

# Information on attending a meeting in public as an observer

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This document gives you some helpful information about attending a meeting held in public of the BSW Partnership Board meetings in public. 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 Governing Body or Committee. Observers are not permitted to join in with the discussion, or participate in the meeting in other ways.

This 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 Governing Body or of a Committee, usually on a specific topic.

The BSW Partnership invites questions from the public for its Partnership Board meetings that are held in public. Questions need to be submitted at least five working days ahead of the meeting. This allows us to group similar questions together, answer as fully as possible, and make best use of time. If questions are lengthy, the question and our answer may be summarised with a full response going to the submitter after the meeting, please see our website for details, [bswccg.partnership@nhs.net](mailto:bswccg.partnership@nhs.net).

The Chair will need to 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 questions from the public and the responses provided will be recorded in the minutes, and responses will be published on our website alongside the meeting papers.

## General information about meetings in public

### Advanced booking

There are limited spaces for observers at meetings held in public, so we ask that you 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.

When meetings are held virtually, observers will need to register in advance to receive a link to join the meeting.

Please contact [bswccg.partnership@nhs.net](mailto:bswccg.partnership@nhs.net) if you wish to attend, as an observer, a meeting in public of our BSW Partnership Board.

### Questions from the public

The BSW Partnership invites questions from the public for its Partnership Board meetings that are held in public.

We will not reference your name when the response to your question is read out at a BSW Partnership Board meeting in public, or when we publish the response to your question on our website. If you do wish your name and / or organisation referenced in our response, please indicate this in your email when you submit your question to [bswccg.partnership@nhs.net](mailto:bswccg.partnership@nhs.net).

Please note: our 'Questions from the public to the Partnership Board are an important mechanism for the BSW Partnership to engage with the people of BaNES, Swindon and Wiltshire about health and care services; it is part of our commitment to transparency and being accountable to the people we serve.

'Questions from the public' may not be an appropriate way to raise concerns or complaints. For these, consider our dedicated teams and routes for enquiries:

- Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS) and Complaints Service, <https://bswccg.nhs.uk/contact-us/compliments-and-complaints> ;
- Media enquiries, <https://bswccg.nhs.uk/contact-us/media-enquiries> ;
- FOI, <https://bswccg.nhs.uk/contact-us/freedom-of-information>

## Queries before the meeting

When you register to observe a meeting in public, we will use your contact details to confirm meeting arrangements / send you the link to the virtual meeting as applicable. When you submit a question from the public to the Partnership Board, we will use your contact details to confirm receipt of your question; advise you of the next available meeting of the Partnership Board in public should you have missed the submission deadline; and, if needed, to ensure with you that we understood your question correctly, so that the Partnership Board's response is to the point and relevant.

We will not retain your contact details beyond the date of the meeting that you wish to observe / have submitted a question to.

## Meeting etiquette

When attending meetings in person, including virtual meetings, 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.
- Laptop keyboard noise if actively used during the meeting.

Microphones, video cameras, the chat function and the Q&A function are disabled for observers during those meetings held virtually.

The Chair and the members of the Partnership Board welcome the public and press to observe meetings held in public. These are not public meetings, and observers cannot actively participate in the meeting, i.e. cannot comment on proceedings or raise questions during the meeting. There is an expectation that the Partnership Board will be able to conduct its business without 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.

For those meetings held virtually, we recommend that observers join the meeting 5-10 minutes

before the scheduled start time, using the link and access details we have issued to them. You will be held in a virtual 'lobby' that we use to ascertain that only individuals dial into the meeting who were given the access details to the meeting. Your name will be visible to all present in the meeting.

## **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, where possible, there will be microphones and a hearing loop in venues used for meetings held in public.

## **Refreshments**

Where the venue allows, we will aim to have 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**

Meeting papers will be made available a week before the meeting via our website, <https://bswpartnership.nhs.uk/>.

The minutes of meetings in public, and any responses to questions raised, will be published on our website. These can be accessed at <https://bswpartnership.nhs.uk/>. Minutes will normally be approved at the next meeting of the committee or Governing Body and then published.

## **Frequently asked questions**

### **Who is in charge of the meeting?**

The Chair of the Partnership 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?**

You can find information about our Partnership Board on our website here: <https://bswpartnership.nhs.uk/>

When meeting in a venue, the Partnership Board members and regular attendees will have nameplates in front of them on the table. During virtual meetings, Partnership Board members' and regular attendees' names are usually displayed on the screen.

### **What happens if the meeting is disrupted?**

Whilst the Chair and the members of the Partnership Board welcome the public and press to observe the meeting, there is an expectation that the Partnership Board will be able to conduct its business without interruption.

Public bodies have a common law power to prevent members of the public from entering a meeting if the public body has reasonable grounds for believing that members of the public 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 members of the public have disrupted proceedings during the meeting, the Chair can exclude members of the public from observing the meeting.