

Top Tips For Positive Meetings

These tips were written by a group of young people who work with a variety of Kent County Council Workers and attend a range of meetings where their lives are discussed

Before:

- Personally invite me to the meeting in advance so I know it is coming and have time to prepare
- Explain to me what the purpose of the meeting is and who will be there, and why
- If possible, let me have a say on when and where the meeting will take place and who will attend so I feel comfortable
- If I want one, organise a pre-meeting with me to discuss what will be spoken about in the main meeting and what I want to say. Don't just give me a form to fill out!
- Support me to prepare for my meetings by giving me different ways that help me share my views. This could be prompt cards or flashcards

"I was often too angry to say anything. I didn't know what was going to be spoken about...I wasn't pre-warned"

"Sometimes meetings seem to be convenient for everyone but the child"

"I feel like an object, just sitting there being stared at and no one's actually speaking to me"

"Being involved in your meetings makes everything a lot better: it's good if the person you're working with is more open with you"

During:

- Introduce all the workers at the meeting. Tell me why they are there and how they support me - especially if they are strangers to me
- Speak to me directly in the meeting and give me clear opportunities to share my views in a way that suits me. Don't speak to each other as if I'm not there. Ask me what I think and take me seriously even though I'm young
- Use language that I understand, not acronyms and jargon
- Don't judge me, say "I know how you feel" or dismiss my opinions; you haven't lived my life and experienced what I am going through
- Don't prioritise my family's or other workers' views above mine
- Include a section in the meeting about what is going well and what I enjoy. Take an interest in my life, don't just focus on the negatives
- Be as open and honest as possible about what is happening now and what might happen in the future
- Check up on me during the meeting and provide breaks if I need them

After:

- Give me time and/or a safe space after the meeting to think about what has been said. Meetings can sometimes be an emotional rollercoaster for us!
- If my meetings take place during school time, let my teachers know that I may not be able to rejoin the class and start learning straight away
- Provide me with a copy of the report or plan. Ask me if I want to get the same plan as the workers, a short version or just an overview. The plan should be easy for me to understand and written with my reactions in mind
- In the report or plan, write what I say - not your interpretation of it!
- Let me know how I can contact you in between meetings if I need you or want to discuss the meeting or anything else with you
- Keep me updated on what happens after the meeting, especially if things don't go to plan or happen more slowly than expected
- Check up on me after the meeting. It shows you care about me and my feelings

"They didn't send me anything. I was told I wasn't allowed and it was given to my carer"

"We talk about difficult things and I just have to get on with it"

But mostly, **LISTEN** to us. We are all different and all want to take part in our meetings and receive information about our plans in different ways. Get to know us and ask us what we would like.

