.
- If they wish to use iPads which are not monitored then they must risk assess their use. This might include a range of measures such as:
    - Increasing passive monitoring by staff.
    - Limiting the access to only the APP staff need.
    - Thinking about allocating those iPads to younger pupils who are less likely to be using them inappropriately.

How the Filtering Solution Works
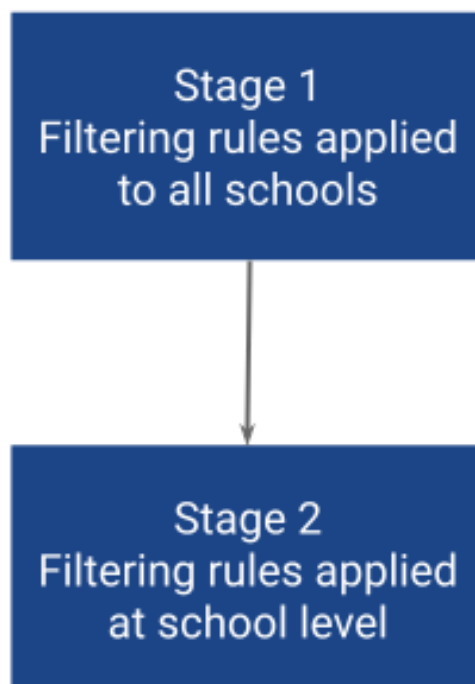
In simple terms filtering is applied at two levels.

Level 1

There are 120 filtering categories, and rules are imposed to block unsuitable content to ensure a secure working environment for all users. As new sites evolve and appear the list of blocked sites is continuously added to in real time. This is all done in the background by Smoothwall themselves.

Different users have some of these categories allowed and some disallowed depending upon their type. This is described in detail later but as a simple example online games might be blocked for primary pupils but allowed for staff.

The ICT in Schools Team has the ability to make changes to these allowed and blocked lists at a South Tyneside level and we will do this when we feel it is needed. Normally the Smoothwall rules are absolutely sufficient but occasionally a new site may not have been categorised yet by Smoothwall so we will block it until it is.

The vast majority of our schools will rely upon this Level 1 of filtering knowing that as a team we are also managing 'minor amendments' to it on their behalf

Level 2

There is also an option to make individual changes at a school level if they are required to customise at a micro level. Our advice is that schools should only make such requests after fully considering the implications and that they are sanctioned by the Headteacher.

We have a process in place to deal with such changes and this is outlined in detail in the Section "Making Filtering Changes at School Level". As part of this process a senior member of our team will consider the reason why a site is blocked or unblocked currently and advise Heads if there is a sound reason for advising against the schools request. Ultimately this is a school decision but the vast majority of schools would not ignore this advice.

Roles and Responsibilities (Filtering)

Technical Team

- All devices in the school will be set up to access the Smoothwall filtering solution so that all staff receive the 'Staff Filtering Settings' and all pupils will receive the 'Pupil filtering solutions'.
- Any new devices are added to the solution and tested thoroughly.
- The team will carry out regular random checks in line with the recommendations in the DFE Technology Standards for Schools (Filtering and Monitoring Strand) some in conjunction with the DSL
- Will carry out checks on an annual basis that feed into the Annual Review carried out in conjunction with the school. This review will form part of the Service Review Meeting in the Summer Term

Technical Manager

- When requested by the head teacher or DSLchanges will be made to the 'school level filtering' rules as per the 'Procedure for Applying for Changes in Filtering Rules' (outlined on next page).
- When sites are identified that require filtering changes at a global level, these will be made.
- All changes to filtering whether at school level or global level will be documented.

Strategic ICT Manager

- To continually review the solution that schools are using to ensure it meets the changing needs of schools and adapts if necessary to the DfE requirements, particularly through the DfE Technology Standards for Schools.
- To formally review the process once a year and feedback on this to schools.
- To carry out an Annual Review of the Filtering and Monitoring Solution at a school level in conjunction with the DSL/Headteacher as part of the Service Review Meeting in the Summer Term.

Durham County Council (Broadband Provider)

- To Send alerts to schools for major attempted breaches of filtering/ These will be typically serious safeguarding threats

School

- To regularly review the effectiveness of the filtering solution during the year. This could be as simple as asking a pertinent question at a staff meeting like "Are we happy with the solution? Is it meeting our needs?"
- To have an internal reporting process to the DSL if it appears the filtering solution is no longer effective for a particular site.
- If changes need to be made to the filtering rules then the DSL to contact the ICT in Schools Technical Manager as part of the procedure outlined in this document. It is important to note that they need to take responsibility for checking any sites that they wish to have blocked/unblocked to be sure there are no safeguarding implications.
- Work with ICT in Schools technicians to do random checks of the filtering solution.
- To carry out an Annual Review of the Filtering and Monitoring Solution at a school level in conjunction with the ICT in Schools Team and Governing Body as part of the Service Review Meeting in the Summer Term.
- To provide key contacts for any urgents Safeguarding alerts to be sent to.

