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

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

- **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.
• **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.

• **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.