

# Mencap - Social care

## Getting the most out of meetings

Meeting with others face to face can be a powerful way of influencing other people, as well as an opportunity for you to listen to their point of view. It is important to make the best possible use of any meeting, and this factsheet contains some tips on how to do that.

### Preparing yourself

Consider the following points before the meeting, and discuss these points with others if it helps you think them through logically.

- Who are you meeting?
- What do you want to get out of the meeting?
- What are your main points?
- What questions do you want to ask?
- What questions are likely to be asked of you?
- How will you remember everything you want to say and record what is being discussed?
- If you need communication support, has this been arranged?
- How will you get to and from the meeting?

It often helps people to write down their thoughts about these points.

### Before the meeting

You may want to:

- Circulate any relevant documentation in advance to give people the chance to read it. Try not to send round too many documents so as not to overwhelm people.
- Circulate a list of things that you want to discuss. These can then be added to the agenda for the meeting if there is one.
- Set one or two goals for what you want to get out of the meeting. Again you can share these with the other people attending if that is appropriate.

### Participating in the meeting effectively

- Check who is taking the minutes and recording the actions from the meeting.
- Keep to time – be guided by the Chair of the meeting, who will explain the agenda at the beginning.

- Actively listen to what is being said (more below).
- Keep to the point.
- Be honest.
- Be polite.
- Respect the views of others, and if you don't agree and want to make that known, try to remain calm.
- If you are upset or angry about something that has been said, then try to remain calm. Say, "I feel angry /upset by that because...".
- Thank the people involved in the meeting. Thanking people is a great way to acknowledge a person's role, effort or input into the process and can help them feel valued. This is likely to mean that they are more open to working together if they feel understood.

## What is active listening?

Active listening involves listening with all senses. As well as giving full attention to the speaker, it is important that the active listener is also 'seen' to be listening. Otherwise, the speaker may conclude that what they are talking about is uninteresting to the listener.

You can show that you are interested by using both verbal and non verbal messages, such as maintaining eye contact, nodding, smiling, agreeing by saying yes or simply 'Mmm hmm'. This encourages the speaker to continue with what they are saying and acknowledges that their opinion is being heard.

## Following up from the meeting

- Make sure that you read the minutes and check whether they are an accurate account of what happened in the meeting.
- Keep any promises you make – if you say you will do something, do it.
- If it is appropriate, write a letter to say thank you and summarise what you understood to be the action points.
- If someone has agreed to do something and there is a delay in hearing from them, contact that person again to check they are doing what they said they would.

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We hope that you have found this factsheet useful. Whilst you are here, we have a small favour to ask. More people are using our service than ever before. We can't keep up with demand. We don't want to turn people away, and we want to keep on developing more information resources like this factsheet, but we don't have enough money to expand. So you can see why we need to ask for your help. We know that our information and advice can make a real difference to the quality of life of the people we support. If people using our service could help to support us, our future would be much more secure. Click here to make a small donation: [www.donate.mencap.org.uk/phone](http://www.donate.mencap.org.uk/phone)

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