

LEWISHAM PARENT PARTNERSHIP SERVICE

PREPARING FOR MEETINGS

As a parent or carer of a child with Special Educational Needs (SEN) and/or a disability you may be invited to attend meetings about your child in school, hospital or other locations with other services. You may also want to request a meeting to discuss your child and aren't sure how to go about it.

This information sheet had been produced to give you some ideas on how to prepare for these meetings in order to get the best out of them.

Getting organised – things you need to do

Requesting a meeting

You have the right to request a meeting with any professional involved with your child. You may wish to discuss problems at school or worries about progress. You may wish to talk to a health professional to discuss other concerns. Ask yourself these basic questions:

- What do I need to discuss?
- Who do I want to meet with to discuss it?
- How do I organise it?
- Are there any special arrangements that need to be made so that I can go to the meeting?

What do I need to discuss?

Work out exactly what the problem is and why you feel you need to have the meeting. Write it down. This will help if you need to send a letter to request the meeting. Be as clear as you can about your reasons for needing the meeting. We can always help with this if you feel unclear and want to talk it through. Call Parent Partnership Service – our number is at the bottom.

Who do I need to meet with to discuss it?

If the problem is related to school you may want to meet with the class teacher or the Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator (SENCO). If you don't know who the SENCO is call the school to ask for their name and best time to talk to them. If the problem is related to health issues you may need to speak to your child's Doctor or Specialist Nurse.

How do I organise it?

You can request the meeting by calling the relevant people and organising a time over the phone. You can request the meeting in writing and give times when you will be available and for them to get back to you to tell you when the meeting should go ahead. If you have involvement of a number of professionals you may have been allocated a Keyworker or Lead Professional. They can request the meeting and organise it on your behalf.

Special Arrangements....

If you need help because of a disability or sensory impairment remember to tell the people holding the meeting to make sure they organise what you need.

If English is not your first language or you find it difficult, you can ask for an interpreter to help you. This may take some time to arrange for you so remember to ask for this well ahead of the meeting.

Hints!

1. Make sure to have pen and paper or even a mobile phone ready to help you record dates and times and
2. Keep a diary to make sure you have no other appointments that could clash with the meeting

Tools to help you get organised

- ✓ Diary
- ✓ File for reports and correspondence

Diary – If you can, try to keep a diary about your child and their difficulties. Make a note of:

- ✓ Date
- ✓ Areas of concern
- ✓ Any difficulties your child has
- ✓ Any improvements that you or your child notice
- ✓ Anyone you have spoken to ie at school and any action taken
- ✓ Any knock-on effects – behaviour, health, anxiety, self confidence etc.

If you speak to someone on the phone about your child, check:

- ✓ Who you are speaking to
- ✓ What you have agreed to do
- ✓ What was decided

You could ask for them to put it down in a letter and send it to you to keep in your file. Write down for yourself what was agreed in the conversation and who it was you spoke to and the date of the conversation.

File for reports and correspondence

- ✓ Keep all important information about your child including school records and reports, important medical information, copies of letters from the school and copies of letters or reports from other professionals.
- ✓ Keep copies of all letters that you send.
- ✓ Try to keep them in a file in a safe place and put them in date order.

Getting ready for meetings

- If you are not sure what the meeting is about ask the person holding the meeting
- Ask who will be there and why. If you feel there should be a particular person at the meeting ask for them to be invited
- Read any reports that are sent to you before the meeting
- Plan what you are going to say. Be clear about what you are going to ask and what you want to discuss, for example
Q: What progress has he made on his individual education plan (IEP) in the last term?

It may help to make a short list of your concerns, questions and suggestions so that you don't forget to talk about them when you get into the meeting. Use reports from professionals to help back you up if possible.

Your child's views

If possible, ask your child for their views including what they enjoy. Do they have any worries? Are there things they would like you to ask the teacher?

Taking people with you

- You may want to take your partner, a friend or relative with you for support. This is especially helpful when a major decision is going to be made.
- If you feel you might lose your temper or become emotional during the meeting take someone with you for support and guidance
- If you can't think of someone to take with you call The Parent Partnership Service. We will be able to give you information on the telephone and may be able to arrange to come to the meeting with you.

The person with you will be able to take notes at the meeting of what was said and by whom. This can be a great help for you as you may not be able to remember everything that was said after the meeting.

Further Contacts

Parent Partnership Service: Independent information, advice and support for parents of children with Special Educational Needs. Contact details below.

Lewisham Parent Partnership Service
The Kabin, Forster Park School, Boundfield Road, SE6 1PQ
Tel: 020 8695 5955 Email: lewishampps@pre-school.org.uk
Website: www.lewishamparentpartnership.org.uk