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If this information would be more accessible to you in another format, please let us know

HELP FOR FAMILIES WITH DISABILITIES

Helen, our Managing Director, has lived and worked with children with disabilities for well over 20 years. From her experience with her own 4 kids (who have a variety of disabilities) and from having worked with hundreds of other families, Helen knows the absolute key to survival is:

"Put your own oxygen mask on before helping others"

This document has been made to help you steer through the confusing array of mainstream and community services available to support your family from surviving to thriving. If Helen and her family can do it, so can you!

PARENT SUPPORT AND EDUCATION

Parenting is hard enough at the best of times. When your child has disability, you need a safe and empathetic space where you can express your concerns, seek guidance, and exchange coping strategies with other families facing challenges like yours. These and other resources can also educate you about your child's disabilities, the understanding from which can make a huge step towards getting life back on track. Through self-care and education, parents become better equipped to provide effective care and support to their children with disabilities. Many of the following are **free, online or NDIS-funded**:

- <https://www.triplep-parenting.net.au/au/free-parenting-courses/triple-p-online-under-12/>
- <https://www.cfecfw.asn.au/parent-and-carer-support-groups-and-disability-advocacy-groups/>
- <https://www.disabilitysupportguide.com.au/topics/health-and-wellbeing>
- <https://www.disabilitysupportguide.com.au/topics/early-intervention>
- <https://www.betterhealth.vic.gov.au/health/servicesandsupport/disability-groups-and-networks>
- <https://www.parentalstresscentre.com/extra-needs/>
- <https://www.relationshipsnsw.org.au/locations/penrith/>
- <https://www.autismcrc.com.au/interventions-evidence>
- <https://sourcekids.com.au/>

MAINSTREAM SUPPORTS INFORMATION

There are a variety of government-funded mainstream supports available to all Australians who need them, including NDIS participants. Information for government support for all age groups of people with disability and their carers includes:

- <https://www.disabilitygateway.gov.au/>
- <https://www.carergateway.gov.au/>
- <https://www.health.nsw.gov.au/carers/Pages/resources-for-carers.aspx>

- Commonwealth Respite and Carelink Centres: ph 1800 052 222
- National Equipment Database: <https://askned.com.au/>
- Independent Living Centres: <https://ilcaustralia.org.au/>
- <https://www.sport.nsw.gov.au/find-a-sport/sport-for-people-disability>
- <https://www.nationalparks.nsw.gov.au/access-friendly>
- Companion Card: <https://www.nsw.gov.au/living-in-nsw/companion-card>
- Disability Support Pension: <https://www.servicesaustralia.gov.au/disability-support-pension>
- Support for people who are not eligible for the NDIS: <https://www.ndis.gov.au/applying-access-ndis/how-apply/receiving-your-access-decision/support-people-who-are-not-eligible>
- Disability supports not funded by the NDIS: <https://raisingchildren.net.au/disability/ndis/about-ndis/child-disability-support-non-NDIS>
- <https://www.facs.nsw.gov.au/families/support-programs/all-families/brighter-futures>
- Barnados Children's Family Centre for Support: <https://www.barnardos.org.au/centres/penrith/>

HEALTH & MEDICARE

- Please ask your GP if you qualify for a Medicare rebate on up to 5 allied health sessions per calendar year (please note, not all providers can afford to bulk bill these sessions). Your rebate may be higher, however, if your family has met the Medicare Safety Net for this calendar year.
- If you are Indigenous, you can ask your GP for a "715 Health Check" which can refer you for up to 5 additional bulk billed allied health sessions.
- The Health Department is responsible for any medical procedures and follow-up allied health services you might require (e.g., if you require Botox to reduce disability-related spasticity, or for 6 weeks following surgery).
- If your child's paediatrician has activated "Item 135" in Medicare, up to 20 sessions can be rebated before your child turns 14. You should be able to check this via the Medicare app, but if not, it may be necessary to call Medicare to inquire.

