



Factsheet

How to Manage Meetings and Appointments

An guide for parents/carers of children and young people with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities

Many parents find the amount of meetings and appointments they have to attend about their disabled child overwhelming. It can be really difficult to juggle all the demands of life, a family and all the additional responsibilities that go with having a child or young person with a disability.

Here are some tips from other parents which have helped parents reduce the stress of multiple meetings with health, education, social care professionals and others involved with their family.

Top Tips

Before The meeting

- Be clear about what the meeting is for. It sounds obvious, but sometimes meetings are arranged in advance, and when the time comes, things may have changed and the meeting may not be necessary, or issues can be sorted out over the phone - check with the person who set up the meeting
- Try to see the same professionals so you don't have to keep repeating your story
- Write down a list of all the questions you would like to ask at the appointment or meeting
- If a meeting has been scheduled that does not fit in with your commitments, you can ask for it to be rescheduled. However, bear in mind that if a lot of professionals are requested to attend and the meeting is rescheduled, they may not be able to be there. Give as much notice as possible if you do need to reschedule



At the Meeting

- Take a friend, relative or someone from a charity for support at appointments and meetings. They can jot down notes as it can be hard to remember everything that is said
- If any professional says something that you don't understand, ask them to explain it and don't be afraid to ask any questions, even if you think they may be unimportant – if you are worrying about something, it is better to ask
- At the meeting, ask if there will be any notes or minutes taken and if so request a copy and ask how long it will take to receive them - it is not unheard of for professionals to take minutes and not circulate them until the day of the next meeting!
- If you do receive notes or minutes at the meeting, ask for time to read through them before the meeting starts, so you have a chance to ask any questions



After the Meeting

- After the meeting, if there are any actions to be done by either yourself or a worker, make sure they are written down so that at the next meeting there is a record and this can be followed up to make sure the action has been completed

Organising your paperwork

- Keep copies of all letters, appointments, test results and benefit information in a folder. Keep a note of all the phone calls you make as well as who you spoke to. A simple lever arch file with dividers, or a concertina type file would be ideal
- Make a list of all the professionals involved with your child, their contact details and what they do as it can get confusing - if anyone attends a meeting and you are not sure who they are or what they do, just ask
- Get organised – get a diary, use your mobile phone (you can set alerts for appointments), or get a big wall calendar to mark appointment times
- If you have been waiting a long time to see a specialist or professional, do not be afraid to ring and chase this up – or get someone to do it on your behalf. It is not unknown for notes to get lost, or appointments missed. Ask to speak to the consultant's secretary, or the professional you were meant to be seeing
- Create a communication passport for your child – this is simply a way to pass on important information about your child such as their medications, likes and dislikes, what to do in case of an emergency. Templates are available from Personal Communication Passports website: www.communicationpassports.org.uk
- Keep a record of your child's progress – this could be in the form of a diary, photographs, videos or mobile phone recordings
- Make a list of all your concerns about your child. This can be used for meetings with health care professionals, social workers or educational staff



Preparing for meetings

- Think ahead about how you will get to the meeting, do you need transport, or change for parking
- Take a toy or comforter to entertain your child if you need to take them to any meetings
- Take drinks and snacks, as refreshments may be expensive

Where to get help

Here at **Skills for People** we can provide support at meetings:

- Family Advice and Support team - any meetings with professionals
- Independent Support - Education, Health and Care Assessment and Annual Review meetings

SENDIASS - Judith Lane (Tel 0191 284 0480) can help with education meetings

Skills for People
Key House
Tankerville Place
Newcastle upon Tyne
NE2 3AT

Telephone: 0191 281 8737
Fax: 0191 212 0300

Email: info@skillsforpeople.org.uk
Website: www.skillsforpeople.org.uk
Facebook: facebook.com/skillsforpeople
Twitter: [@skillsforpeople](https://twitter.com/skillsforpeople)



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