Case Studies

Why have we selected these case studies?

- Clear focus on learning disabilities
- Variety of approaches and settings
- Evidence of positive outcomes
- Geographic diversity (UK, Germany, Uruguay, USA)
- Show there's not one right answer, but provide six different lenses on digital inclusion.

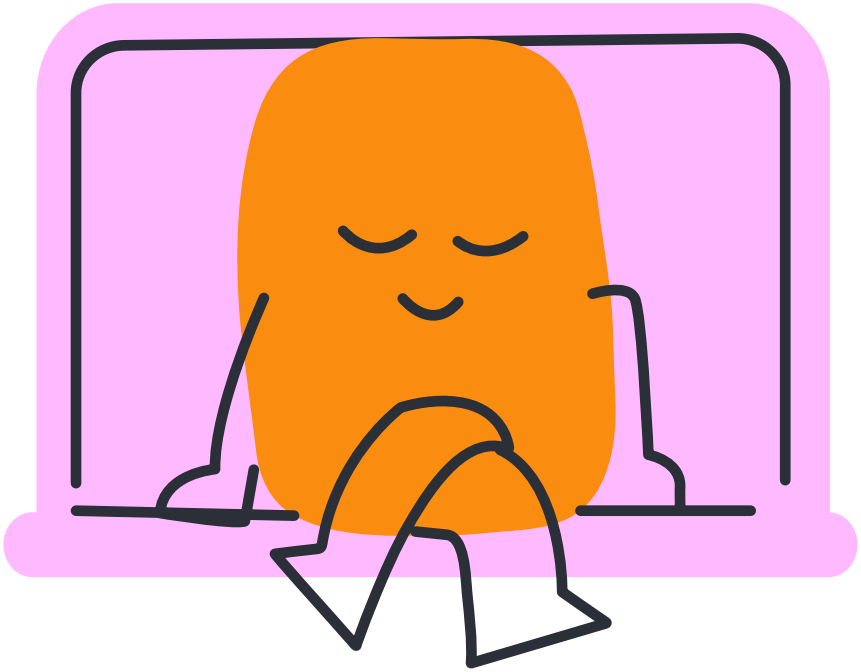
What can we learn from these success stories?

Digital inclusion isn't just about giving people devices — it's about matching technology with the right, sustainable support. What really makes the difference is when we centre people's needs, strengths, and preferences, making digital tools relevant and meaningful in their lives.

These case studies show that inclusion can be practical or playful, personal or universal — but it always works best when it's built on trust, choice, and care.

Learning from success stories

The power of starting with what is relevant and matters to each person, not just what others think they should learn.



Challenges

Many people didn't have devices or internet at home. Some felt anxious about using tech or making mistakes. Training often felt too fast or confusing. Carers and support workers didn't always know how to help.

Actions taken

Started with what people wanted to do, not just what others thought they should. One-to-one support, using simple, clear steps. Training for support staff so they could keep helping. Created easy-read guides with pictures and plain language. Used creative methods, like stories and role-play, to explain online safety.

Outcomes

People felt more confident and independent online. They could do things like video calls, play games, and shop online. Support staff felt better prepared to help. The project showed how digital inclusion can build real-world confidence.

Tools used

Tablets and smartphones. Zoom and YouTube. Easy-read digital safety guides. One-page profiles to understand individual goals.

ALaDDIN

The Aladdin project in Leeds worked with people with learning disabilities to help them get more confident using the internet and digital tools. The team focused on what people wanted to do online – like video calls, shopping, and staying safe. They listened, learned, and created support that really worked.

Targeted and responsive action can quickly close critical gaps for people with specific support needs.

Case Study 2

Challenges

People were cut off from family, friends, and support during lockdown. Many didn't have devices, internet, or digital skills. Some felt anxious or unsure about trying new tech. Support staff didn't always feel confident helping with digital skills.

Actions taken

5,500 tablets with data were given to people with learning disabilities. Support came with the tech – not just a device in a box. Easy-read guides and accessible content helped build confidence. Local organisations were involved in delivering training and support. Safety, independence, and inclusion were all part of the plan.

