# Best Practice

**The following pages share key insights into best practice in digital inclusion for people with learning disabilities.**

These insights draw on a wide range of perspectives — from our partners and stakeholders, as well as from existing research and reports. While not comprehensive, they offer a snapshot of the foundations and emerging directions shaping best practice.

The content begins with a foundation: a definition of what effective digital inclusion must include to succeed. It then sets out four directions rooted in current experience and future potential. Together, these directions explore why digital matters, who needs support, where and how support can be offered, and how people learn and grow. Each direction includes practical prompts for reflection and action, along with a view of what good could look like in practice.

**Learning from research and partners**

# Foundations

Before we explore best practice in action, it's important to start with a shared understanding of what digital inclusion means.

At its core, digital inclusion is about making sure everyone can access and benefit from digital technology in ways that are meaningful, safe, and empowering.

This means having the right device, reliable connectivity, and the ongoing support to build skills and confidence. These three elements work together and one without the others is not enough.

## Digital Inclusion means

# Device + Connectivity + Support

# Build for the long-term

## Create sustainable and joined-up support ecosystems

**Digital inclusion isn't something that happens once.**

It needs to be part of everyday life in places where people already feel safe, comfortable, and connected.

That means building on what's there: places people go, relationships they trust, and roles that support them. When digital tools are consistently available and visible in these spaces, they feel more normal, less intimidating, and easier to explore at people's own pace.

The challenge often isn't the technology itself, but the need for a supportive, responsive environment that recognises people's existing digital skills and experiences. Confidence and engagement grow when people feel seen not just as learners, but as individuals with strengths to build on.

Use tools and resources that are low-burden: Things that can be picked up by existing staff or by people themselves. Ideally, something that can be used independently or with minimal explanation.

Long-term support also means keeping the conversation going. Digital needs and interests should be part of regular reviews and planning, not just a one-off assessment.

Embedding these small, everyday practices - in familiar and accessible settings, through ongoing conversations — helps digital inclusion become something that lasts.

## Practical prompts:

**How might we** start where people already feel safe and comfortable — in homes, day centres, or community hubs?

**How might we** make sure support settings have the basics in place — like reliable Wi-Fi and accessible devices?

**How might we** make digital part of everyday conversations, assessments and reviews - not just special projects?

**How might we** use tools and roles that already exist, rather than adding more?

**How might we** build peer and local networks that help keep support going over time?

## Good looks like:

Digital inclusion is embedded into everyday life. Trusted places and people are part of ongoing digital conversations and support. Support systems build on people's existing strengths and adapt over time. Digital needs are regularly reviewed — just like any other care or support need. Roles, resources, and infrastructure are in place to sustain inclusion beyond individual projects.

# Enable the enablers

**Support carers, families, and staff to feel confident with digital**

**Digital inclusion doesn't happen in isolation.**

The people who support someone — carers, family members, support staff — often shape whether digital tools are explored, avoided, or embraced. Their confidence, understanding, and attitude can make all the difference.

But many supporters feel unsure about their own digital skills. They may be worried about safety, struggle with time and capacity, or just not know where to start. That's why support needs to include them too — by offering simple, practical tools that build confidence without adding extra burden.

Training doesn't need to be formal or complex.
It might be bite-sized tips, peer support, or
creating space to talk openly about fears and questions. When families and staff feel confident, they're more likely to encourage, not block, digital exploration — and more able to offer help when it's needed.

This means digital inclusion becomes a shared responsibility.
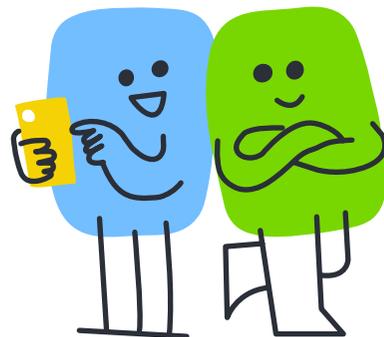
## Practical prompts:

**How might we offer digital support that includes families, carers, and support staff as part of the picture?**

**How might we make resources feel simple, approachable, and relevant to people's everyday lives?**

**How might we tackle fears or misunderstandings around digital safety or dependency?**

**How might we help supporters feel part of the journey — not left behind by it?**

## Good looks like:

Carers, family members, and staff feel confident starting and supporting digital conversations. Digital inclusion is recognised as a shared responsibility — not "extra" or optional. Supporters have access to simple, practical tools that work in real-world settings. Space is made to talk openly about fears, gaps, and successes with digital. Peer learning, mentoring, and bite-sized training help build skills across teams and families.

