

How to get the supports you need

by Bridget Larsen, Family Carer

1 Needs Identification

What does your person want and need?

Prioritise age-appropriate supports, respect individual preferences and encourage exploration.

What does your family need?

Identify pain points and what would help – think moments like dinner time or after school.

2 Plan

Questions to Ask Yourself

- What do I need right now?
- Are there key transitions ahead? (e.g. *changing schools*)
- What should I plan for – short, medium and long term (*housing, schools, cars and more*)
- Emergency planning – have a Plan B for unexpected health needs, including care for siblings or pets
- Contingency planning – prepare for disruptions, like a physio resigning, by keeping a list of alternate providers

3 Triage

Prioritise What Matters

- Focus on the essential and time-critical first
- Your time, energy, and resources are limited, so pick your battles and let the rest go
- Stay flexible and realistic – there will be surprises, setbacks and unexpected support along the way

4 Research

Finding the Right Supports

- Do your research. Check government and association websites
- Ask your networks, learn what's worked for others and explore alternatives
- Stay open-minded. Unexpected activities can spark lasting interests
- Look locally, visit expos and keep a file of useful resources
- Try things out. Site visits and "having a go" can be eye-opening
- Build informal supports. Family and friends want to help – it's okay to ask and accept

5 Implement

Building Strong Supports

- Be proactive. You're the expert – share information and guide others
- Choose and train well by communicating clearly, checking in and giving constructive feedback
- Invest in relationships – strong, lasting connections beat high turnover
- Stay flexible and adapt where needed to keep good supports, e.g. working around student placements.

6 Manage

Staying Organised & In Control

- Use calendars, diarise reminders and set aside weekly admin time to plan and schedule
- Create systems that work for you, like checklists, apps or reusable resources and guides to help keep information accessible
- Keep notes on contacts and key information across providers and agencies
- Be prepared. Know your goals, who's in the room and why you're meeting
- Get paperwork right. Take your time, government forms are unforgiving.
- Raise concerns thoughtfully and negotiate effectively.
- Be polite, ask for support when needed and don't be afraid to say no. Your voice matters.

7 Evaluate (and adjust)

- Ask: How are things going?
- Identify what's working and what's not.
- Review needs: Do I still need this? What's coming up?
- Consider improvements: What could be better? Are there better alternatives?
- Decide wisely: Is it easier to fix or replace?



Tips for Carers

- Stay physically and mentally healthy
- Prioritise sleep and wellbeing. It's essential, not negotiable
- Be kind to yourself and honour your needs.
- Invest in relationships. Social, emotional and financial support matters
- Ask for and accept help. It's healthy
- Explore supports like carers' groups and associations