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New interactive tools released for people with learning disabilities

A Christchurch disability support organisation has launched new interactive online tools to assist people with learning disabilities to navigate the digital world safely and confidently.

Hōhepa Canterbury's *Digital Citizens Framework* was originally developed in partnership with Netsafe and People First with support from the Ministry of Social Development, to support people with learning disabilities, whānau, support teams and educators.

Now, the framework has been enhanced with interactive web-friendly tools, including five online quizzes covering key topics such as Supports and Safeguards, Values and Attitudes, Cyber Safety Awareness, Digital Literacy, and Digital Fluency. An app and card game have also been released as part of the update, making digital safety education more engaging and accessible.



Together, the framework now serves people at all stages of digital literacy, from those who engage with online platforms with guidance, through to people who are considered digitally fluent. The quizzes are specifically designed for people with learning disabilities to identify their current skill level in each area and track their progress over time.

Hōhepa Canterbury's Sarah Kinley says the tools aren't just a one-off assessment but are designed for continuous use as people develop their digital skills.

"This tool gives people a way to understand where they're at, where they want to be, and how to get there -safely and confidently. We've seen real change because of it - safer relationships, stronger choices, and people feeling more in control of their digital lives."

Chief Customer Officer for Netsafe, Leanne Ross, says ensuring people feel safe and confident when using online resources is key.

"These tools were designed with people with learning disability because we knew there was a need for resources in that area, but they're truly universal.

"These Easy Read guides can be used by anyone, including families who want to encourage safe online experiences."



Georgie and her mum Tracey say the tools are a fantastic resource.

Hōhepa Canterbury resident Georgie says the resources have helped her gain confidence to safely use online platforms, including social media.

"Previously, I was using websites and didn't really know what I was getting myself into. The framework has helped me feel a lot less stressed and more confident. It is nice and easy to use with big text, and I liked that the quizzes give me results at the end."

Her newfound confidence has been a game-changer not only for her but also for her family. It has given her mum Tracey some much-needed reassurance.

"It's unbelievable. We have a different life and a different relationship because of the framework. It's been a journey for both of us," Tracey says.

People First NZ National Chairperson Michael Aldridge says: "Everyone has the right to be safe online. These new tools make it easier for people with learning disability to learn online safety skills, and it's important that our voices are part of the design, it's nothing about us without us."

The Digital Citizens framework and interactive resources are available here:

<https://netsafe.org.nz/business-and-community/support-for-people-with-a-learning-disability>

About the organisations:

Hōhepa Canterbury provides residential care, education and support services for people with learning disabilities across Canterbury.

People First New Zealand is a Disabled People's Organisation (DPO) which means we are run by and for people with learning disability. Our work makes sure people with learning disability have and know their rights and that our communities are inclusive across Aotearoa New Zealand.



Netsafe is New Zealand's independent online safety organisation, working to help people stay safe online through education, support and advocacy.

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