# Support exploration and learning by doing

## Enable people to shape, lead, and explore their own digital journeys

**Digital inclusion isn't about following step-by-step instructions.**

It's about trying things out, discovering what works, making mistakes, and having space to learn by doing. People build skills when they're supported to explore in their own way, using tools that make sense to them.

Learning through digital play can be especially engaging. It sparks curiosity, builds confidence, and encourages people to explore ideas, identities, and activities. These playful experiences can lead to new interests and aspirations, showing the potential of digital tools to inspire as well as support.

Encourage scaffolded support: offered when needed, and stepped back when confidence grows. This might look like exploring a new app, finding an easier way to type or navigate a screen, using voice controls, or helping someone else.

Support works best when it's flexible, recognising that everyone learns differently. Some people benefit from repetition, others from play and exploration. What matters is that there's space to try, adapt, and grow.

Some of the most powerful learning happens through peer support. When people help each other, lead activities, mentor peers, or help co-create resources, they don't just build digital skills, they grow confidence, connection, and a sense of ownership in their learning.

## Practical prompts:

**How might we create safe and supported spaces where people can try things out safely, explore, make mistakes, and adapt digital tools in their own way?**

**How might we offer support that's flexible – stepping in when needed, stepping back when not?**

**How might we make space for people to lead, mentor and support each other?**

**How might we create opportunities for people to adapt tools, co-design, and get involved in shaping their digital environments?**

## Good looks like:

People feel safe and supported to try things out, make mistakes, and learn by doing. Play and curiosity are seen as valid – and valuable – ways of learning. Support is flexible and responsive, scaffolding exploration without taking over. Peer learning and co-creation are encouraged, building confidence and ownership. People have agency in setting their digital goals and shaping how they get there.

# Make digital meaningful

## Focus on real life relevance, not just access

**Digital inclusion isn't just about having a device and a connection.**

It's about why someone would want to use them in the first place. And it starts with what matters to each person: their interests, routines, and relationships.

That might mean listening to music, playing games, sending messages, using maps, or joining a video call with family. When digital tools support things people already enjoy or find useful, they feel more meaningful and more motivating.

Celebrating and recognising people's experiences — especially through visual media like photos or things they can create and share — helps them express who they are. Self-representation builds confidence and opens up new ways of connecting with others through meaningful moments, helping people shape and share their own stories.

Support should be tailored to each person's preferences, barriers, and goals. That could involve going at a slower pace, using accessible formats, or choosing the right tools. Small, everyday steps — like sending a photo or joining a group chat — can build confidence and momentum. Digital doesn't need to replace face-to-face life. It can blend in naturally, becoming part of someone's daily routines and relationships.

When technology feels relevant, personalised, familiar, and fun, people are more likely to explore it, stick with it, and make it their own.

## Practical prompts:

**How might we** begin by exploring what digital activities feel fun, useful, or meaningful to each person?

**How might we** support digital participation as part of someone's routine, rather than as a separate skillset?

**How might we** use visual guides or easy formats to make tech feel more accessible and inviting?

**How might we** create space to celebrate small steps and everyday digital achievements?

**How might we** use personal interests to spark confidence and curiosity in digital activities?

## Good looks like:

People use digital tools in ways that reflect their interests, identities, and daily routines. Technology helps people tell their own stories and share meaningful experiences. Support is person-centred — tailored to individual goals, preferences, and pace. Digital complements face-to-face life, rather than trying to replace it. Motivation to use technology grows because it feels relevant, familiar, and fun.
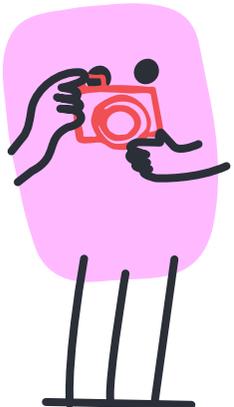
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# Let's Link

**This document is one of four outputs from Let's Link—a collaborative project focused on advancing digital inclusion.**

**The full set of resources includes:**

1. Case Studies

2. Best Practice

3. Toolkit

4. Framework

**Let's Link is a partnership between:**