

## **Preparing for a meeting about your child**

When you are asked to attend a meeting about your child, it is useful to spend some time preparing for the meeting in order to ensure that you are clear why the meeting has been called and its intended outcomes. A meeting with professionals can be daunting and you may find it difficult to ask the questions or to make contributions which you think are important for your child.

It is useful to remember that the best outcome for the child is where the family, school and other agencies work together for the benefit of the child. This should be at the centre of all meetings and discussions about your child.

### **Before the meeting**

This is an essential part of ensuring a successful meeting.

- Why has the meeting been called? Ask for an agenda. If the meeting is part of the EHC process, the Local Authority should ensure all paperwork has been received.
- Understand the situation – be informed. Have in advance all the necessary information such as letters and reports from school and any professionals who have been involved with your child. It is helpful to have these arranged in chronological order with the most recent on the top. This should enable you to take part fully and confidently in any discussions.
- Have 2 sheets of paper: On one, have points you want to make with any evidence you may have to support your view (e.g. examples of your child's behaviour at home, letters from other professionals such as a doctor, or details from reviews of your child's Individual Education Plans). This is all the information you want to PUT INTO the meeting. On the second, write down questions that you would like to ask. This is the information that you want to TAKE AWAY from the meeting. Identify where your points will fit into the agenda.
- Take someone with you for support and ask him or her to take notes. It's hard to speak and listen and then be able to recall all the details of a conversation. Having a note taker will enable you to participate fully and not have to worry about writing it down.
- How does your child feel about the situation? Does he or she want to attend the meeting? It may be a good idea for them to attend just part of the meeting. If not, can you record their feelings and take them to the meeting? (Evidence is much better in your child's own handwriting, but if they are unable to write then someone can scribe for them. Even a drawing can be an important part of the discussion.

### **Involving your child**

- Always remain positive and keep your child informed.
- Is your child aware of his/her diagnosis or learning difficulties? If not talk to your child about it honestly and openly and to the best of his/her age and ability.
- Use clear words.
- How does your child feel about it? Listen and consider his/her feelings.
- What type of support would your child like to see in school and at home? How much support is enough support?

•

- Would your child like an opportunity to discuss this at school?
- Talk to your child about what will happen at the meeting. Discuss who will be there and their roles.
- Try to be creative about how your child could access the meeting. Maybe he/she could attend for the first or last 10 minutes only?
- Could your child put his/her thoughts into writing?
- Do not force your child to do anything he/she is not secure doing.
- Enable your child to stay in the process as best he/she can and still be comfortable.
- Allow your child to have some control over the situation at school – teachers should welcome it.

### **During the Meeting**

- Remember that everyone at the meeting is there to support your child. Ask for everyone at the meeting to be introduced and acknowledge everyone with a smile and a greeting.
- Stay focused on the needs and provision for your child or young person.
- Make your contributions at the relevant parts of the agenda and tick them off as they are covered.
- Allow yourself to be engaged in active listening. Be clear on what is being said – reflect this back to confirm your understanding: “So, what you’re saying is...”
- Allow yourself time to pause and take deep breaths. If you get upset, ask for some time whilst you leave the room and compose yourself before returning to the meeting. You don’t have to agree to anything there and then. Be open-minded and ask for time to consider any proposals which are suggested if you feel it would help you.
- Before you finish, check if you have covered all the points and questions made in your notes?
  
- It is very important that you ensure that any agreed actions are recorded with information about who is responsible for carrying them out.
- Be clear about how the actions agreed will be reviewed. Is there a date for a review meeting?
- Ask for a copy of the notes of the meeting.

### **After the Meeting**

- Talk to your child; how did he or she feel about it if they attended?
- Make sure you receive a copy of the meeting notes as soon as possible after the meeting. If you disagree with them then contact the school or the author of the notes. If you do not do this it will be assumed that you agree with them.
- Follow up on agreed actions if necessary.
- Keep all paperwork in a file so you can refer to it at a later stage if necessary.
- Start to note strategies which enable you to be effective at supporting your child, whilst still allowing you to be comfortable. This will increase your confidence.

## **10 tips for a successful meeting**

1. Do the preparation. Be informed and well prepared with up to date information
2. Ensure that the right people attend.
3. Distribute or receive an agenda in advance.
4. Listen to what is being said and if necessary confirm your understanding by asking questions. It's OK to say you don't understand and ask for someone to explain in a different way.
5. Respect others at the meeting. They may not agree with you but people listen when spoken to respectfully. Acknowledge support already given.
6. If reports are produced at the meeting ask for time to read them through thoroughly.
7. Meetings can be stressful and in this situation it is easy for you not to "hear" everything. This means that you may misunderstand what has been said. If you take someone with you this will give you an opportunity to confirm with them after the meeting what had been said.
8. Get an agreement on who will do what agreed actions and by when.
9. Be confident – remember you know your child best.
10. Someone from Shropshire IASS will be able to help and support you to prepare beforehand what you want to say in a meeting. Please do call us on 01743 280019 to discuss further.

## **Where can I get further information, advice or support?**

Contact the IASS team on:

**Phone:** 01743 280019 (Open 10am-4pm Monday—Friday)

**Web:** [www.cabshropshire.org.uk](http://www.cabshropshire.org.uk)

[www.facebook.com/IASSShropshire](https://www.facebook.com/IASSShropshire)

**Email:** [iass@cabshropshire.org.uk](mailto:iass@cabshropshire.org.uk)

**Address:** Fletcher House, 15 College Hill, Shrewsbury, SY1 1LY