

## NAIT guidance for schools and nurseries: Making planning meetings accessible to families affected by autism

### Context:

There is an increasing recognition that in many cases, autism can have a genetic component. Where one person in the family has received a diagnosis of autism, there is an increased likelihood of siblings, parents or other family members with similar or related thinking styles. It can be helpful to keep this in mind when considering the potential needs and sensitivities of the whole family.

The following guidance has been collated from feedback and recommendations about the child planning process from parents of autistic children and young people.

It is hoped that this guidance will inform staff in schools and nurseries of adjustments that could be made to support parents and carers to be equal partners in planning for their child or young person. Many of the parents' recommendations would constitute good practice for all planning meetings.

### 1. Planning the meeting

- Provide all information in written form, rather than verbally. If you make arrangements by phone, follow up with an email or letter to confirm the details.
- Inform parents that they can bring advocacy or a supporter to meetings.
- Book a consistent space. Holding the meeting in the same room each time can make parents or carers feel more comfortable.
- Check with the parent or carers when in the week might best suit them. Holding the meeting first or last thing in the day may be helpful (going to work late or leaving early can be easier than coming and going).
- Limit the number of people present at each meeting but ensure that key people are there for input around current issues (e.g. ensure that the allocated Occupational Therapist is invited if sensory needs are to be discussed).

### 2. Before the meeting

- Send out the agenda in advance; don't assume that the format will be familiar from meeting to meeting.
- Share information about who is going to 'chair' the meeting.
- Share clear start and finish times- and keep to these. This will enable parents and carers to predict how long they will need to be away from other responsibilities/ work place.
- The parent or carer may appreciate the option to prepare and submit their views in advance. Providing a consistent pro forma can support this.
- Share a list of the people likely to attend, with job titles.
- Consider issuing a role descriptor sheet – don't assume that everyone will know from a job title what people do.
- Check with the parent or carer whether they have a seating preference, they may like to sit near to or opposite the person 'chairing' the meeting.

### 3. During the meeting

- Be aware that the parent or carer may be feeling anxious.
- Make it clear where the parent or carer is expected to sit.
- Consider distributing clear name badges.
- Start with introductions, don't assume that everyone has met or remembers all names and roles.
- Keep to the agreed meeting format for your local authority.
- Ensure that you consider the whole life of the child; ask about the child at home and in the community.
- Summarise each section as you go along.
- Review 'action points'.
- Set a date for the next meeting.

### 4. After the meeting

- Some parents have indicated that they would appreciate the chance to reflect on the meeting straight afterwards. This can provide an opportunity to seek clarification on anything they didn't want to ask about during the meeting (advocacy may be able to support this).
- Send Minutes out within two weeks of the meeting or as soon as is possible.