Empowering young people with additional learning needs to connect safely online.

Understanding the role of social media for young people with additional learning needs

1

Fitting in

Being known for what you do (gaming/creativity) rather than as a young person with 'differences'.

Independence

It can provide children and young people with a place where they can be truly independent.

Joining in

It can be a space where they are not judged and can contribute equally and provide a sense of belonging.

Friendship

Allowing children to build and maintain their friendships – which may be even more important especially if not in a mainstream school, or mobility and meeting face-to-face is more difficult.

Managing moods

Young people told us that they would talk to friends, play games with friends or watch funny videos to relieve feelings of anger or boredom.

Discovering new things

Young people also feel it's a great way to learn new skills from others.

2

Messaging services

Allows them to connect individually or with a group via text, calls or video – the most popular amongst children are Snapchat, Facetime, WhatsApp, Facebook Messenger, and Houseparty.

Social media

Allows them to generate your own content, share with others, interact and communicate – the most popular amongst children are Instagram, YouTube, TikTok, and Twitter.

Gaming platforms

Allow users to game and communicate online – most popular are PlayStation and Xbox Live but children and young people can also communicate within certain games, without the need for a console or a subscription, with Fortnite and Roblox being the most commonly played amongst children.

3

Streaming services

Allow users to live stream or broadcast to multiple users – the most common are Facebook Live, Instagram Live, Periscope, and Twitch.

Anonymous platforms

There are a number of apps where users connect online anonymously, however, these are often associated with more negative or risky behaviour and can pose a greater risk to young people.

Chat rooms

Online platforms that allow them to communicate with multiple groups of people in real-time, orientated around a wide range of different subjects. Anonymity is a key feature of users of chat rooms.