Roles and Responsibilities (Monitoring)

Technical Team

- We will ensure Smoothwall Monitor is added to every device that can take it.
- We will regularly check the Smoothwall Monitor portal to ensure all devices are reporting in and as such Monitor is working.
- We will add any new devices to Monitor when they are purchased.
- We will forward any information about updates and new features directly from the Smoothwall Team
- We will jointly deliver a Termly Update session alongside the Smoothwall Monitor team and invite all DSL's and active users of the solution to this
- Work with DSL to do random checks of the monitoring solution.

Strategic ICT Manager

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School

- To have a process in place such that all reports/incidents identified in Smoothwall Monitor are dealt with by an appropriate person.
- To keep the contact details in the Monitor portal updated so that when the DSL is not available, reports are delta with by another appropriate person
- Work with ICT in Schools technician to do random checks of the monitoring solution.

Procedure for Applying for Changes in Filtering Rules

If a school finds a site that they think should be blocked and it currently is not, or if they wish to have a site unblocked that currently is, they must communicate this to the ICT in Schools Team by sending the following information to the ICT in Schools Team.

- School
- Name
- Website URL
- Whether you want to block or unblock
- Is this a permanent change?
- If not permanent, how long do you want the restriction to be in place?
- Is this for pupils, staff or both?

This can be done using the following link to an online form Filtering Changes

This must come from the Headteacher/ DSL.

The appropriateness of the site in question must have been checked by the DSL/Headtecher before the request is made.

Once received this request will be considered by a senior member of our team with experience of the filtering solution.

The flowchart below shows the process:
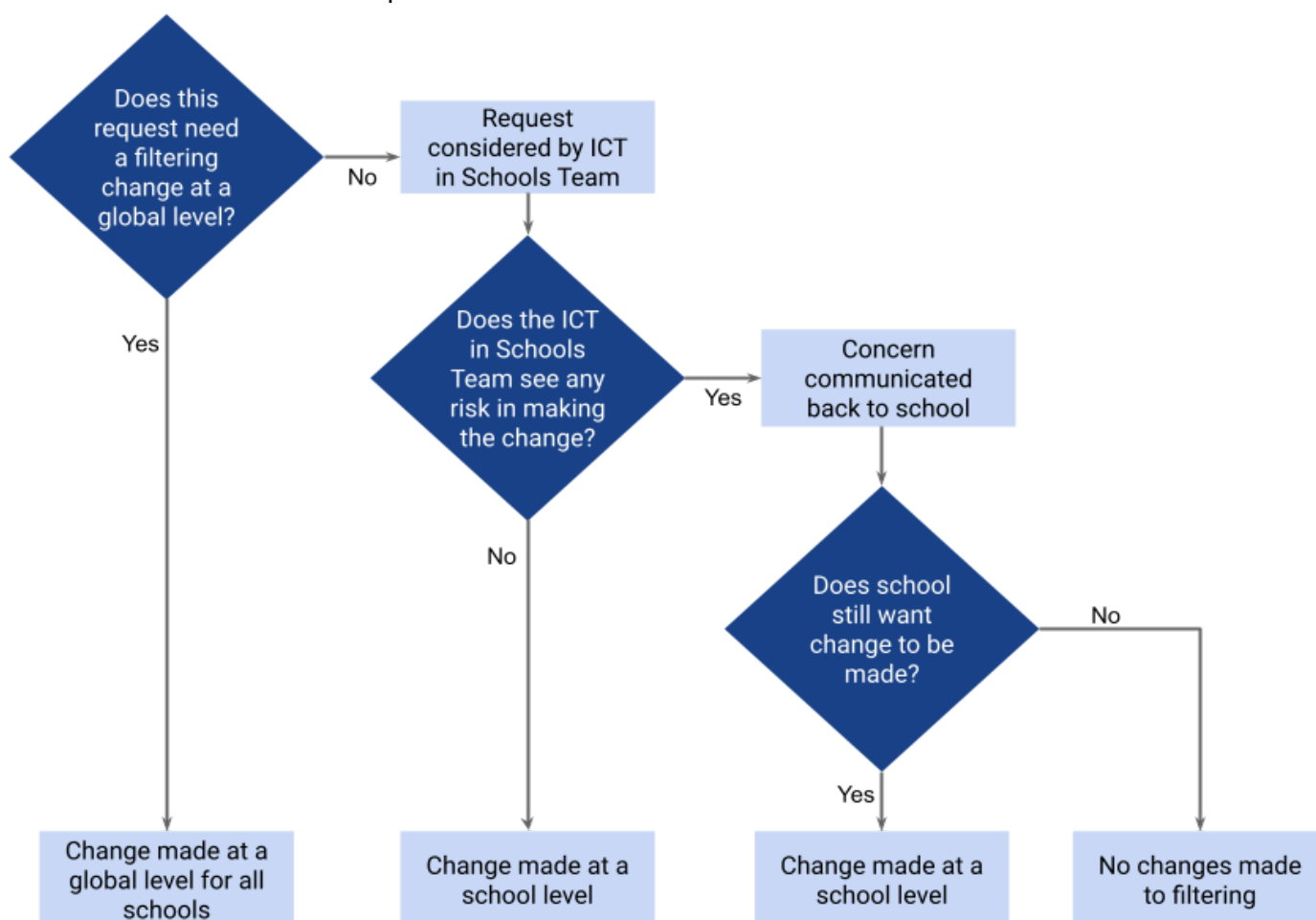
It is also important that when a school purchases a new online product that asks for specific sites to be 'whitelisted' then this information is passed across to the ICT in Schools Team through the same agreed process.

