



Helpful Hints Making the Most of Meetings

You may be asked to attend meetings about your child with professionals. Here are some helpful hints to follow to ensure that the meetings run smoothly.

Before the meeting:

- Make sure you know what the meeting is for. If you are not sure it is ok to ask the organiser. You can ask for a list of things to be discussed or done within the meeting. This is sometimes called an agenda.
- If you have something that you would like to discuss at the meeting, talk to or write to the organiser, asking for it to be included in the agenda.
- Did you ask for the meeting? If so, what do you want to achieve? It is a good idea to write to the person/ people you have called a meeting with outlining the things that you wish to discuss. That way everyone is clear on the aim(s) of the meeting.
- Make sure you know the date and time of the meeting, where it will take place and how long it will last.
- Find out who will be at the meeting and what their roles are in relation to your child. Ask who will be running the meeting. Will it be the SENCO, the Headteacher, someone from the SEN team or another professional?
- Consider whether you need to make transport arrangements in advance.
- Consider whether you need to make childcare arrangements to ensure you can attend the meeting. You will be able to focus better if you don't take any younger siblings with you.
- If you are unable to make the date set, contact the organiser as soon as possible so that another date can be arranged.
- Decide whether you would like to take someone with you for support. This could be your partner, a family member, or a friend. At SENDIASS, we can attend some meetings if appropriate. Please contact your advisor to discuss if they are able to attend. If someone is going to attend with you, you should let the organiser of the meeting know.
- Let the school/ meeting organiser know if you would like them to make any reasonable adjustments for you (wheelchair accessibility, documents in large font, a hearing loop etc)
- Ask if any new information will be shared at the meeting. If there is new information, ask if you could have a copy to read before the meeting so that you are prepared.



Preparing for the meeting:

- Make a list of things that you would like to discuss or any questions you would like to ask at the meeting. You could use the HW SENDIASS meeting planner on our website. Be realistic about what you can achieve in the timeframe of the meeting. It is a good idea to prioritise the things you want to discuss and write them out in order of importance.
- Read any reports or relevant documents such as your child's EHC plan or the schools SEND Information Report (this should be on their website or you can ask school for a copy).
- Is there any paperwork that needs completing before the meeting? Have school asked for anything from you? Try to do this in good time to allow the school and other professionals time to read it before the meeting.
- Ask your child or young person for their views and record them in some way. There are some resources in the young person section of our website to help with this.
- Consider your and your child's views, wishes and feelings to share at the meeting.
Think about:
 - ❖ What is going well at home and at nursery/school/college?
 - ❖ What is not going so well at home and at nursery/school/college?
 - ❖ Any ideas you have for what might make things better
 - ❖ Any strategies that are likely to make things worse for your child
 - ❖ Your aims and aspirations for the future
- You can also ask your child or young person if they would like to attend the meeting, for all or part of it.

What to take with you to the meeting:

- A notepad, pen or device to make notes. If someone is coming with you to the meeting you could ask them to take notes for you.
- Any relevant information. This could be reports, letters or your own research.
- Your child or young person's views.
- Your list of things to discuss and questions to ask or the HW SENDIASS Meeting Planner.
- A diary or device to schedule any follow up meetings or actions.



During the meeting:

- During the COVID-19 pandemic be prepared to wear a mask or face covering and for others within the meeting to do so. If you have a hearing impairment or rely on lip reading let the organiser of the meeting know so that other arrangements can be made. Also be prepared to follow any social distancing rules and procedures that the school or venue might have in place. You can ask the school about these in advance. It is also possible that meetings might be held virtually via online platforms. See our helpful hints guide to virtual meetings.
- Your emotions are likely to be raised as this involves your child but try to remember that the meeting will go better if you stay calm.
- Be on time. You will feel calmer if you are not rushing. Give yourself time to do what you need to feel ready – look over your notes, take deep breaths, etc
- Introduce yourself and make sure you are clear about the roles and responsibilities of the other people at the meeting. If you are not sure what someone's role is or why they are at the meeting it is ok to ask.
- If anyone is going to take minutes, these are notes of the meeting, ask for a copy. Or take your own notes or ask anyone coming with you to take notes for you.
- If this isn't your first meeting, ask about any actions that were agreed at the last meeting and find out if they have been done.
- Use the agenda or your list of questions and cross them off as they are covered or answered. You could use the HW SENDIASS Meeting Planner to record actions as they are agreed.
- It is OK to ask people to explain anything you don't understand.
- It is also OK to disagree with what's being said. You could say something like "I understand what you're saying but I disagree" rather than saying something or someone is wrong.
- Listen carefully and try not to interrupt. Respect the views of other people in the meeting.
- Try to be positive and focus on how things can improve rather than what might have gone wrong in the past. Try to focus on solutions rather than problems. You could say things like:
 - ❖ What can we do to improve this?
 - ❖ I/We find.....helps at home. Would school be able to do the same?
 - ❖ What could I/we do to support?
 - ❖ Do you have any ideas of what might help?
 - ❖ Ifisn't possible what else could school offer?



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- It is ok to ask for extra time to think about things or talk to other people involved. You do not have to agree to things on the spot.
 - It is also OK to ask for a break at any point if you feel you need one.
 - Acknowledge the school and other professionals' roles, experience and support that is already in place. It is best if you work together to understand your child and support them.
 - Make sure you have time to express your views and ask any questions you have. If you have someone with you, they can help you to do this.
 - If your concerns have not all been discussed, ask how this might be followed up (phone call, email, letter, another meeting)
 - At the end of the meeting ask the person running it to list the main actions that have been agreed, who will be doing the work and by when.
 - It is a good idea to summarise what you think you have been told to make sure that everyone agrees and check that everyone else has understood your views.
 - Make sure that you agree a date for a review meeting, if appropriate.
 - Ask for the name of the person you should contact, with any concerns in the future.

Following the meeting you should know:

- Who is going to do what and by when
- How and when the action points will be reviewed
- How any other concerns will be followed up
- Who to contact if you have any questions or concerns
- The date of the next meeting if there is one.

After the meeting:

- If you forgot to mention something at the meeting or ask a question, contact the meeting organiser as soon as you can.
- If minutes (notes) were taken at the meeting and you don't receive a copy within two weeks, contact the person who ran the meeting to ask for them.
- If you receive a copy of the minutes but you do not agree that they are a true reflection of the meeting, make sure you contact the person that wrote them and ask for them to be changed. If you do not do this, it will be assumed that you agree with the notes.
- If no meeting notes are taken you may want to write a letter/ email, thanking the person for the meeting and outlining the actions agreed. This way it ensures there is



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a written record of the meeting and something to refer to at the following review meeting.

- If, at the meeting, you agreed to do anything, make sure you do it.
- Keep an eye on deadlines to make sure that you and others complete actions on time.



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