

# Preparing for Meetings/Appointments

You might be going to your GP to discuss your OCD for the first time or to ask for a referral to another service or you might be meeting with your psychiatrist to request a referral for more intensive and specialist treatment. Whatever the meeting, it's essential that you're prepared; that you have an overall plan - the following questions and tips can ensure that you get the best from any meeting or appointment you might attend.

## **Planning**

- 1) Devise a strategy: What outcome do you want? Use the Advocacy Planning tool pages and worksheets.
- 2) What information do you want to get across? What questions do you want to ask and have answered?
- 3) Who is going to be present in the meeting? What are their roles? Why are they there?
- 4) Where is the meeting taking place? Is that somewhere you can get to?

## **Top Tips for attending a meeting**

- Consider taking someone with you both for moral support but also to help you to self-advocate - they can act as a prompt if you forget to ask something, they can be helpful for remembering who said what in the meeting and they can make notes during the meeting of the main points discussed and any actions agreed
- Have the points that you want to raise written down in front of you so that you can see them in the meeting
- Try to find out who is going to be at the meeting - names and role descriptions. If you have concerns about anyone being at the meeting - don't be afraid to ask the reasons for them being there or request that they leave

- Be punctual – make sure you know where you're going and how to get there
  - Don't forget to take any documents with you that might be relevant – for example you might take **OCD Action's GP Card** to an initial meeting with your GP or **OCD Action's CBT Checklist** to a meeting with your therapist if you have concerns about the quality of treatment you're receiving
- When the meeting starts, if there are no formal introductions, ask for people to introduce themselves so that you know who everyone is. Are there people at the meeting that you weren't told about? Don't be afraid to ask for them to leave if they are not directly relevant to your care & treatment
- Don't be put off by authority figures. Be polite but don't be talked over – if this happens, wait until the person stops speaking and then make your point
  - Monitor how you're feeling – do you need to ask for a break?
  - Don't be afraid to make notes in the meeting about what is being said/agreed – particularly the responses to the specific questions that you wanted to raise and who responded
  - If you don't understand or aren't clear what is being proposed by the people present ask for clarification e.g. if you're going to be referred for treatment: clarify who's going to refer you, how soon are they going to make the referral, what's the treatment, (is the referral dependent on securing funding, how does that work), who's going to treat you – what's their expertise in treating OCD/BDD and related disorders, what are the waiting times like, what support will you get in the meantime, who will keep you updated with developments?
  - Don't forget – you don't have to agree to anything there and then – if you want time to think about things or talk through treatment suggestions with family and friends ask for that time and agree a timeframe for telling the meeting attendees of your decision. Just be sure that this isn't your OCD stalling!
  - If there hasn't been enough time for you to say everything you wanted to say and you have felt rushed then you could ask for a follow-up meeting or send a letter with your additional concerns/points and request a written response
  - As the meeting is coming to an end try to summarise to those present your understanding of what has been agreed or ask them to do so
  - Don't forget to ask for timeframes for any actions agreed at the meeting/appointment
  - Depending on the type of meeting/appointment you might want to ask for minutes from any meeting to be emailed/posted out to you or you could email your own summary of the meeting to the other attendees