MENTAL HEALTH

- All people with a disability are entitled to ask their GP for a Better Access to Mental Health Care Plan if they require support, e.g., for depression, anxiety and/or stress (please note, not all providers can afford to bulk bill these sessions and waiting lists often apply).
- Carers of people with disabilities are also entitled to ask their GP for their own Better Access to Mental Health Care Plan if they require support to sustain their ability to care (again, not all providers can afford to bulk bill these sessions and waiting lists often apply).
- For additional resources, you can phone:
 - Lifeline (24/7; you may also be eligible for 12 free sessions): 13 11 14
 - Kids Helpline (ages 5-25): 1800 551 800
 - Carer Gateway: 1800 422 737
 - Mental Health Hotline: 1800 011 511

EARLY CHILDHOOD

All childcare centres, preschools and family day care services are required to provide developmentally appropriate educational opportunities to all children they care for.

This is particularly important for children with disability, who often require extra practice to master skills.

- Go to <https://www.childcarefinder.gov.au/> and <https://www.startingblocks.gov.au/> for services available near you
- You can access information about fee subsidies here: <https://www.education.gov.au/early-childhood/get-help-fees>
- Many children with disability, including those who live with their grandparents, those whose parents wish to transition to work, and those facing financial hardship are eligible for additional fee subsidies: <https://www.education.gov.au/early-childhood/support-vulnerable-families>
- All early childhood facilities are required to make their services inclusive and can apply for funding to assist your child's access to their service: <https://www.education.gov.au/early-childhood/implement-inclusive-practices>

FAMILY SUPPORT

It has never been harder to be a parent than now, regardless of whether your child has disability, you are experiencing domestic violence, you are at risk of homelessness, are from a linguistically and culturally diverse background, are Indigenous, or any combination of these and other complexities. There are a variety of government-funded supports available to families, including:

- <https://www.facs.nsw.gov.au/families/parenting>
- <https://www.facs.nsw.gov.au/families/parenting/caring-for/resources>
- <https://www.facs.nsw.gov.au/families/parenting/caring-for/disability>
- <https://www.facs.nsw.gov.au/families/parenting/caring-for/disability/chapters/disability-services-and-support>
- <https://www.facs.nsw.gov.au/families/support-programs/all-families/general-support-and-counselling-numbers>
- <https://www.facs.nsw.gov.au/families/support-programs/all-families/family-connect-and-support>
- <https://www.familyconnectsupport.dcj.nsw.gov.au/>
- <https://www.facs.nsw.gov.au/families/support-programs/all-families/brighter-futures>
- https://www.facs.nsw.gov.au/domestic-violence/services-and-support/programs/staying-home-leaving-violence?SQ_VARIATION_568329=0
- <https://www.facs.nsw.gov.au/housing/help/ways/start-safely>
- <https://www.facs.nsw.gov.au/families/support-programs/all-families/integrated-services>

SCHOOL EDUCATION (INCLUDING EARLY INTERVENTION)

- There are around 9 preschools on the sites of public schools in our area. Fees are low, with reductions for Health Care Card holders and Indigenous families. Enrolment is for 1 year prior to starting primary school:
 - <https://education.nsw.gov.au/teaching-and-learning/curriculum/early-learning/departments-preschools/enrolment>
- Early Intervention Support Classes are run as 2.5hr blocks 2-3 days a week with a maximum of 8 children to 2 staff, for children aged 3-6. They are intended to be in addition to early childhood services your child accesses.
 - Contact your local public school or call the delivery support team on 131 536 to be considered by the Placement Panel.

