

## Getting the best out of virtual Multi-Agency Risk Management Meetings

Coping with the new normal is a steep learning curve. Multi-Agency Risk Management Meetings can still go ahead, you will just need to approach them differently. Virtual meetings are when people use video, text, and audio to link up irrespective of their physical location. This is possible through technology of video conferencing software, such as Skype, Zoom, Microsoft Teams etc.



### Tips for participating in a Microsoft Teams Meeting

Here are some tips for all of you, whether you are chairing or attending a virtual meeting.

1. If this is the first time you have used Microsoft Teams, familiarize yourself with it or ask someone who has experience with using it to show you. You may find it helpful to practice with a colleague first.
2. Sit back from the screen: have not just your face but also most of your upper body visible. Staring at just a face filling the whole screen and staring back at you is tiring! Don't be afraid to ask at the beginning of the meeting, "is this all right? Do you need to see more of my face or my body?" Just seeing a face/s means there is no other body language to observe and that can be just as tiring.
3. Choose the background carefully. A blank wall is easier to watch than a busy background, which can be distracting. Teams allows you to blur your background. [More information on background blur](#).
4. Sit lower than your screen and look slightly up. No one wants to peer up your nostrils which is what happens if you are looking down at your screen and looking down on others is not good body language. If you are using a laptop or iPhone, prop them higher on a pile of books or something, so that you are looking slightly up to the screen. If you have a set desktop screen, get a lower chair.
5. Find a quiet room where you will not be disturbed or overheard. If there are others in the house, tell them you don't want to be disturbed. Preferably lock the door, especially if others are likely to come in whilst you are talking.
6. An hour is long enough for people to be able to concentrate and contribute, it may be better to break the meeting up into bite-sized chunks. Don't be afraid to say 'enough's enough, let's do it again soon'. This is an intense way to be with other people. There are none of the usual nuances of the physical presence, and there's little opportunity to look away. We are concentrating the whole time – and that is tiring.
7. Emotions can get amplified using this method. You can be surprised by peoples' responses which can seem stronger than you might expect; allow for this, check out what they mean and try not to overreact in response.
8. Relearn the basics of active listening (see FFI below).
9. Don't be afraid of silence, people are probably just thinking.
10. Remember the virtual nod. If people cannot see you, you need to say something or make a noise to acknowledge a comment, so people know you are there.



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11. If you cannot hear what someone is saying, either because they are speaking softly or because of signal issues, don't be afraid to interrupt and ask them to speak more loudly or repeat what they have said. If you cannot hear them, the chances are other attendees can't either and they could be making an important point.
12. Make sure you are familiar with the [MARM Framework](#). You can also [review the MARM Quick Guides and tools and templates](#) on our website.
13. Before the meeting, make sure you know why you are attending and consider what your contributions might be.
14. Ensure you have enough relevant background information about the person and their circumstances to enable you to effectively contribute to the meeting.
15. Read any papers you have been sent in advance and familiarize yourself with the Agenda before the meeting.

## Tips for Chairs

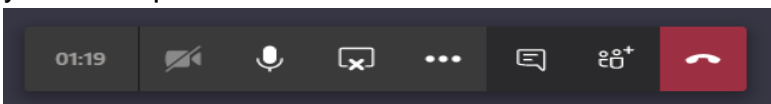
These steps should be taken before the meeting:

1. Make sure everyone has the meeting link. An example is shown below:



2. Give people clear instructions about joining. Here's an example:

- Please join the meeting 3–5 mins before it starts so that you can check out your connection.
- If you join late, join quietly and don't interrupt the conversation or the presentation. The Chair will notice you've joined and welcome you at an appropriate point.
- Background noise and audio feedback can disrupt the meeting. Please turn off your phone or anything else that might distract you or the other participants. When you are not speaking **mute** your microphone.



*The menu bar will be at the bottom of your screen.*

3. Send out your Microsoft Teams invite, including the agenda, at least 24-48 hours before the designated time.



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- If you wish to send out a separate Microsoft Teams invitation (e.g. for the adult), the Teams meeting link may be copied and pasted into a separate e mail (example below):

Microsoft Teams meeting  
**Join on your computer or mobile app**  
[Click here to join the meeting](#)  
[Learn More](#) | [Meeting options](#)

- Decide who will take the meeting notes and the action plan, and whether the meeting will be recorded. Refer to your own organization’s GDPR and Information Storing Policies when recording/sharing meetings. When you record meetings, MS Teams captures the audio, video and screen-sharing activity, with optional automatic transcription. During playback, closed captions of the transcript appear on screen, making it easy to search for important discussion items. Recordings are automatically saved to the Microsoft Teams/Stream and are automatically shared with attendees. Always ask participants for permission to record the meeting before proceeding.
- Allow 10-15 mins to prepare yourself: checking that your laptop, phone or iPad is working, check your microphone/headphone settings etc.
- Ensure you have a list of everyone who is joining in at the meeting and you already know who has confirmed their attendance.
- Review any reports or other documents.
- Where the adult is attending the meeting, contact them and introduce yourself. Explain the purpose of the meeting, your role as chair and discuss what’s important to them, and the outcomes they would like to see. Check if they want a supporter/advocate during the meeting; if so check that the supporter/advocate understands the purpose of the meeting and their role. It may be helpful to speak to advocate as well. If this is not possible, check if there is anyone else who talk to the advocate.
- Try to ensure that the adult (whose meeting it is) is the first person to arrive at the meeting, before asking others to join.
- The first step for a successful meeting is getting participants on the same page. Preparing an agenda and clearly defined meeting goals ahead of time can increase engagement.
- Call upon people by name to give their views get people’s comments and questions in turn to avoid people speaking over each other.
- Remind participants of the next steps and the agreed action plan, and call out any key takeaways, deadlines, or decisions.

## Active Listening

<b>FACTS</b>	Listen to the facts, data, and the specific detail that people share.
<b>FEELINGS</b>	Listen to the feelings expressed or implied through the tone of voice or pace of delivery.
<b>INTENTION</b>	Listen to what the speaker intends to do, their commitment to any intended actions. Listen for any unconscious intention (listening for what else people are telling you, by ‘reading’ between the lines).