

EDTECH AND ETHICS: MONITORING SUICIDE RISK IN UK SCHOOLS

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When considering new technology for suicide prediction and monitoring, what responsibilities do teachers and schools have, and is this different to what their responsibilities **should** be?

Introduction

Suicide Statistics

- Second most common cause of death for those 15-19 (Mokdad et al. 2016)
- For every person seen in clinic, there are approximately 10 in the community who self harm (Hawton, 2022)
- A key location for community interventions = the school

Criticisms

- No clear evidence on accuracy, e.g. rate of false positives/negatives
- Potential misuse (e.g. for protest surveillance over mental health support)
- Used instead of more effective risk intervention strategies
- Overburdening teachers
- No clear framework for responsibility / accountability

Studying Teachers' Responsibility

Completed

- Analysis of legislation and professional standards documents

In Progress

- Talking to British secondary school teachers in a variety of roles:
 - Headteachers
 - Safeguarding leads
 - Form teachers
 - General subject teachers

Themes

Risk and Risk Thresholds	Criteria of Responsibility
Training	Types of Software
Data Handling	Protocol for intervention
Shared Responsibility	Responsibility Vs Accountability

School-Based Solutions

Non-Statutory Training and Advice for Teachers

- Mental Health and Behaviour in Schools
- Behaviour and Discipline in Schools

Legislation

- Keeping Children Safe in Schools
- Online Safety Bill

Traditional Options

- Columbia Suicide Screen
- SOS Programme
- Seyle Study

Technology

- Chatbot Therapy
- Monitoring software: Gaggle, Impero, Social Sentinel...

Mental Health Monitoring: How Does It Work?

- Developed by private companies
- Filtering and monitoring
- Materials screened: all typed on school network, some included social media
- Using Internet Watch Foundation's Keyword Library for risk
- Risk of multiple behaviours, not only mental health or suicide

Initial Conclusions

- While teachers have always had a pastoral role, they feel burdened by a growing responsibility for mental health
- Technology has the potential to alleviate some of this burden of responsibility
- However, there is no clear evidence on the accuracy of this technology, and a growing concern around privacy and general misuse
- Without proper guidance, technological solutions have the potential to quickly add to a teacher's burden, rather than relieve it

Conflicting messages about the need for teachers to take on additional, non-academic roles (Passive? Active?)

More fundamental conflicts between these roles (Education, Surveillance, Care)

A prioritization of shared responsibility between schools and other social services

A lack of clear, explicit guidelines on how responsibility should be shared

Initial Results

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