Outcomes

People stayed connected to family and friends. They accessed services, played games, did video calls, and joined groups. Support workers felt more confident helping with digital. The project showed that digital access is a lifeline, not a luxury.

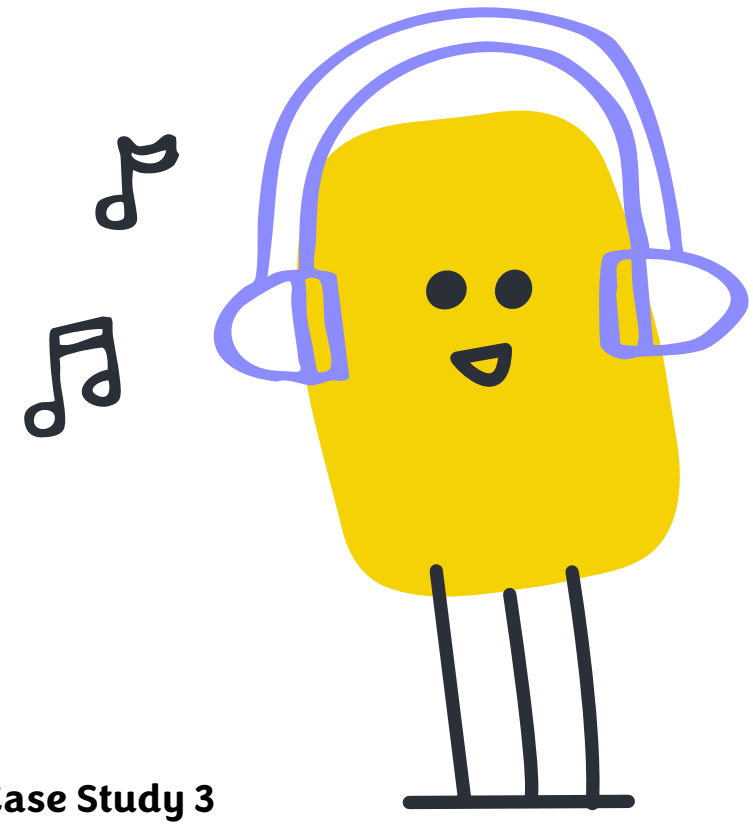
Tools used

Samsung tablets with SIM cards and mobile data. Easy-read resources from Good Things Foundation. Local community organisations for in-person or phone support. Training guides tailored for different needs.

Digital Lifeline

This project gave thousands of people with learning disabilities free tablets, data, and support during the COVID-19 pandemic. The project helped people stay in touch with others, access services, and enjoy being online – at a time when it mattered most. It showed the power of providing the right device, support, and training all together.

Inclusion can be playful. Accessible design in creative tools opens up joy, communication, and self-expression.



Case Study 3

Challenges

Traditional music tools are often too complex or hard to use. Some children found it difficult to join in with group music-making. Many digital instruments are not designed with accessibility in mind. Teachers and carers weren't always sure how to support creative digital play.

Actions taken

Created LoopBoxes: simple, touch-friendly music devices. Designed with accessibility and sensory needs in mind. Used bright visuals, physical buttons, and loops to make it engaging. Children could record sounds, remix them, and play them back. Ran inclusive music workshops in schools and care centres.

Outcomes

Children with SEN were able to create music independently. The project boosted confidence, creativity, and collaboration. Teachers and carers discovered new ways to engage children. The joy of music became more inclusive and hands-on.

