

Virtual meetings are where you're meeting online, using a computer or phone, rather than meeting face to face. It's a great way to connect with others and communicate. These are our top tips to help you get the most from this kind of meeting.

### When you're sent the invitation

Make sure you know why the meeting has been called and who will be there. There should be an agenda or list of things to discuss. If you're not sure about anything, ask the person who has called the meeting.

Ask who is running the meeting – is it the SENCO, someone from the SEN 0-25 team or another professional? Tell them if there is anything you would like to discuss.

If your child, young person, or partner is taking part, work out how that's going to happen. Will they sit with you or join separately on another phone or tablet?

Make sure you know what meeting software or platform is going to be used, for example Microsoft Teams or Google Meet. Check you have been sent a link to the meeting – it might come as an email or a calendar invitation. The SEND Tribunal has its own system and provides help to use it.

Ask if you can have a practice run before the meeting with the person who sent you the invite. Or arrange one with a friend or family member.

If you can't do a practice, check with the person hosting the meeting whether the internet browser you use will work OK with the meeting software.

Ask for a phone number you can call on the day, in case you have problems getting into the meeting or need help.

### Things to do before the meeting

Work out what you want from the meeting. Make a list of things to discuss or use the DiAS meeting form to get your thoughts down on paper. Be realistic about what one meeting can achieve - you may need to focus on small steps or prioritise one or two things.

Read any reports and relevant documents, such as the school plan or your child's EHC plan.

Ask your child or young person what their views are and record them in some way – there are resources on the DiAS website to help.

Think about where you're going to sit and what device you'll use. You'll need to use a device that you're comfortable with. You'll need access to the email with the meeting joining details.

If you're using your phone for the meeting, check you'll have enough data allowance or credit to do all the meeting. It's a good idea to make sure your battery is charged too!



### How to join a meeting

You'll be sent an invitation by email. In it you should be able to see the time and date of the meeting and a link to join the meeting.

Click the link (don't dial in). You may be asked if you'd like to download the app. You don't need to, but if you do, you'll probably get more options for the call.

Click to join the meeting on the web, add your name in the box and turn your microphone and camera on or off as needed. You might need to wait a few moments to be added into the meeting. That's it.

## 15 minutes before the meeting

If it could be a long meeting, go to the toilet!

Make sure you're sitting somewhere comfortable, quiet and private where you won't be disturbed (if possible).

If you're going to be using video, check what's going to be behind you in the background. On some meetings platforms, such as Teams, you can blur the background or add a standard picture so people can't see your lounge or kitchen.

Make sure you're wearing something appropriate if you're going to be using video for the call.

Do your practice call if you've arranged one.



### Important to know

The best way to do a virtual meeting is to click on the invitation link and use a direct internet connection or wi-fi so that the call is free. You will be able to use video as well as sound.

If you're using a phone, you can dial in using the phone number listed and just join by audio. **But if you dial in using that number it will cost** – you will either use up any pre-paid minutes and/or get a bill after the call (it's 55p a minute for some calls!).

If you're going to do a virtual meeting using your phone and you don't have an internet connection, ask the person leading the meeting to call you at the start and invite you in. That way you won't end up with an unexpected bill.

## At the start of the meeting

Introduce yourself or ask the organiser to introduce everyone. Make sure you know who's who. If you're not sure what someone's role is or why they're at the meeting, it's OK to ask.

The person leading the meeting should tell you how to let them know if you want to say something. There should also be an agreement about whether everyone will use video or not. If these things aren't discussed, you can ask about them.

It's a good idea to mute your microphone when you're not speaking so others on the call can't hear background noise, like your dog barking or the kettle boiling.

You don't have to put your video on so that people can see you, but many parents find it better to do so. If your internet connection is poor, turning off your video can help to improve the quality of the meeting.

If you can't work or access your camera to have video on, ask everyone else to stop using their video too – so everyone is in the same position.



### What to have with you during the meeting

- A note pad and pen to jot things down.
- A glass of water or a drink if it's going to be a long meeting.
- Your battery charger or power cable if you might need it.
- Your child or young person's views.
- Any relevant reports or information. This is especially important if you're using your phone, because it's difficult to read reports on a small screen during the meeting.
- Your list of questions or concerns or the DiAS meeting form.

## During the meeting

Use any agenda and cross off questions on your list as they are answered. If this isn't your first meeting, ask about any action that was agreed at the last meeting.

It's OK to speak up if you don't understand something or want it explained in more detail. It's also OK to disagree with what's being said. You could try saying something like "I understand/hear what you're saying, but I have a different view, or I disagree".

Listen carefully to each person and try not to interrupt. Respect other people's views in the meeting.

Make sure you have time to say your views and opinions. Try and be as positive as you can and focus on how things can improve, rather than on what's gone

wrong – ask if you can talk about solutions rather than problems.

Don't feel pressured into agreeing to things that you're not sure about. You can ask for time to think about things or say you'd like to talk to others such as your partner or someone from DiAS.

When the meeting is coming to an end, ask the person running it to list the main actions that have been agreed, who will be doing that work and by when. Check all your questions have been answered.

## **After the meeting**

If you forgot to say something or ask a question at the meeting, email or contact the person who ran the meeting as soon as you can to tell them.

If minutes were taken at the meeting and you don't get a copy within a week or two, contact the person who ran the meeting to ask for them.

If, when you were at the meeting, you agreed to do anything, make sure you do it! Keep an eye on deadlines to make sure you and others complete the action points.

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