

Internet Use by People with Intellectual Disabilities: Current Priorities

Aim: This research aimed to determine priorities for support and research in the area of internet use and digital inclusion for people with intellectual disabilities.

Method: We carried out semi structured interviews with 22 participants – 11 people with intellectual disabilities and 11 non-disabled professionals who work with people with intellectual disabilities. Interviews were audio recorded, transcribed verbatim and analysed thematically.

Results: The results have demonstrated that people with intellectual disabilities are commonly and frequently using the internet. Mobile devices (phones, tablets) are most commonly used and video streaming, browsing and social media are common usages. People with intellectual disabilities are confident in their internet use but professionals working with them have concerns about safety and are not always making use of existing guidance.

Conclusion: Use of the internet by people with intellectual disabilities is increasing rapidly. In order to support people to access online resources, research needs to keep pace with the changing activities, vulnerabilities and risks that people with intellectual disabilities might face by using the internet. This research highlights priorities for ensuring people who work with people with intellectual disabilities are able to confidently support them.