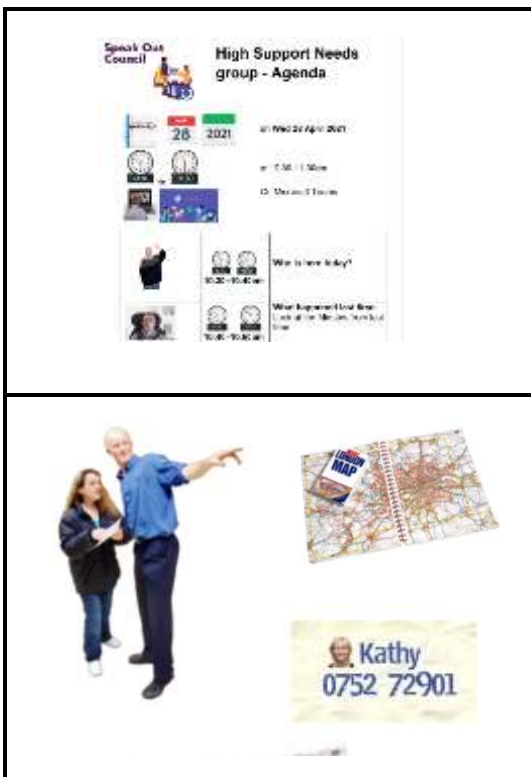


Speak Out Council guide running an accessible meeting



1. Before the meeting



Agenda

- Share an agenda a few days before the meeting so that people can read and understand it.
- Add timings for each item on the agenda and a few things that people might like to think about relating to each item. This gives people time to

Travel

- Make sure people know how to get there. Photos of the venue and major landmarks might help.
- Give people a contact number so they can phone you if there is a problem.

2. Room



- No flickering lights or background noises.
- Allow plenty of personal space in the room.
- Make sure the exit to the room is easy to get to otherwise some people may feel trapped.
- Sometimes it is good to have a second quiet space, as a designated chill out room, maybe with some sensory toys etc.

3. Presentation



- At the beginning of the meeting, explain how the meeting will work, for example time keeping – you can nominate someone to keep time on track.

- For some people with autism timing is really important and they can feel really anxious if things run late.
- Often people are fine if you explain beforehand that timings on the agenda are a rough idea and might need to change.

- Make sure you plan regular breaks and let people know when they are. Having a 5-10 minute break after 45 minutes to 1 hour is usually a good idea.

- Make sure information is easy to read.
- Make it clear that it is Ok to ask questions.
- Notice when people are finding it hard to join in by the things they say or their behaviour.



- It can be useful to break into small groups for discussions.



- If people haven't said anything, perhaps ask them directly if they have anything to add, but don't pressurise them to talk if they feel uncomfortable.



- Signs that people are finding it hard to join in might be inappropriate laughing.
- Sometimes "I don't know" or shrugging their shoulders, really really means "I don't want to answer. Please leave me alone".

4. General Communication



- Use accessible language and avoid **jargon** or abbreviations, or long words that might be hard to understand.



- Follow the lead of the person you are communicating with and go at their pace. If you are aware that some people in the room will need more time or a slower pace try to work to that
- Check you have understood by summarising what you have been told and asking short single item, open-ended questions.
- Check that others have understood by asking them the same sort of question. For example, “What do you think about x?”
- The Speak Out Council use **traffic light cards** at all our meetings and would recommend you try them too. (See our guide to using Traffic Light Cards)

5. Time concepts



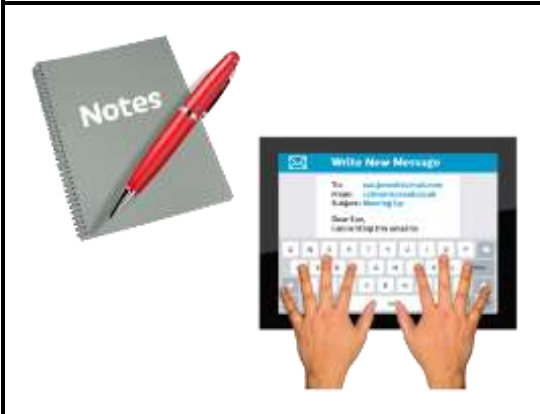
- Words relating to time can also be very difficult to understand.
- Some people might not understand the concept of waiting.

6. Physical contact



- Please don't touch anyone without their permission.
- By this we mean even a well-meaning pat on the shoulder or a little nudge.

7. After the meeting



- Check how everyone is feeling.
- Ask whether there is anything they would like to talk more about.
- If you were taking note, send any actions from the meeting to everyone else in an email or letter.

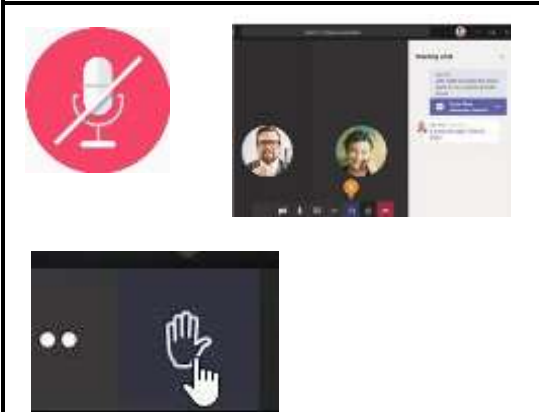


- If you are given some actions to do you might want to email/call the organiser once you have done them. Or you might be expected to talk about them at the next meeting. Ask the meeting organiser if you are not sure what is expected of you.

8. Online meetings



- Make sure people know how to join meetings online.
- It is helpful to offer a practise session on Teams or Zooms before your meeting to make sure people are comfortable about how to join.



- Background noise can be painful to some people and distracting during online meetings. Ask that people mute their microphones unless they are speaking.
- Check whether people are happy with how to raise their on-screen hand and use the chat function.



- During online meetings it can be harder for people to join in, you might need to check more regularly whether anyone else has anything to add, or ask people directly, perhaps going around in turn.
- Flashing lights can also be distracting online.



- Online meetings can be tiring, you may need more regular breaks and to encourage everyone to have time away from the screen.



- Be aware that, as a presenter during an online meeting, you may not be able to see the chat, or people are raising their hands. It is useful to have someone else to check this and help to chair the meeting and keep time.