Appendix A

Smoothwall Response Outlining how their Filtering Solution meets the DfE Technology Standards for Schools Filtering and Monitoring Strand - Filtering Element

At Smoothwall we understand the importance of protecting students from harmful content while providing them with the freedom to learn without limits. Smoothwall Filter fully meets the criteria outlined within this section.

Smoothwall has a long-standing partnership with the IWF that is built on a mutual vision of keeping children safe online. The important work done by the IWF enables Smoothwall to create digital safety solutions that are designed to keep harmful images away from young or vulnerable adults.

The CAIC list of domains and URLs is an integral part of Smoothwall Filter. We also use a number of search terms and phrases provided by the IWF, and perform daily self-certification tests to ensure the IWF content is always blocked through a Smoothwall Filter. We will continue to support the work of the IWF with our commitment to block and report child sexual abuse imagery and make the internet a safer place for children.

Smoothwall's web filtering solution also incorporates CTIRU list, enhancing its effectiveness in blocking illicit online content. In addition, it offers specific categories designed to block all CSAM content. These categories are supported by both third-party organisations such as the IWF and internal filtering rules.

Smoothwall Filter is capable of filtering all network traffic as long as it is filtered on the network correctly. Schools also have the flexibility to set up multiple filtering settings that can be tailored for different age groups and users. As the leading education filter in the UK, the service is designed to meet the unique requirements of educational settings.

Smoothwall supports many different languages as part of their filtering categories. Due to our content scanning technology, we can filter all sites and searches irrespective of mis-spellings. The technology can also filter out unwanted images as part of the service. To prevent users from bypassing the filtering system, Smoothwall filter contains specific categories to block VPN technologies and proxy services. These categories are applied using both URL/domain filtering and page construction analysis, enabling detection of unknown or new sites and technologies that attempt to circumvent filtering measures.

Smoothwall incorporates an alerting service that notifies safeguarding personnel of any filtering and safeguarding breaches. This alerting system proactively informs stakeholders, even if the content has not been configured to be blocked, allowing for prompt review of policies and response to potential risks. In addition, Smoothwall has the capability to filter all devices connected to the internet through its system. For iOS devices, filtering can be ensured by installing an application through Mobile Device Management (MDM) systems. Similarly, other mobile devices can also be filtered centrally using Smoothwall's comprehensive solution. Furthermore, Smoothwall's filtering service enables you to identify and log the device name or ID, IP address and individual, ensuring comprehensive coverage for reporting purposes. Each filtering log is time stamped with the precise date and time of the attempted access. Moreover, Smoothwall diligently records all search terms and blocked websites, making this valuable information readily accessible through its alerting and reporting platforms.

Appendix B

Smoothwall Response Outlining how their Filtering Solution meets the DfE Technology Standards for Schools Filtering and Monitoring Strand - Monitoring Element

Smoothwall Monitor provides a range of features to support effective monitoring and reporting processes.

Schools are able to generate detailed reports on a per-user basis, allowing you to gain insights into individual device activity.