- Early Intervention Resource Support is where the early intervention teacher upskills your child's early childhood service provider to provide early intervention at their usual service facility.
- Transition Support Teachers are available to support some children transitioning to Early Intervention or primary school:
 - <https://education.nsw.gov.au/parents-and-carers/inclusive-learning-support/early-childhood-education/early-intervention>
- The Department of Education is required to make their school accessible to your child's needs and to provide equipment and support required to include your child in meaningful educational activities. Allied health provided in schools to facilitate this is paid for from the school's RAM funding:
 - <https://education.nsw.gov.au/teaching-and-learning/disability-learning-and-support>
 - <https://www.education.gov.au/swd>

HIGHER EDUCATION AND VET

The Department of Education helps school leavers:

- <https://education.nsw.gov.au/teaching-and-learning/disability-learning-and-support/leaving-school/further-education-and-training>

EMPLOYMENT

The Department of Education helps with employment and the following link also includes information on how Centrelink, JobAccess, Workforce Australia, Disability Employment Services and Australian Disability Enterprises can help:

- <https://education.nsw.gov.au/teaching-and-learning/disability-learning-and-support/leaving-school/employment>

There is also information about NSW government employment supports for people with disability:

- <https://www.nsw.gov.au/living-in-nsw/government-services/disability-services>

HOUSING

The Department of Housing has a disability modifications policy:

- <https://www.facs.nsw.gov.au/housing/policies/disability-modifications-policy>

Physical Disability Council of NSW housing information can be found here:

- <https://www.pdcnsw.org.au/useful-resources/housing-and-accommodation/>

INFRASTRUCTURE

The Department of Infrastructure has information on making infrastructure more inclusive:

- https://www.infrastructure.gov.au/territories-regions-cities/local-government/awards/2019/factsheet_disability
- <https://www.infrastructure.gov.au/infrastructure-transport-vehicles/transport-accessibility>

TRANSPORT

A variety of transport options can be found at:

- <https://www.nsw.gov.au/living-in-nsw/government-services/disability-services>

JUSTICE

The Department of Communities and Justice has a Disability Inclusion Action Plan:

- <https://www.dcj.nsw.gov.au/content/dam/dcj/dcj-website/documents/about-us/diap/dcj-diap-2020-2024.pdf>

People with disability may need to attend court (e.g. as a witness) and support is available:

- https://www.justice.nsw.gov.au/diversityservices/Pages/divserv/divserv_so_you_have_to_go_to_court.aspx

Information on capacity assessment and assisted decision making is available:

- https://www.justice.nsw.gov.au/diversityservices/Pages/divserv/ds_capacity_tool/ds_capacity_tool.aspx

AGED CARE

Some NDIS participants live in multigeneration families, while others are turning 65. These links provide information for supports available to older people in your family:

- <https://www.facs.nsw.gov.au/coniston/service-and-support-for-older-people,-people-with-a-disability-and-their-families-and-carers>
- <https://www.myagedcare.gov.au/carers/caring-someone-disability>

The government is committed to ensuring younger people do not live in residential aged care. If this affects your family, information can be found here:

- <https://www.dss.gov.au/disability-and-carers/programmes-services/for-people-with-disability/younger-people-with-disability-in-residential-aged-care-initiative>

ADDITIONAL MAINSTREAM SUPPORTS

Various community health resources can provide valuable support to empower the local community to provide readily accessible resources for health and well-being, for example:

- Aboriginal Health in Nepean Blue Mountains:
<https://www.nsw.gov.au/health/nbmlhd/services/aboriginal-health>
- Inclusion Support Program: <https://www.education.gov.au/early-childhood/inclusion-support-program>
- Nepean Blue Mountains Local Health District: <https://www.nsw.gov.au/health/nbmlhd>
- Service Directory for Nepean Blue Mountains:
<https://www.nsw.gov.au/health/nbmlhd/service-directory?categorySearch=Allied%2520health&location=-33.759%2C150.7711%2CST+MARYS+2760>

NDIS-SPECIFIC INFORMATION

The NDIS is constantly evolving, with Information specific to your needs frequently changing. At the time of writing, the following links were available and may assist you to navigate the system better:

- Types of Early Connections that are available:
<https://www.ndis.gov.au/understanding/families-and-carers/early-childhood-approach-children-younger-9/what-types-early-connections-are-available>
- What does the early childhood approach look like? <https://ourguidelines.ndis.gov.au/early-childhood/early-childhood-approach/what-does-early-childhood-approach-look>
- Early childhood development: <https://ourguidelines.ndis.gov.au/how-ndis-supports-work-menu/mainstream-and-community-supports/who-responsible-supports-you-need/early-childhood-development>