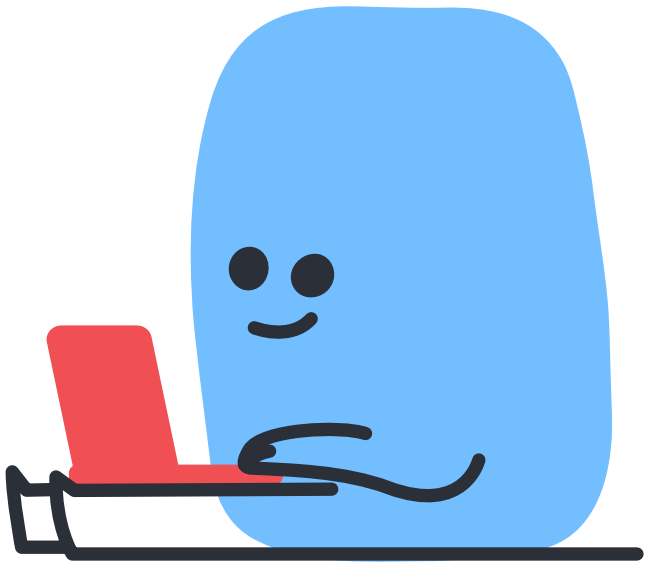
Tools used

Custom-built LoopBoxes (with touchpads, LEDs, and speakers). Open-source music software. Tablets and laptops for connecting devices. Workshops led by artists, technologists, and educators.

LoopBoxes

This is a creative project from Berlin that gives children with special educational needs (SEN) a fun and accessible way to make music using simple digital tools. It focuses on inclusion, self-expression, and play – using custom-made "music boxes" that anyone can use, no matter their ability or experience.

Inclusion works when it's universal. Giving everyone access from the start lays the foundation for fairness, belonging, and personalisation.



Case Study 4

Challenges

Many children in rural areas had no access to computers or internet. Teachers needed training to use laptops in lessons. Families didn't always understand how to support digital learning. There were concerns about cost, maintenance, and repairs.

Actions taken

Gave every child and teacher a laptop, starting in primary schools. Set up free internet access in schools and public places. Provided ongoing training for teachers and school staff. Created local repair centres and support teams. Developed digital learning resources in Spanish.

Outcomes

All children, no matter where they lived, could access digital learning. Teachers became more confident using technology in class. The project helped reduce the digital divide in Uruguay. Ceibal became a model for other countries aiming for digital inclusion.

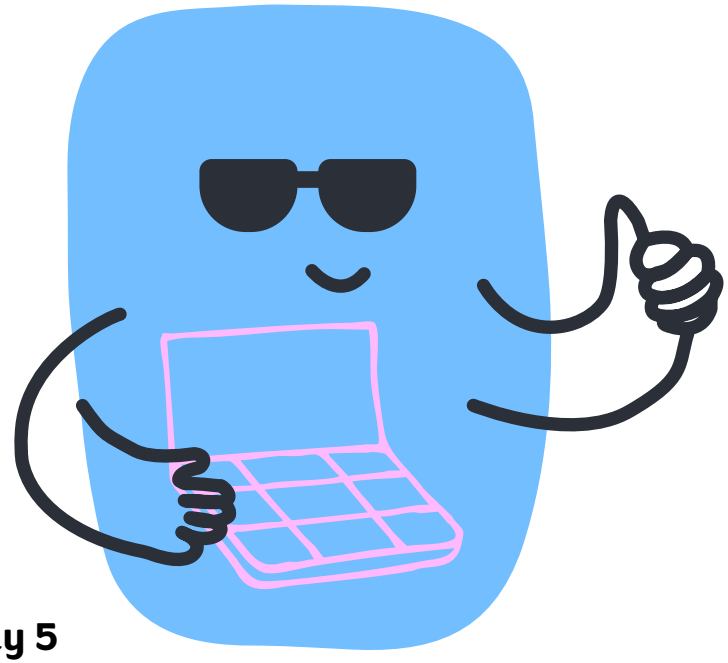
Tools used

XO laptops (child-friendly, durable, low-cost). Ceibal platform with digital lessons and activities. Local internet hubs and school networks. Teacher training modules and online support.

Ceibal

The Ceibal Project gave every school child in Uruguay their own laptop – making it one of the first countries in the world to do so. The goal was to make sure that all children, no matter where they live or how much money they have, could learn with digital tools. The project focused on equality, access, and long-term support for teachers and families.

Digital education can be both inclusive and aspirational – with the right mix of tech, flexibility, and structure unlocking talent and confidence.



Case Study 5

Challenges

Tech classes often move too fast or aren't adapted for different learning styles. Many neurodiverse students feel left out of traditional programs. Social anxiety or sensory needs can make group learning difficult. Families struggle to find inclusive digital education opportunities.

Actions taken

Offered small group workshops focused on digital art, coding, game design, and animation. Used Universal Design for Learning (UDL) to adapt content and delivery. Created a calm, sensory-friendly environment with clear routines. Included social-emotional support and time for breaks. Involved families and built long-term learning pathways.

