

#GettingThrough meetings during an inpatient stay

Created by and for families

During your child's inpatient stay there will be a variety of meetings. Taking part in these can sometimes feel overwhelming but your involvement is crucial and your views are important. Here are some practical tips and questions that are relevant for most kinds of meetings.

Getting started

You can ask a member of staff:

- What meetings will take place?
- Which ones am I invited to?
- Will my child be there? Who else will be there?
- What if I can't make the date/time? Is there an option to rearrange?

I was so pleased I had the courage to speak up and share how I felt about home leave. I had thought if I brought up my concerns the professionals would think I couldn't cope, but they gave me some really useful tips

Getting ready

- Ask what reports are going to be discussed – can you see them beforehand?
- See if someone can come with you, an extra pair of ears is always useful.
- Think about what's important to you and write it down. Your views and opinion really matter.
- If your child can't or doesn't want to attend, make sure their views are represented in the meeting by you or the unit
- Plan what to take with you: a notepad/pen, any reports, your list of important points and a bottle of water. It sounds obvious, but it's easy to forget!

Getting through the meeting

- Take some deep breaths just before the meeting starts.
- There should be a round of introductions including you and your child. You can ask people to call you by your name if they refer to you as 'mum' or 'dad'.
- It's completely fine to ask people to repeat things, to slow down or to explain abbreviations.
- Meetings can be emotional for you and your child; if you feel yourself wobble take a break.
- Remember that you are a valued part of the team. Ask the questions that are on your mind and don't leave the room with something important unsaid.

Remember everyone wants the same thing – the best for your child

I was nervous to share my views, I thought all the professionals in the room knew best. I'm so glad I did because the information I shared was really useful to the discussion. It was written into the care plan and it gave me reassurance that my voice does matter

Getting over it!

- Try and give yourself some time afterwards, whether that's to think about what's been said, have a cuppa with a friend or a walk on your own. Whatever is helpful to you.
- Check when and how you will receive a copy of the minutes.
- If you are unsure about any of the decisions, talk it through with someone: a family member, a support group or a member of staff. Explain your concerns and arrange a follow up meeting if needed. You can always ask your local Patient, Advice and Liaison Service (PALS) for advice.

My son didn't want to attend his care meeting or talk about it. So, we sent a number of text messages about the things that were important to him. I wrote them down, then sent him a picture to get his final agreement and took it into the meeting so his voice was heard

Top tips

- Be honest. Professionals may only see your child for a short time and their decisions will be informed by what you and others tell them.
- Trust your instincts – you know your child really well.
- Be open to suggestions but speak up if you think something won't work for you or your child.
- Supporting a child with mental health difficulties puts lots of extra pressure on the whole family. It is ok to ask for support and guidance if you or other family members need it.

I remember the first time I asked, 'what does that mean?' in a meeting. Honestly, I was so anxious, but I'm pleased I did because it helped me understand what's going on and now, I don't hold back



For further information and support visit
www.england.nhs.uk/getting-through/