- Participant Service Guarantee: <https://www.ndis.gov.au/about-us/policies/service-charter/participant-service-guarantee>
- Change in Circumstances: <https://www.ndis.gov.au/participants/using-your-plan/changing-your-plan/change-circumstances#download-the-form>
- Assistive Technology: <https://ourguidelines.ndis.gov.au/supports-you-can-access-menu/equipment-and-technology/assistive-technology>
- Do we expect family and informal supports to provide care for you?: <https://ourguidelines.ndis.gov.au/supports-you-can-access-menu/home-and-living-supports/short-term-accommodation-or-respite/how-do-we-make-decisions-about-short-term-accommodation/do-we-expect-family-and-informal-supports-provide-care-you>
- Sustaining Informal Supports: <https://www.ndis.gov.au/about-us/operational-guidelines/including-specific-types-supports-plans-operational-guideline/including-specific-types-supports-plans-operational-guideline-sustaining-informal-supports#11>

COMMUNITY SUPPORTS INFORMATION

Community supports are not federal or state government-funded; they can be charities, private businesses or funded by local councils, as just a few examples. As with Mainstream supports, please always keep in mind that it genuinely does take a village to raise a child, so rather than make life even harder for you and your family by trying to do everything yourself, please access as many community supports as you require to help your family thrive.

NON-NDIS THERAPY SERVICES

If you don't have sufficient NDIS funding for the therapy services you require, options include:

- There are grants that can be applied for to help cover the cost of therapy, e.g.: <https://www.variety.org.au/nsw/get-help/>
- Additionally, the following resource is available for children facing funding constraints: <https://thefrankiefoundation.org/apply-for-a-grant/#:~:text=The%20Frankie%20Foundation%20grants%20to,by%20their%20current%20NDIS%20plan.>

PHYSICAL ACTIVITY

Increasing everyone's physical activity, whether they have a disability or not, is so important for everything from long-term health to emotional regulation, socialisation, participating at school, and MUCH more. Some of the most accessible physical activities for the whole family include swimming, cycling and even going to the park. Examples of how to find activities that might suit your family can be found on these links:

- <https://alishub.com.au/activities/>
- <https://www.facebook.com/groups/WesternSydneyAutismCommunity/>
- <https://www.sdn.org.au/family-activity-hub/>
- <https://www.lukepriddisfoundation.com/>

Alternatively, Blacktown City Council is working with Disability Sports Australia to open the Disability Sports Centre of Excellence in preparation for the 2032 Paralympic Games in Brisbane.

CLUBS

- For everyone and all interests: <https://www.clubsofaustralia.com.au/clubs-in-new-south-wales-71/>
<https://www.clubsofaustralia.com.au/clubs-in-new-south-wales-71/>

- Autism Community Network with links to workshops for kids, carer support groups, and a variety of disability-friendly sports: <https://acnaustralia.org.au/events/>

SENSORY-FRIENDLY SWIMMING

- Ripples Special Needs program caters for students with mild to severe disabilities of all ages and swimming abilities, with locations in Penrith and St Marys: <https://www.ripplesnsw.com.au/learn-to-swim/swim-school/special-needs>
- Sydney Gymnastic and Aquatic Centre aims to develop multiple aquatic-based skills for all people with an intellectual and/or physical disability, located in Rooty Hill: <https://www.sgac.com.au/classes/special-needs-swimming-lessons/>
- Rainbow Club is a network of social swimming clubs for children with a disability. It is a Registered NDIS Provider, with several locations including Penrith and Seven Hills: <https://www.myrainbowclub.org.au/>

ACCESSIBLE PARKS & PLAYGROUNDS

Councils throughout Sydney and the Blue Mountains have been upgrading their parks and playgrounds to make them more accessible. Here's a list of some to help you get started:

