

Useful Advice Links

Autism NI Family Support

Links you to information, support, assistance and services you may need. For parents/carers who are experiencing difficulties it will provide a listening ear, support and signposting to appropriate services in their area. Autism NI focuses on support for autistic children, adults and their families, by providing a menu of options that aims to increase resilience, improve knowledge and skills.

Helpline

Tel: 02890 401729 (Option 1).

Email: info@autismni.org

Web: www.autismni.org

Children's Law Centre

Information and advice on the law in relation to Special Educational Needs in Northern Ireland.

Main Line: 028 9024 5704

Chalky Freephone: 0808 808 5678 *open 9am-5pm week days*

Web: www.childrenslawcentre.org

Global Mediation

Independently runs the free Dispute and Resolution Service in Northern Ireland. If you feel that school, college or the Education Authority don't support your child's needs, you can request a referral is made to Global Mediation. A DARS meeting involves all the key people so everyone has a chance to listen to each other and work out a solution.

Tel: 02890 726060

Email: DARS@globalmediation.co.uk

Web: www.globalmediation.co.uk

Education Authority NI:

Armagh Office	02837 512200
Ballymena Office	02825 661111
Belfast Office	02890 564000
Dundonald Office	02890 566200
Omagh Office	02882 411411

Web: www.eani.org.uk/

Health & Social Care Trusts Autism Co-ordinators

BHSCT	02895 041464
NHSCT	02827 661335
SHSCT	02938 366777
SEHST	02892 607528
WHST	02882 835983

Web: www.hscboard.hscni.net/our-work/social-care-and-children/autism-asd/

NICCY - Northern Ireland Commissioner for Children and Young People

The Commissioner can deal with individual complaints from children and young people, or their parents/guardians about government services like education, health, adoption and fostering, youth justice and road safety.

Tel: 028 9031 1616

Web: www.niccy.org

SENAC Special Education Needs Advice Centre

A regional charity set up in 2003, they provide confidential, independent advice and advocacy on behalf of children and young people with disabilities and special educational needs (SEN) attending schools in Northern Ireland up to the age of 19 years.

Mon, Tues and Wed 10am-1pm

Tel: 028 9079 5779

Web: www.senac.co.uk

Donard, Knockbracken Healthcare Park,
Saintfield Road, Belfast BT8 8BH
t: 028 9040 1729 e: info@autismni.org
www.autismni.org



Facebook:
[/AutismNI](https://www.facebook.com/AutismNI)



Twitter:
[@AutismNIPAPA](https://twitter.com/AutismNIPAPA)



Instagram:
[autism_ni](https://www.instagram.com/autism_ni)



Advocacy Hints and Techniques

A guide for parents & carers meeting with professionals

Parents meet with a range of professionals and organisations throughout the process of getting the best care, information and services for their child.

e.g. Teachers, Principals, Educational Psychologists, Speech & Language Therapists, Occupational Therapists, Voluntary Organisations and Support Networks

How **YOU** as a Parent / Carer can help yourself prepare:

1. Before any meetings or appointments write down any questions you may have or any comments you would like to make.
2. Remember **You** are a vitally important member of those present at the meeting and have an extremely valuable contribution to make – you are representing your child and know their specific needs and requirements
3. Write down all the people in attendance, this will be useful later if making further contact
4. If possible, bring someone with you for support and to make sure you have someone to talk to later about the meeting
5. Prior to the meeting discuss strategies should you require a break, explain that you do want to proceed to make best use of the meeting but that you need a brief break
6. Don't be confrontational but be firm and assertive about what is important to you, otherwise you may regret not having your concerns heard and feel despondent and frustrated after the meeting
7. If possible, take notes – write down exact words spoken, this is useful as a record to read later and is a useful resource for review meetings and follow ups
8. Make notes for next meeting / make sure the date is agreeable with you, obtain the name of a contact person should you need to rearrange, postpone or cancel

9. If a follow up meeting is required check who is attending the next meeting, is it all or only some of the initial meeting members
10. After the meeting you may want to send a letter confirming what your understanding is of what happened and was agreed during the meeting.

Letter

If you are required to write a letter on behalf of your child as their advocate. **Please consider the following**

- Letters should be clearly marked “Private and confidential” and states the name of the individual whom you want to open the letter
- Date the letter and name of child and subject area
- Be concise and factual
- Have a clearly defined time line for expected response
- Consider if this choice of approach is the correct one to achieve your goal
- For further help refer to the SMART goals on the leaflet
- **KEEP GOOD RECORDS**

