



# NHS Wales Video Consulting Service



## Patient or Client Frequently Asked Questions

### **Q: Why am I being asked to attend this group via a virtual link?**

**A:** Because of the current Covid 19 pandemic it is currently deemed unsafe for lots of educational groups and therapy groups to meet face to face. In order to continue with this much needed work we have taken groups online and can now meet via a virtual call.

### **Q: How do I join a virtual group?**

**A:** You will need an email account or mobile phone with internet access. You will need to join the virtual group via the internet in a private room. You don't need any special programme or phone applications, but you will need a camera and microphone in order to join in. The group co-ordinator will send you a link. You click on it and access a virtual platform "Microsoft Teams". Then the virtual group begins.

### **Q: What happens in a virtual group?**

**A:** Once you've clicked the link and joined, a member of the team who is running the virtual group will greet you. The facilitator's job is to keep the group together and make sure the session stays on track. They will ask you to confirm your identity and check you are happy to take part. Then they will start the session by reminding everyone in the group to keep information confidential and to follow some simple group rules or understandings.

### **Q: What happens if I change my mind when I'm in a virtual group?**

**A:** If you feel a group isn't working for you, let the facilitator know. You can leave at any time. The team asks for feedback at the end of every virtual group so let your facilitator know if you think things could be improved.

**Q: Can patients get together and form their own groups after a virtual group?**

**A:** This is entirely down to the discretion of the team running the group. Please discuss with them if you think this is appropriate.

**Q: Have virtual group clinics been tried before and what do patients think about them?**

**A:** Yes, virtual groups are up and running all over the UK. They have proved popular with patients. Teams report that patients find them as helpful as face to face groups and patients who attend them see their health improving and need to go to hospital less. It is still early days to know exactly how successful virtual groups are.

**Q: Can my partner, friend or carer join me in my virtual group clinic?**

**A:** Yes provided the team running the group agree this will be suitable (sometimes it may not be) and with your agreement. It is often very useful for family members, carers or friends who support you to join. The beauty with virtual groups is they can join from their home or workplace and you can join from yours. If your relative lives at a different address or even in a different town or abroad, they can still join in to support you. They need to consent to take part and agree to respect confidentiality, and confirm their identity just like other participants. Ideally you should just invite one person to join you; otherwise groups can get too large.

**Q: Can I record my virtual group session?**

**A:** No. To ensure all information shared in the session is kept confidential and your privacy is fully respected, you will be asked to sign up to the virtual groups patient agreement. This means you must not record, share or post any aspect of the session. It's in everyone's interest to respect this.

**Q: Can I share my virtual group link with someone else who wants to join in?**

**A:** You should only share the link with a relative or carer that you wish to join you in the group. You shouldn't share the link with anyone else. You should let the team know that your relative or carer will be joining and that you have shared the link. They will tell you how to do that.

**Q: What happens if I don't want to say anything in a virtual group?**

**A:** Let your facilitator know if you are feeling worried about being in a group. It is OK to join a group to just listen. You will still learn a lot and many people who do this and end up joining in once they feel comfortable.

### Q: What happens if I am late joining my group?

**A:** Your team will tell you their policy. Most likely if you are more than a few minutes late, you will not be allowed to join the group and will have to rebook. This is because it is important that everyone has the chance to confirm their identity, consent and sign up to confidentiality at the start. It also disrupts the group for others when people join late. If you are late, ask to book into another virtual group or remote consultation.

### Q: How is my health information kept confidential during a group?

**A:** Before the group, all participants sign an agreement to not to share any information discussed within the group. Unlike the confidentiality regulations surrounding a doctor's obligation to keep all information confidential, this is not enforceable by law. However, as all participants will be sharing personal information, it is in everyone's interests to respect this. It is also up to you to not divulge any personal information that you are not happy to share.

The teams running your group get training and support in preserving confidentiality and safe information sharing. The virtual platforms being used to host virtual groups meet NHS cyber security quality requirements.

### Q: Is my personal information stored on the computer after a virtual group?

**A:** The type of information stored on remote consultation or virtual conferencing platforms differs from system to system. Information is stored before, during and after sessions and normally controlled through the privacy settings of the particular platform. Most platforms provide information on privacy settings, the information they store and how to maintain confidentiality. **The general rule is to 'log out' of any accounts you have including and most especially if a family member has a team's account and enter your virtual group sessions as a 'Guest'. This helps you to avoid sharing personal information like your full name and email.**

### Q: Are under 18s allowed to join or be in the background of a virtual group and do they need to consent?

**A:** As with face to face consultations, young people below the age of 13 years must be accompanied by a parent or guardian. Young people between the ages of 13-15 years may attend alone if a clinician has assessed their competence to participate prior to the group and ideally, the young person should be advised to have a parent or guardian present.

If a young person is involved in a virtual group, they must confirm identity and location, consent and agree to adhere to the confidentiality agreement as an adult would do.

Patients must alert the facilitator to people of any age in the background and within earshot of the group. Once alerted, the facilitator will get agreement from the group to progress. Clinicians make

the overall decision on the appropriateness of the information being discussed with young people present.

**Any other questions?**

If you have other questions, please get in touch with your clinical team. Thank you.