

Checklist - How to make SEN meetings work for you and your child

Meetings play a big part in the lives of parents of children with SEN and it is important to parents that they go well. Meetings can be one of the best ways to make things happen for your child. They should be about parents and professionals talking and listening to each other. The SEN Code of Practice (2:2) says parents should be treated as partners and should be supported to make their views known about how their child is educated.

Before the meeting – get prepared by thinking about the following:

- What kind of meeting it is? Has the purpose been explained to you? Is there an agenda?
- Have there been previous meetings, and have agreed action points been carried out?
- When and where is it and how long is it likely to last. Say if it this is not convenient for you.
- Who has been invited – have you met them before? What is their role?
- Are they the people who need to be there and the ones you would like to be there? If not ask if the meeting can be rearranged to allow them to come.
- Have you got all the paperwork and reports to be discussed at the meeting? Have you had a chance to read them? Are there other reports that you want to share or chase up?
- Have you been asked for your views? What are the points you want to make and the questions you want to ask? Write a manageable list, in order of priority for you and your child.

- ☑ Would it make better use of meeting time to send your contribution in before hand- do you have any other paperwork you would like to be sent out?
- ☑ What are your child's views- are they being invited to take part in the meeting? Is this involvement at an appropriate level?
- ☑ Think about what support you may need - would it help to have someone else there to take notes or go through what was agreed, after the meeting. See if a friend or relative could come along and confirm their attendance in advance.
- ☑ Find out what you may need to know about the wider SEN process. SEN procedures are complicated. Find out how your meeting fits into the system.
- ☑ Decide whether you would like the support / information you are entitled to as a parent of a child with SEN from your Parent Partnership Service to help you to prepare for, or feel more confident about attending the meeting. If so ring Supportive Parents on 0117 9897725 or look at our Working Together Manual at www.supportiveparents.org.uk.
- ☑ Think about what you want for your child from now on - try to concentrate on this, whatever past history has been like!

- ☑ **At the meeting – think about the following:**

- ☑ Do you know who everyone is, and how they are involved with your child. If not, ask for introductions to be made.
- ☑ Do you know who is running the meeting and whether notes are being taken? If not, take notes yourself if you can, or ask a friend or relative to help with this if you want to concentrate on what is being said.
- ☑ Ask for time to read any reports that have been given to you during the meeting.

- ☑ Try to start with the positive areas that you and the other professionals involved with your child are in agreement on. Be clear on areas where there may be differences of opinion. If this happens, ask to have your views recorded separately.
- ☑ Think about whether you would rather give your views before or after the professionals. You may want to listen to their contributions and ask questions before giving your views. Ask to give your views in a way that feels right for you.
- ☑ Is the language used by professionals in discussions and in paperwork parent friendly or jargon you don't understand? Ask for an explanation - teachers are used to answering all kinds of questions.
- ☑ Have you said what you wanted to say? Keep to the points which are most important to you and your child. Make sure you've covered all the points on your list and any new concerns that have come up during discussions. Go over any notes you have made.
- ☑ Have you been heard? Think about what you can do if the meeting becomes difficult - ask for a break, especially if you feel that the meeting is not going as well as you hoped and you feel tearful or angry.
- ☑ Has the meeting done what it set out to do? Has it answered your questions and concerns? Try not to leave the meeting with unanswered questions, but be realistic about available time. Try to re-arrange rather than overrun.

- ☑ **At the end of the meeting – think about the following:**

- ☑ Do you feel agreement has been reached about “who is going to do what when”. If you are unsure about agreed action points, double check these and if possible get them recorded in writing.

- ☑ Do you know whether or when there will be another meeting arranged? Who is responsible for organising this? Would it be helpful for you to have a date in your diary.
- ☑ Talk to your child after the meeting about what will happen next and how this will help. Check whether school staff also plan to talk to them about this.
- ☑ Ask for a copy of any meeting notes to be sent to you so you can remember what was discussed. Check that you agree with this record. Ask for changes if necessary.
- ☑ If nothing happens after the meeting contact the person who organised the meeting.
- ☑ Are you clear about who is going to be making any further decisions that are needed and how you will be informed about these? This may not be the people present at the meeting.
- ☑ If you are unhappy with a decision, find out who has made it, or how to get it changed. Explore the various options which may be available to you - Disagreement Resolution, Appeal to SEN Tribunal , Complaints procedures, but give schools and the Local Authority a chance to put things right first.
- ☑ The Code of Practice and Toolkit offer good practice guidance to improve parent's experience of meetings.
<https://www.education.gov.uk/publications/eOrderingDownload/DfES%200581%20200MIG2228.pdf>

Schools and Local Authorities should take this guidance into account.