

Information on attending a meeting in public as an observer

This document gives you some helpful information about attending a meeting in public of one of our committees. It has been developed to support the smooth running of a professional meeting.

A meeting in public is where members of the public can attend to observe a formal meeting of a committee or board. However, observers are not permitted to join in the discussion.

It is different from a public meeting, which is an open forum to allow members of the public to ask questions and discuss issues with members of the NHS in Bristol, North Somerset and South Gloucestershire – usually on a specific topic.

In some cases, the Chair of a meeting in public may agree in advance that questions can be taken at a dedicated point in the meeting (usually at the beginning or at the end of the agenda). If this is the case it will be made clear in any communication or publicity about the meeting. In some cases, we may request that questions are submitted to us before the meeting. This allows us to group similar questions together, answer as fully as possible, and make best use of time.

The Chair will keep to the timing on the agenda to ensure all the items on the agenda can be covered sufficiently, so may not be able to cover all questions. All public questions will be recorded in the minutes and responses will be published on our website alongside the minutes.

General information about meetings in public

Advanced booking

There will be limited space for observers at meetings in public so we will normally need people to reserve a place in advance. If the public seating is full we will not be able to allow anyone who attends without booking to come into the meeting room.

Meeting etiquette

Please keep noise and distractions to a minimum during the meeting, to allow everyone attending to hear and follow what is happening in the meeting. Examples of things which can be distracting are:

- Participating in conversations whilst another person is speaking.
- Mobile telephones ringing during the meeting. Please switch your phone off or put it on silent mode.

Whilst the Chair and the members of the committee or board welcomes the public and press to attend the meeting, there is an expectation that the committee or board will be able to conduct its business without undue interruption.

Arrival

The meeting will begin promptly at the advertised time, so please arrive in plenty of time. On arrival at the meeting, you will be asked to sign in, so we can keep an accurate record of attendance.

Accessible venues

Venues for meetings in public will be chosen to ensure they have disabled access. Please let us know in advance if you have any specific accessibility requirements. We will have staff on hand on the day to support you.

Microphones and hearing loops

To support everyone to hear speakers, there will be microphones and a hearing loop in use at meetings in public.

Recording and filming

The meeting will be recorded to support the minute takers with accurate documentation for the official records. The meeting may also be filmed and may be streamed online. If the meeting is recorded this will be available afterwards on our website.

If you do not wish to be filmed, please make a member of the meeting support team aware when you arrive and sign in.

Refreshments

Where the venue allows, we will aim to make tea, coffee and water available for attendees. Some venues do not allow refreshments to be consumed in the meeting room itself and if this is the case we will let you know when you arrive and sign in.

Papers for the meeting

Our policy is to make meeting papers available digitally wherever possible to reduce our use of paper. We hope people will be able to access papers online at www.bnssgccg.nhs.uk, but please contact us (see below) if you do not have access to the internet and wish to see the papers in advance and we will make arrangements for this. If you would like to leave your email or postal address with us when you sign in for the meeting, we can send you the minutes of the meeting.

The minutes of meetings in public, and any recordings made, will be published on our website at www.bnssgccg.nhs.uk. Minutes will normally be approved at the next meeting of the committee or board and then published.

Queries before the meeting

Meetings in public will include a contact point for any queries as part of the venue and booking details provided ahead of the meeting.



Frequently asked questions

Who is in charge of the meeting?

The Chair of the committee or board is in charge of the meeting. It is the role of the Chair to ensure that members can discuss the published agenda items in the time available. It is the role of the Chair to facilitate a well-run and respectful meeting.

How will I know who the members of the meeting are?

The committee or board members will have name plates in front of them on the table and will be introduced at the start of the meeting.

What happens if the meeting is disrupted?

Whilst the Chair and the members of the committee or board welcomes the public and press to attend the meeting, there is an expectation that the committee or board will be able to conduct its business without undue interruption.

Public bodies have a common law power to prevent members of the public entering a meeting if they have reasonable grounds for believing that they would disrupt the meeting by disorderly conduct and make it impossible for the body to conduct its business. Also, if the Chair of the meeting considers that there is a risk that proceedings will be disrupted during the meeting, they can exercise the power during the course of the meeting.

Whilst we do not expect such behaviour during meetings, we hope being clear from the outset about expectations will assist with the smooth running of the meeting.