Full training is given to all Smoothwall Monitor customers, to ensure they understand how the solution works and how to use it most effectively. When concerning activity does occur, Smoothwall Monitor captures the details in real-time, promptly alerting the designated safeguarding lead (DSL) and other specified contacts. The severity of the breach determines the notification method, whether through our portal, email, or even a phone call, ensuring that immediate action can be taken. Customers can also easily view monitoring data via Smoothwall Monitor's easy-to-use dashboard. Reports are displayed alongside simple human moderator summaries. The dashboard also details phone calls that have been made, when safeguarders have been alerted to a breach.

Smoothwall Monitor makes it easy to identify users within a school or college, so any concerns can be traced back to an individual or guest. If the organisation opts in to user identification, user details will appear with all alerts. The system can also synchronise with authentication systems to enable group membership.

Smoothwall Monitor alerts on all concerns identified in the Content, Contact, Conduct and Commerce guidance section of KCSIE. For example, it picks up risks relating to harmful content that may include, but not exhaustively, self-harm, suicide, radicalisation and extremism. It's also able to identify harmful online interactions with other users that may expose them to risks such as online grooming or sexual abuse. Using the latest technology and our expansive team of human moderators, we're also able to continually update our list of monitoring detection rules based on the latest digital trends and risks, as they emerge.

Appendix C

Product Sheet for Smoothwall Monitor

Smoothwall Monitor Managed Service

Currently the only solution of its kind, Smoothwall Monitor - Managed Service is a real-time, proactive digital monitoring solution that offers a 24/7/365 human moderated service. A highly trained team monitor your alerts and will notify you of risks appropriate to their grade, meaning you can concentrate on providing support to the pupils in your care.

Advanced proactive digital monitoring for schools and colleges

As digital learning becomes more commonplace in the classroom, the need to protect children online has risen to the top of schools' agendas.

Legislation such as Keeping Children Safe in Education and the Prevent Duty have solidified how high the Government expectations of school safeguarding responsibilities are. Not only must schools and colleges ensure they have 'appropriate filtering' in place, but also 'appropriate monitoring', putting more of an emphasis on human interaction to ensure that vulnerable young people are safeguarded.

Smoothwall Monitor – Managed Service has been designed to provide the most advanced on-device monitoring. Moderated by vast AI technology and human specialists, you can concentrate on supporting and educating the young people in your care, with peace of mind that should an incident arise, you will be alerted by one of our expert moderators.

Smoothwall Monitor – Managed Service is the only solution of its kind to continuously build a profile of all users, allowing the system to accurately interpret between a one-off event or a consistent pattern of behaviour.

Now more than ever, schools and colleges need help to protect the young people in their care. Smoothwall Monitor - Managed Service provides round the clock support to keep your school one step ahead in the evolving world of digital safety.

Why is procative digital monitoring software needed?

Proactive digital monitoring software helps pick up on thoughts that students can't say aloud, related to: suicidal thoughts, eating disorder, radicalisation, cyberbullying, sexual grooming, self-harm, racism and depression.

I can't praise [it] enough! It's not only made my life a lot easier, but also has the ability to transform lives because receiving the alerts gives me time to act!

Designated Safeguarding Lead
King Harold Academy

smoothwall®

Smoothwall for Education

Key features

Proactive real-time monitoring

User activity is auto moderated in real-time, alerting any risks and allowing for early intervention.

Intuitive and simple interface

Incidents are displayed clearly allowing you to quickly evaluate any concerns.

Cloud-based

Installation couldn't be easier with remote set-up options.

Role-based access

IT, Reporting, and Safeguarding roles provide access to different areas of the portal, allowing for adherence to data privacy rules.

Appropriate alerting

Choose an alerting configuration that suits both the school and students and ensure safeguarding staff only receive the alerts they require.

Simple, secure access anywhere

The software can be securely accessed anywhere, any time, on any device. Single sign-on from School systems provides both security and ease of use.

Artificial intelligence

Our automated "first layer" of intelligence ensures alerts are timely and effective, highlighting issues that a 100% human moderated product could miss.

Managed service

Our highly trained team of moderators alert and notify you of risks using our level 1 to 5 grading system.

Record management integration

Integrates with Safeguard Record Manager, CPOMS and MyConcern Safeguarding Software to help provide a holistic view of a child's wellbeing.

Get in touch

If you would like to find out more about Smoothwall Monitor -- Managed Service or have any questions, please get in touch with our team of safeguarding experts. We'd be delighted to help.

Web: www.smoothwall.com/education
Tel: +44 (0)800 047 8191
Email: enquiries@smoothwall.com

Further reading

You may wish to download:

'A Complete Guide to Proactive Digital Monitoring for Schools' at www.smoothwall.com/complete-guide-to-monitoring

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