

PARTICIPANT HANDBOOK

NEW ENGLAND NORTH WEST
ABILITY LINKS



Contents

What is Ability Links?	3
How is Ability Links managed?	4
Who works at Ability Links?	5
What can Ability Links offer me?	6
How do I become a participant?	8
What are my rights?	9
What are my responsibilities?	9
What about my Privacy?	10
Ability Links responsibilities as a Mandatory Reporter	10
How do I make a complaint?	11
How do I contact Ability Links?	12



Linking people with disability to their local community

What is Ability Links?

Ability Links is a program designed to help people with disability, their families and carers, to have their needs met within their local communities. It is further designed to promote the rights of people with disability to live inclusive lives in all spheres: community, public, private and social.

Ability Links aims to facilitate the inclusion of people in the activities offered by public, private, non-government and volunteer-based services and organisations by building:

- the skills and abilities of people with disability, their families and carers; and
- social capital within organisations and across communities so that people with disability are able to access and actively participate in activities available to the general community.

Our services are free of charge.

“ Believe in your dreams. They are the voice of your heart. ”

- Anon

How is Ability Links managed?

Ability Links comes under the umbrella of Pathfinders, a large organisation which is based in Armidale. Pathfinders provides a variety of services to children, families and young people throughout the New England North West area of NSW.

Pathfinders is a not-for-profit, non-government organisation managed by a group of community members who make up our Board of Governance. The Board employs a Chief Executive Officer to oversee the operations of all the services and programs under Pathfinders.

Ability Links has its own Program Manager to make decisions in relation to service provision on a daily basis.

“ The greatest inspiration is often born of desperation. Don't let what you can't do interfere with what you can do. ”

- John Wooden



Who works at Ability?

Linkers are employed by Ability Links and are experienced support workers who are caring, welcoming, confidential and non-judgemental.

Linkers are situated in the following areas:

- Program Manager—Lynn Lennon—0459 141 755
- Linker—Inverell—Brett Pischke—0488 254 997
- Linker—Tamworth—Anne Davis—0400 673 370
Linker—Tamworth— Rebecca Browning—0459 096 935
- Linker—Armidale—Suzanne Bannon —0409 137 993
- Linker—Glen Innes—Jason Reed—0400 598 754
- Linker—Moree—Jill Skinner—0457 833 854

“ I have a disability yes that’s true, but all that really means is I may have to take a slightly different path than you. ”
- Robert M Hansel



What can Ability Links do for me?

Staff at Ability Links will make an appointment with you to discuss your dreams and goals and support you with the steps required to reach them.

Linkers can assist with:

- Hobbies, leisure and recreation
- Education and training
- Health
- Employment
- Accessing services
- Transport
- Housing
- Concerns with accessibility
- Discovering “what’s on” in community

All requests are considered and investigated to help you achieve the life you wish to lead.

“ Everything will be OK in the end. If it’s not, it’s not the end. ”
- John Lennon



If you are a parent or carer, we can help with:

- Provide advice about services within your community
- Support to find interests/activities just for you
- Be an ear to listen
- Provide information on programs and activities for all family members
- Support siblings with their dreams and goals
- Connect you to others in your community in similar situations
- Explore options for managing the demands of being a carer
- Where possible deliver, or connect you with culturally appropriate services and agencies

“ There is just one life for each of us
-- our own.
- Euripides ”



How do I become a participant?

Ability Links can assist:

- People with disability (9-64 years); and
- Carers and families of people with disability.
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people with a disability
- Australian people of culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds with disability

You can be referred by:

- Another agency or professional
- A friend or past participant of Ability Links
- Yourself

You don't need a formal referral. We encourage people to take the initiative and contact us themselves. No formal diagnosis of disability is required to utilise the Ability Links program.

“ We must be the change we wish to see
in the world.”
- Ghandi ”

What are my Rights?

As a participant of Ability Links you have the right to:

- Be treated with dignity and respect
- Have an active role in setting your goals
- Privacy and confidentiality (see *What about my Privacy?* on page 10)
- A culturally appropriate professional, quality service
- Ask questions
- Make a complaint about the service (ask staff for a Complaints Form)
- End the service whenever you want
- Be assured that Ability Links will adhere to the Disability Standards, NSW and operate within the terms of the 6 Standards, Rights, Participation and Inclusion, Individual Outcomes, Feedback and Complaints, Service Access and Service Management

What are my Responsibilities?

As a participant of Ability Links you have the responsibility to:

- Be in control of the process
- Able to change your mind
- Treat staff with dignity and respect
- Notify us as soon as possible when you can't keep an appointment

What about my Privacy?

Your contact with Ability Links will be confidential within the service. This means that anything you tell us will not be shared with anyone outside the service, unless we get your written permission first.

The only exception to this is our obligation as a Mandatory Reporter (see below).

Your file will be locked away securely at all times unless your support worker is using it.

Ability Links is a mandatory notification agency, therefore we must notify the relevant authorities if we believe a child is in danger of significant harm or abuse.

Ability Links Responsibilities as a Mandatory Reporter

Significant harm or abuse is violence or abusive behaviour such as physical abuse; emotional abuse; neglect; sexual abuse and any other behaviour which threatens a child's right to safety.

If we are concerned about a child's safety we will make the report, and we will tell you about it.



How do I make a complaint?

We would like to know if you are unhappy with our service or workers as we are always striving to improve the services we provide.

If you wish to make a comment, suggestion or complaint about Ability Links, you can take the following steps:

- Talk to a staff member and/or;
- Fill out a Complaints Form or ask a staff member to help you fill it in

All complaints are addressed fairly and promptly. There will be no negative consequences for any person who wishes to express concern.

If you are not happy with the outcome of your complaint you can contact the Pathfinders Chief Executive Officer and he will make time to see them. You can get the Chief Executive Officer's contact details from any Ability Links staff member or you can contact the NSW Ombudsman on 1800 451 524.

How do I contact Ability Links?

You can contact our staff on the following numbers and at the following locations:

INVERELL—6720 8870

Program Manager—0459 141 755

Linker—0488 254 997

ARMIDALE—6711 1209

Linker—0409 137 993

GLEN INNES—6732 1711

Linker—0400 598 754

MOREE—6751 1199

Linker—0457 833 854

TAMWORTH—5776.7282

Linkers—0459 096 935 or 0400 673 370

For written complaints, post a letter or a completed Complaints Form to:

PO Box 990 Inverell 2360

For more information on the Ability Links program go to:

www.pathfinders-aus.org

