



Preparing for a meeting

A guide for parents of children with Special Educational Needs

As a parent of a child with special education needs you may be asked to attend a variety of meetings with professionals at your child's early years setting or school. It is very important that you try to attend this as it gives you the opportunity to put your thoughts forward.

Before the meeting

If the date or time is not convenient, ask for it to be changed. Ensure you are aware of where the meeting is being held.

If you are not sure what the meeting is about ask the person holding the meeting.

Also ask who will be attending the meeting. If there is someone you feel should be invited to the meeting who has not then request that this is done.

If you need help because of a sensory impairment or disability let the person arranging the meeting know before you go.

If you require an interpreter because English is your second language you can ask for an interpreter to help you understand. It may take some time to organise this so there may be a delay in holding the meeting.

Preparing for the meeting

Read through any reports that are sent to you before the meeting. If this meeting is an Annual review of your children Statement of special educational needs then reports should be given to you two weeks prior to the meeting. Make notes if there are parts you do not understand or would like clarified. It would be better to ask the early years setting or school prior to the meeting for clarification, but if they are unable to help raise the points at the meeting.

Be clear about what you want to discuss at the meeting and the outcome you would like. It is best to have an idea of your limits, what is the most you want and what is the least you will accept?

Make a short list or notes of what you want to say, as these will help you to remember.

There may be issues you need to raise about things that have happened in the past, this is fine but try to focus on the future rather than the past!

If possible, ask your child for their views. What they like and dislike about school? Do they have any worries? Is there anything they would like you to say at the meeting? This gives your child an opportunity for their views to be taken into consideration.

You may wish to take your partner, family member or a friend with you for support.

The person may be able to take some notes for you at the meeting that will help you to remember important information.

If you would like support at the meeting please ring Parent Partnership 01296 383754, with as much notice as possible, and we may have an Independent Parental Supporter or member of staff who could attend.

Take your diary to the meeting just in case future meetings need to be organised.

At the meeting

It is important to ensure that you are on time and are prepared.

Ensure that all the people introduce themselves so that you know who they are.

If you are asked to speak first it is quite acceptable to ask to speak after others so you can listen to their contributions and then make your comments.

If during the meeting people use complicated terms or jargon that you do not understand ask them to explain. They will not mind. They are probably just used to using these phrases and abbreviations in their day-to-day work. Keep asking, until whatever is unclear has been explained in a way that makes sense to you.

If you are given any new reports to read at the meeting, ask for time to read them and if you have any queries then raise them. If you feel you need more time ask for the meeting to be put back to another day so that you have time.

If you disagree with a professional at the meeting about their views then do not be afraid to speak up. You know your child in a way that they do not and if you do not think something they are suggesting will work then tell them why and perhaps make another suggestion.

If you do not understand how a professional has come to a conclusion about your child ask as many questions as you like to gain an understanding.

Try to keep calm and polite at the meeting rather than angry. This way you are seen as a parent with a different point of view rather than a “difficult” parent and

professionals may be more willing to co-operate with you. They certainly will listen more if you are calm.

If at any time you feel that you need a break from the meeting because you are feeling “out of control” with your emotions this is fine or you may have to ask for another meeting at another time.

Be realistic about what they can offer and be prepared to negotiate and compromise with other people’s options and the possible alternatives.

At the end of the meeting ask the Chair of the meeting to clarify what has been agreed and what should happen next and any actions or support that has been agreed. If any further meeting is to be set it is better for this to be done at the meeting when everyone is available.

After the meeting

You may feel that you would like to confirm what was agreed in a letter to ensure that there has been no misunderstanding.

It is important to keep all the important information about your child, including reports and correspondence. Try to keep them in a file in a safe place for future reference.

If you speak to someone on the phone try to keep a record of what was discussed with the date and actions to be taken by whom.