

Depending on the circumstances, there will be times when having informal conversations, phone calls or an email 'conversation' just won't be suitable for effective communication to take place, and a meeting will be required instead. Meetings generally:

- allow for more open 'round the table' sharing of concerns and ideas
- can enable several people to be involved at the same time
- can aid the sharing and discussing of reports or other documentation

If your child has an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP) then one meeting you will want to prepare for, is the Annual Review of the EHC plan. Please see our [Annual Review factsheets](#) for more information about how to prepare for this specifically. For all other meetings, this factsheet aims to help you prepare.

Please note: 'child' = 'child or young person'

Preparing for a Meeting

- If you are worried about a meeting, try and take someone supportive with you. Let the professional who has arranged the meeting know that someone else will be attending with you.
- Make sure you and those invited to the meeting are clear as to why the meeting is happening and how long you will have.
- Think about the outcome(s) you would like from the meeting and the questions you want to ask or the points you want to raise. Make a note of these to take with you to act as a reminder. Think about how you might voice any concerns without being confrontational.
- Make sure any paperwork that you need is sorted and easy to find. Remember, you can request copies of paperwork (such as ILPs, school reports etc) from the school if you do not have them.
- You may want to make some notes during or straight after the meeting, so make sure you have some spare paper and a pen with you or ask the person accompanying you to take brief notes for you. Do not record the meeting unless you have asked and gained everyone's permission.

During a Meeting

- Ask to be introduced to anyone at the meeting you don't know, and for their roles to be explained (as in why they are there).
- Don't be afraid at any point to ask for any jargon or abbreviations to be explained.
- Try to stay calm and polite. If you feel that you are getting upset or angry then ask if you could take a few minutes away from the meeting to collect your thoughts and emotions.
- Check your outcomes to see whether they have all been addressed.
- At the end of the meeting ask for someone to sum up what has been agreed and what will happen next (with time frames).

After the Meeting

- Ask for clarification on anything you cannot remember / were confused about.
- When you get home, check and tidy up any notes you made, so that you can refer to them in the future if necessary.
- If notes were not taken officially, then you can email those present with a summary of any decision or actions made. This gives people the chance to agree or disagree about what was discussed and agreed. It also acts as a record and evidence should it be needed in the future.



Decide the next steps to take

- If actions were agreed with timeframes, leave any following up until the time agreed has passed to see if the support / actions make any positive difference.
- Keep a log of any incidents/ concerns that continue so that the actions/outcomes can be revisited at an appropriate time for review.

Mediation

Mediation is one of a number of different ways of resolving a disagreement and tends to be used when the people involved are finding it difficult to communicate about an issue. Some advantages of mediation:

- involves an impartial third party who won't take sides.
- mediators are interested in helping people who disagree to find solutions that they can all agree to.
- they will help both parties to identify the issues that need to be sorted out and what can be done to resolve them.
- this approach may bring out helpful ideas that no-one has considered before and can lead to acceptable solutions for both parties.
- the process of mediation can only be started if both parties are willing to join in.
- It is a confidential process and either party can withdraw at any time.
- taking part in mediation may not resolve all the issues but it will not affect any legal rights you have, such as your right of appeal to the SEN Tribunal.

Details of the mediation service in West Sussex should be available from your child's school, the Local Authority or the SENDIAS Service. You will also be able to find details on the [West Sussex Local Offer](#).

Where to find more help and information:

The West Sussex SENDIAS Service is available to help where the problem is related to a child's SEN. They can help you by:

- listening to you about your situation
- helping you define the issues
- helping you to identify the person to talk to
- helping you decide what to do next
- supporting you to prepare for a meeting (and attend if there is availability and need)
- suggesting other ways forward, if after a meeting, your concerns have not been resolved



See our website to view other subjects in our ['Effective Communication Series'](#)

Service Statement

The role of the SENDIAS service is to ensure that all parents, children and young people have access to impartial information, advice and support so they can make informed decisions related to their situation. Any information that is shared with the service is in confidence unless permission has been obtained to share this with other individuals, services and agencies that may be able to help the family with their circumstances. All our policies and privacy notice, are on our website.

How To Contact Us

Contact-line: 0330 222 8555
Email address: send.ias@westsussex.gov.uk
(parent carers and professionals)
cyp.sendias@westsussex.gov.uk
(children and young people up to 25 years)
Website: www.westsussexsendias.org

SEND: Special Educational Needs and/or Disabilities

To view all SENDIAS factsheets online: <https://bit.ly/3apJBmu>

or scan QR code:

