



## **NE Lincs SENDIASS Fact Sheet**

### **Preparing for a Meeting about Your Child/ Supporting your child at a meeting**

When your child has/or may have Special Educational Needs or a Disability (SEND) you may be asked to attend meetings or you may request a meeting to be held about your child. This could be for a variety of reasons such as:

- There are concerns about your child's progress
- There are concerns about how any Special Educational Needs your child may have are being met
- There are concerns about your child's behaviour, how it is being managed and the impact on their education

In addition as part of the EHC process, there are requirements for attendance at meetings so you as a parent/ carer and your child/young person can make sure your wishes and feelings are being heard and acted upon.

The best outcome for a child is achieved when the family, the school and other agencies all work together.

#### **Before the meeting**

View the meeting as a problem solving opportunity – you all want the best for your child. Be prepared – this is an essential part of ensuring you have a successful meeting:

- When and where is the meeting?
- Why has the meeting been called?
- Who will be there?
- Read any paperwork you receive before the meeting. If the meeting is part of the EHC process, the Local Authority should ensure all paperwork has been received by those attending.
- Take any evidence you may have to support your view (e.g. examples of your child's behaviour at home, letters from other professionals, or details from reviews of your child's progress).
- Make a list of all the questions you want to ask AND all the points you want to raise.

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- If you have the opportunity it can be a good idea to send your list of questions in advance so that answers to your questions can be ready for the meeting.
- Take someone with you for moral support and ask them 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. This can be a relative or friend or you can ask NE Lincs SENDIASS.
- If you aren't able to take any support make sure you have a pen and paper to write down actions that are agreed.
- Find out how does your child feel about the situation? Does he or she want to attend the meeting or 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 words, but if they are unable to write don't worry you can do this; even a drawing can be an important part of the discussion.

## **During the Meeting**

- Keep it friendly but business-like.; remember that everyone at the meeting is there to support your child
- Be realistic - remember you could be frustrated at something that the school and/or the LA have no control over.
- Don't be afraid to ask questions; there is no such thing as a silly question
- Go through your list of points and questions. Tick them off as they are dealt with.
- Share your child's views.
- Be prepared to negotiate and to listen to others points of view.
- Stay focused on the needs and provision for your child or young person.
- Allow yourself time to pause and take deep breaths. If you get upset, ask for a "time out" whilst you leave the room and compose yourself before returning to the meeting.
- Before you finish, check if you have covered all the points and questions you wanted to make.
- Ensure that any agreed actions are recorded with who is responsible for carrying them out; in what timescales and when will these be reviewed?
- Don't feel pressured into agreeing something if you aren't sure.
- Agree a date to meet again to review how things are going.

## **After the Meeting**

- Talk to your child; how did he or she feel about it? Or let them know what happened if they did not attend.
- Ask for a copy of the meeting notes. If you disagree with them then make your case to the author of the notes. If you do not do this it will be assumed that you agree with them.
- If no notes are taken you could write a letter of thanks with any agreed actions included. This ensures that there is a written record of the meeting outcomes.
- Follow up on agreed actions if necessary.
- Start to note how the agreed strategies are effective in supporting your child.
- Keep all paperwork in a file so you can refer to it at a later stage if necessary.

## **Issues to consider when talking to your child about attending a school meeting**

- Always remain positive.
- Keep your child informed.
- Is your child aware of his/her diagnosis? Talk to your child about it honestly and appropriately for his/her age and ability
- How does your child feel about the issues? 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; or draw a picture? Complete a One Page profile?
- Do not force your child to do anything he/she is not secure doing.
- Enable your child to stay in the process as best as he/she can and still be comfortable.
- Allow your child to have some control over the situation at school – teachers should welcome it

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

1. Be prepared with up to date information
2. Ensure that the right people attend.
3. Distribute (or receive) an agenda/reports in advance.
4. If reports are produced at the meeting ask for time to read them through thoroughly
5. 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.
6. Respect others at the meeting. They may not agree with you but people listen when spoken to respectfully. Acknowledge support already given.
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. NE Lincs SENDIASS can help to support you in a meeting, either by attending with you or helping you prepare what you want to say beforehand.

If you would like help or want to discuss how we can support you to resolve any problems please call;

NE Lincs SENDIASS on **01472 355365**

or email:

**nelincs@barnardos.org.uk**

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