

# Accessibility and Sensory Support Guide



## Helping Children and Young People with SEND Use Technology Safely and Positively

### Introduction

Technology can be a powerful tool for children and young people with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND). For many families, the right technology can support communication, learning, independence, organisation, emotional regulation and access to the wider world.

This guide highlights some of the accessibility features, tools and resources available to support children and young people. Every child is different, so what works well for one child may not work for another. We encourage families to explore options together and find what best meets their child's individual needs.

### Built-In Accessibility Features

Many families are surprised to discover that phones, tablets and computers already include a wide range of accessibility tools.

#### Visual Support Features

Useful for children with visual impairments, dyslexia, processing difficulties or reading challenges.

Features may include:

- Text-to-speech and screen readers
- Adjustable text sizes
- Colour filters and contrast settings
- Magnification tools
- Reading mode and immersive readers
- Audio descriptions



## Communication Support Features

Helpful for children with speech, language and communication needs.

Features may include:

- Speech-to-text dictation
- Predictive text
- Picture-supported communication apps
- Voice recording tools
- AAC (Augmentative and Alternative Communication) systems

## Attention and Focus Support

Useful for children with ADHD, autism and executive functioning difficulties.

Features may include:

- Focus modes
- Guided Access (locking devices to one app)
- Visual timers
- Reminder systems
- Task management tools
- Calendar prompts

## Sensory-Friendly Technology Adjustments

Many children experience sensory sensitivities that can make technology overwhelming.

Consider:

### Reducing Visual Overload

- Lower screen brightness
- Use dark mode where appropriate
- Reduce notifications
- Simplify home screens
- Remove unnecessary apps and distractions

### Reducing Auditory Overload

- Adjust notification sounds
- Use headphones where appropriate
- Enable captions and subtitles
- Turn off unnecessary alerts



## Supporting Emotional Regulation

Some children benefit from technology that helps them recognise and manage emotions.

Examples include:

- Breathing exercises
- Mindfulness activities
- Relaxation music
- Guided meditation
- Visual emotion check-ins
- Calm sensory experiences

Remember that regulation tools are often most effective when balanced with real-world strategies such as movement, outdoor play, sensory activities, social connection and rest.

## Helpful Technology for Different Needs

### Autism

Technology may support:

- Predictable routines
- Visual schedules
- Social stories
- Special interests
- Communication
- Emotional regulation

Many autistic children enjoy creative games such as Minecraft, which can encourage imagination, problem-solving and collaborative play when used safely and with appropriate parental controls.

### ADHD

Technology may support:

- Organisation
- Time management
- Reminders
- Task completion
- Breaking large tasks into smaller steps

Visual timers and reminder apps can often be particularly helpful.



## Dyslexia

Helpful features may include:

- Audiobooks
- Text-to-speech
- Speech-to-text
- Reading rulers
- Dyslexia-friendly fonts
- Immersive reading tools

## Speech, Language and Communication Needs

Technology may support:

- Alternative communication systems
- Visual supports
- Symbol-based communication
- Recording and playback tools
- Social communication practice

## Recommended Organisations and Resources

### National Autistic Society

Offers guidance on autism, technology, communication and online safety.

### Ambitious about Autism

Provides information on digital inclusion and technology for autistic young people.

### Communication Matters

UK charity supporting children and adults who use communication aids.

#### AbilityNet

Provides extensive information about accessibility features and assistive technology.

### RNIB

Guidance on accessibility tools and support for children with visual impairments.



## **British Dyslexia Association**

Information on assistive technology and accessibility tools for dyslexic learners.

## **Internet Matters**

Practical advice for families on online safety, parental controls and supporting children with additional needs online.

## **Questions to Ask When Choosing Technology**

Before introducing a new app, game or device, consider:

- Does it meet a genuine need?
- Is it age-appropriate?
- Are parental controls available?
- Does it support learning, communication or wellbeing?
- Could it create unnecessary stress or anxiety?
- How will it fit alongside sleep, physical activity, family time and real-world experiences?

## **Technology and Real Life**

Technology can open doors, remove barriers and help many children with SEND thrive. At the same time, children need opportunities to build friendships, explore the world around them, move their bodies, play, create and develop confidence away from screens.

The goal is not to avoid technology altogether, but to find a healthy balance where technology supports your child without replacing the real-world experiences that help them grow.

## **Other helpful resources for SEND families**

Please check out our other resources to support children and young people with SEND too on our website.