- David Currie Playspace (Banks Dr, St Clair)
- Glenbrook Park Inclusive Playground (Park St, Glenbrook)
- Endeavour Park (Shanke Cres, Kings Langley)
- Livvi's Place Elara (Elara Blvd & Northbourne Dr, Marsden Park)
- Tench Reserve (East bank, Nepean River, Penrith)
- Wawai Ngurra Playspace at Nurragingy Reserve (Knox Rd, Doonside)
- Wentworth Falls Lake Playground (Sinclair Cres, Wentworth Falls)

BIKING AND WALKING TRAILS

- Blacktown paths: <https://www.blacktown.nsw.gov.au/Sport-recreation/Sport-and-Leisure/Walk-run-cycle#section-5>
- Blue Mountains paths, listed by length and difficulty: <https://www.alltrails.com/parks/australia/new-south-wales/blue-mountains-national-park/mountain-biking>
- Yandhai Nepean Crossing (walk or bike) -7km loop: <https://www.visitpenrith.com.au/things-to-do/outdoors-active/yandhai-nepean-crossing>

LIBRARY GROUPS

Local libraries offer a range of benefits, including providing younger children with a stimulating environment for early social interaction and cognitive development. You might like to try:

- Baby Time (0-2 years) weekly during school terms in Penrith (Mondays), St Marys (Tuesdays), and St Clair (Thursdays) libraries
- Toddler Time (1-3 years with an adult carer) weekly during school terms in Penrith (Mondays)
- Story Time (2-5 years with an adult carer) weekly during term time in Penrith (Wednesdays), St Marys (Tuesdays), and St Clair (Thursdays) libraries
- Bilingual Story Time (2-5 years with an adult carer) weekly in St Marys (Tuesdays), Penrith (Wednesdays), and St Clair (Thursdays). Available in Urdu, Auslan, Tagalog and Mandarin

- Little Seekers Story Time (2-5 years with social and sensory needs with an adult carer) twice per term in Penrith
- Toy Library (0-8 years with their family) during open library hours in Penrith

Further information can be found at: https://penrithcity.spydus.com/cgi-bin/spydus.exe/MSGTRNGEN/WPAC/ProgramsChildren?HOMEPRMS=UD_Children

COMMUNITY THERAPY

Sometimes, in-clinic therapy sessions may not best suit your ongoing needs. For example, you may be ready to generalise skills learnt in-clinic into your "real life" settings, or you may find it too hard to travel to the clinic due to other life events. You can use the "provider finder" on the NDIS website: <https://www.ndis.gov.au/participants/working-providers/find-registered-provider/provider-finder>

Alternatively, we have collated the following information to help make the transition easier for you. To the best of our knowledge, these providers all offer home visits or similar community-based therapy sessions:

- <https://www.benevolent.org.au/services-and-programs/clinical-health-and-disability-services>
- <https://aussie-care.com.au/index.php/allied-health-care-therapeutic-support/>
- <https://betterrehab.com.au/>
- <https://www.earlystartaustralia.com.au/>
- <https://disabilityhomecare.australianhealthprofessionals.com.au/>

We recommend contacting more than one, as waiting times and disability expertise may vary substantially between services.

Of course, you can't learn to drive in a clinic, either, so you might like to contact this registered provider if you have a family member who wants to learn to drive:

- <https://learntodriveandrivingschool.com.au/ndis-driving-lessons/>

ADDITIONAL HELP

If you've read this far and still have questions, your support coordinator, early childhood coordinator, or local area coordinator should also be able to help you achieve your goals – their contact information should be in the **"My NDIS Contact"** part of your NDIS plan.

Please note that, due to high staff turnover, if your NDIS Contact doesn't reply to you promptly, it's wise to ring the 1800 800 110 contact centre to ask who your new NDIS Contact is.

This information was prepared in November 2023 and is current to the best of our knowledge. We really hope it helps your family thrive, but please let us know if you find anything that needs updating!