



Helpful Hints Making the Most of Virtual Meetings

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic many meetings are being held virtually. Here are some helpful hints to follow to ensure your meetings run smoothly.

What is a virtual meeting?

Virtual meetings are where you meet with people online rather than face to face. You can use a computer, tablet or a phone to do this and you can decide whether you use a video (so others can see you) or just audio.

How are they arranged?

You will be sent a link by the person arranging the meeting. This might be sent by email or calendar invitation if you have an online calendar. You should be able to see the time and date of the meeting and a link to join.

Before the meeting:

- Make sure you know what the meeting is for and who will be joining. As with a face to face meeting there might be a list of things to discuss (an agenda) which is sent out before the meeting, make sure that you have a copy.
- Make a list of things that you would like to discuss or any questions you would like to ask at the meeting. You could use the HW SENDIASS meeting planner on our website. You should prepare for a virtual meeting in much the same way as you would prepare for a face to face meeting. Read our helpful hints- making the most of meetings for more information.
- Make sure you know what meeting software or platform is going to be used, for example Microsoft Teams, Google Meet or Cisco Webex. Check you have been sent a link to the meeting – it might come as an email or a calendar invitation.
- Check whether the internet browser you use will work effectively with the meeting software. If you are unsure ask the person hosting the meeting.
- If you are not familiar with the platform used, ask the person arranging the meeting if you can have a practice run before the meeting. Or arrange one with a friend or family member.
- Ask the person arranging the meeting for a phone number that you can call on the day, in case you have problems accessing the meeting.
- Think about where you are going to sit. You will need to make sure it is somewhere quiet so that you can hear the other people in the meeting and somewhere you are comfortable discussing sensitive information. You will also need to make sure that



you have good internet connection and your device is fully charged. If you are using a phone to access the meeting check that you will have enough data allowance or credit if necessary.

- If you have decided to use video, make sure that you wear something appropriate and consider what can be seen in the background behind you. Some meeting platforms give you the option to blur your background or add a standard picture behind you.
- If your child, young person, or partner is taking part in the meeting too, think about how that will work. Will they sit with you or join separately on another device?

How do I join a virtual meeting?

You should see a link to join the meeting in the email invitation that you are sent. At the time of the meeting you should click the link.

Depending on the platform used, you might be asked if you would like to download the app. You do not have to do this, but if you do you might get more options, for example, backgrounds to use.

Once you have clicked the link, add your name in the box so the other people in the meeting know who you are and turn your microphone and camera on or off as required.

Depending on the platform used and the time you join the meeting, you might need to wait a few minutes to be added to the meeting by the host.

What should I have with me?

- Your charger or power cable in case you need it.
- A notepad, pen or device to make notes.
- Any relevant information. This could be reports, letters or your own research. You may need to print these documents out if you are using a phone to access the meeting as it is hard to read reports on small screens.
- Your child or young person's views.
- Your list of things to discuss and questions to ask or the HW SENDIASS Meeting Planner.
- A diary or device to schedule any follow up meetings or actions.



During the meeting

- The person running the meeting should set some basic rules. They should make it clear how you should let them know if you want to speak (some platforms give you the option to 'put your hand up' or give a 'thumbs up' sign) and they should agree whether people will use video or not. If these things are not mentioned it is a good idea to ask at the start of the meeting.
- Some platforms also have a 'chat' function which you could use to ask questions during the meeting if you don't want to interrupt the person talking. The person running the meeting might need to enable these functions and it should be agreed how they will be used.
- It is also a good idea to agree at the start of the meeting what you should do if you need to leave at any point to look after your children.
- The person running the meeting should ask everyone to introduce themselves and explain their roles. If this does not happen and you are not sure what someone's role is, it is ok to ask.
- It is normally best to mute your microphone when you are not speaking so that other people in the meeting can't hear any background noise.
- You do not have to use video if you don't want to. However, if you do choose to do so but your internet connection is poor, turning off your video can improve the quality of the call.
- The meeting should run in much the same way as a face to face meeting and you should use your agenda or your list of issues to discuss and cross them off as they are covered. You could use the HW SENDIASS Meeting Planner to record actions as they are agreed. See our helpful hints- making the most of meetings for more information.
- At the end of the meeting ask the person running it to list the main actions that have been agreed, who will be doing the work and by when.

Following the meeting you should know

- Who is going to do what and by when
- How and when the action points will be reviewed
- How any other concerns will be followed up
- Who to contact if you have any questions or concerns
- The date of the next meeting if there is one.



After the meeting

- If you forgot to mention something at the meeting or ask a question, contact the meeting organiser as soon as you can.
- If minutes (notes) were taken at the meeting and you don't receive a copy within two weeks, contact the person who ran the meeting to ask for them.
- If you receive a copy of the minutes but you do not agree that they are a true reflection of the meeting, make sure you contact the person that wrote them and ask for them to be changed. If you do not do this, it will be assumed that you agree with the notes.
- If no meeting notes are taken you may want to write a letter/ email, thanking the person for the meeting and outlining the actions agreed. This way it ensures there is a written record of the meeting and something to refer to at the following review meeting.
- If, at the meeting, you agreed to do anything, make sure you do it.
- Keep an eye on deadlines to make sure that you and others complete actions on time.

What if I don't have access to the internet or a computer?

The best way to access a virtual meeting is to click on the link in the email invitation and use a direct internet connection or wi-fi so that there is no cost.

However, you are also able to use a phone to dial in. You can do this using the phone number that is listed below the meeting link in the invitation email. You will then need to enter a conference ID number and you will be able to join by audio.

But if you dial in using this number it will cost. If you want to attend a virtual meeting using your phone and you don't have an internet connection, you can ask the person leading the meeting to call you at the start and invite you. That way you won't be charged.

If you do not have access to email you will need to let the organiser of the meeting know so that they can provide you with a phone number and conference ID or arrange to call you to invite you at the start of the meeting.



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