Outcomes

Students gained real digital skills from coding to video editing. Many discovered new ways to express themselves creatively. It helped build confidence, communication, and career interests. The project showed that digital education can be both inclusive and aspirational.

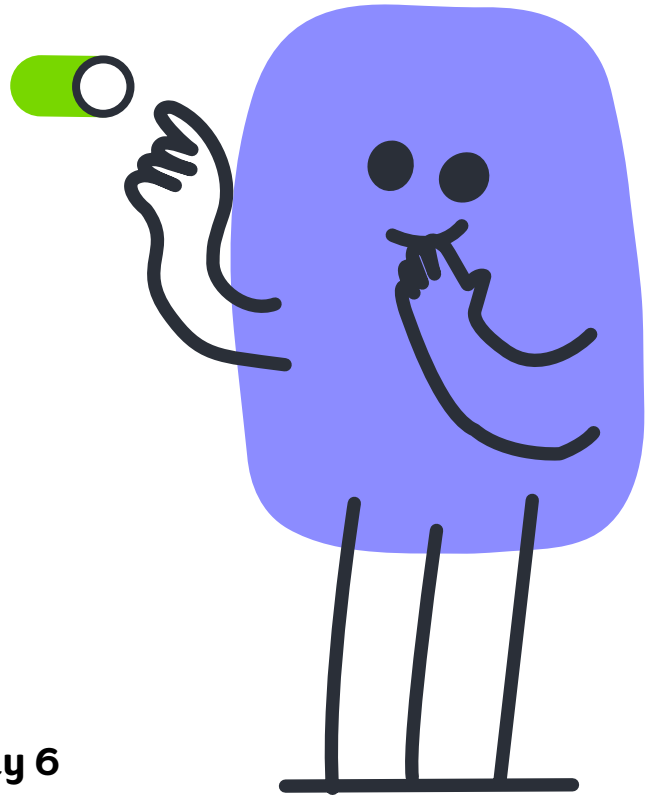
Tools used

Software like Scratch, Tinkercad, Adobe, and Minecraft. Laptops, tablets, and drawing tablets. Visual step-by-step guides. UDL principles and individualised support plans.

Tech Kids Unlimited

This is a NYC-based program that teaches digital skills to neurodiverse students, especially those with autism and learning differences. Their workshops focus on creativity, communication, and future job skills – all in a supportive, accessible environment where everyone can thrive at their own pace.

Mainstream tech tools aren't just for convenience – they can give people more choice, control, and independence.



Case Study 6

Challenges

Many people rely on staff for tasks they could do with the right support. Traditional support can limit independence or feel intrusive. Some people felt anxious about trying new technology. Support staff weren't always confident using smart devices.

Actions taken

Installed smart speakers, sensors, and voice controls in supported living homes. Used tech for reminders, controlling lights / heating, and entertainment. Gave people control over their environment through voice or tablet. Trained support staff and involved families from the start. Made sure the tech matched each person's needs and choices.

Outcomes

People felt more independent and in control of their space. Staff were able to step back and give more autonomy. Daily routines became simpler and less stressful. The project showed that mainstream smart tech can be inclusive when used well.

Tools used

Amazon Alexa and Google Home. Smart plugs, lights, heating, and door sensors. Tablets and phones for voice or app control. Custom training and support from Innovate Trust.

Innovate Trust

This is a charity in South Wales that helps people with learning disabilities live more independently. They've been using smart home technology – like voice assistants and sensors – to support daily life in supported living homes. The focus is on choice, safety, and independence through simple, everyday tech.

Acknowledgements

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How the resources produced through this work look and function is very much down to the skill, insight, and creativity of the Design Team involved: Ute Schauberger (Opencast); and Abi Scott, Nimeesha Schotanus, and Zoe Adams (The Glasgow School of Art). They, along with other colleagues from The Glasgow School of Art, are very much thanked for their critical role in the project, and for being such an immense pleasure to collaborate with.

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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:

SCLD

Scottish Care

NORTH AYRSHIRE Health and Social Care Partnership

Opencast

THE GLASGOW SCHOOL OF ART