

VIDEO CALLS FOR HEALTH

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KEY POINTS

- Video calls can be used to make healthcare more accessible to people who are unable to attend appointments in person.
- It is important to make sure you understand the technology before starting a call, and that you have set up a suitable place to make or receive the call.
- During a call, consider muting your microphone when you are not speaking to avoid background noise, especially if there are multiple people on the call.
- You can use chat functions on most video call programmes to talk in text, share documents or images, or react to things.
- Calls can be recorded, but you have the right to request not to be recorded at any time.

This factsheet contains information on using video calls. It is aimed at anyone who is uncertain or uncomfortable with using online communication tools.

If you want to seek out other information and support online, you may find it helpful to read the CHSS factsheet “Finding information online”.

Why video calls?

Online video appointments let you have a conversation with a doctor, other medical professional, or support group without needing to see them in person. This is helpful because:

- Not everyone is comfortable with risking air or surface borne infections
- Some people would otherwise have to travel long distances
- Having an appointment at home can be more comfortable

Video calls may be held on different platforms. The common ones covered in this factsheet are:

- Microsoft Teams
- NHS Near ME
- Zoom

Increasingly, since the COVID lockdowns, video calls are used for medical appointments and contact with services.

Video calls can also connect you to people in your day-to-day life, which can be important to combat loneliness and help your mental health. Seeing someone's face is an important part of communication, which audio telephone calls do not offer - video calls can add this back into the conversation.

Video calls are also used within CHSS to network between staff, volunteers and people who use our services. This lets us all stay in touch, even when far apart.

Things to consider before a video call

If you have a video call arranged, you will want to make sure:

Your internet connection is stable and fast enough to handle video.

You can test the speed of your internet online using a website like broadbandtest.which.co.uk. An upload speed of at least 1Mbps (the rightmost result on the linked page) is best for high-quality video calls, but you should be able to complete a call as long as you consistently have at least 0.6Mbps.

You know when and how to take the call.

You will probably be sent a link to the video call. If you do not have a link, call or email the person you are meeting to ask them how to proceed.

You may need to download a programme such as Zoom or Teams in order to join the call. Make sure you do this in advance. If you are not sure which programme the call will use, or whether you need to download it, ask the person you are meeting.

You have a suitable place to talk.

Video calls can be taken anywhere with a decent internet connection. It's best to find somewhere comfortable, where you can sit down, and where there isn't too much background noise or light shining directly onto the screen. You may also want to consider what's in the background of your call. If there is anything visible that you don't want the other person to see, you can either move or, depending on the programme you're using, use a feature that blurs or replaces the background.

You know where your microphone and webcam are.

Most laptops, smartphones, and tablets have a built-in microphone and webcam. Where these are will depend on the make and model of your device. In most cases, the built-in webcam is just above the screen - look for a small glass circle with a little light next to it. The light will turn on when the webcam is in use. The microphone in a laptop is usually built into the base.

You can also buy external microphones and webcams. You will need to plug these into the computer, usually with a USB cable. You may also need to change your settings to select the microphone or webcam you want to use.

You have headphones if you need them.

You can make video calls without headphones. However, if there is a lot of background noise, headphones or earbuds will help. They are also useful if you struggle with hearing, or you will be discussing private information.

Things to consider during a video call

- Try to make sure that the webcam is positioned so that your face is visible and, if possible, face into camera. (This should be easy if you are using a built-in webcam, but may need adjustments if you are using a separate camera.)
- Face towards the microphone when talking. Remember that the further you are from the microphone, the harder you will be to hear.
- When you are not talking, it can be best to mute your microphone, especially in larger groups. This prevents echoing and means that background noise is not passed on. You can unmute yourself when you need to speak.
- If the call freezes, it can sometimes help to turn your video off for a short time. This frees up internet bandwidth and may let you continue the call as audio.
- Remember that while your microphone is on, people may be able to hear anything you hear. This includes noise from other people in your house, traffic outside, or conversations in the same room.
- Remember that some people on the call may experience a lag. They may be slow to respond because they don't hear or see the content being shared. If anyone is lagging, be patient. It can help to leave a couple of seconds before speaking.

Using chat

Many video call programmes have a chat function. This allows you to type messages to other people on the call. Chat is very useful in group calls. It allows you to talk without the risk of interrupting. You can talk to one person or to the whole group. You can also ask questions or make comments that can be responded to later on. Chat is less useful in one-on-one calls. You can use it to share links or documents. It's also useful if you are having trouble hearing each other. Additionally, you can write down something that needs to be spelled out.

Recording calls

By default, video calls are not recorded. If they are being recorded, you should be told in advance. In most programmes, you will also see a pop-up bar or window which tells you that the meeting or call is being recorded.

If you are not comfortable being recorded, you have the right to request that the call not be recorded. In a group call, like a seminar or training session, which is being recorded, you may also feel more comfortable if you turn off your camera.

Using Microsoft Teams calls

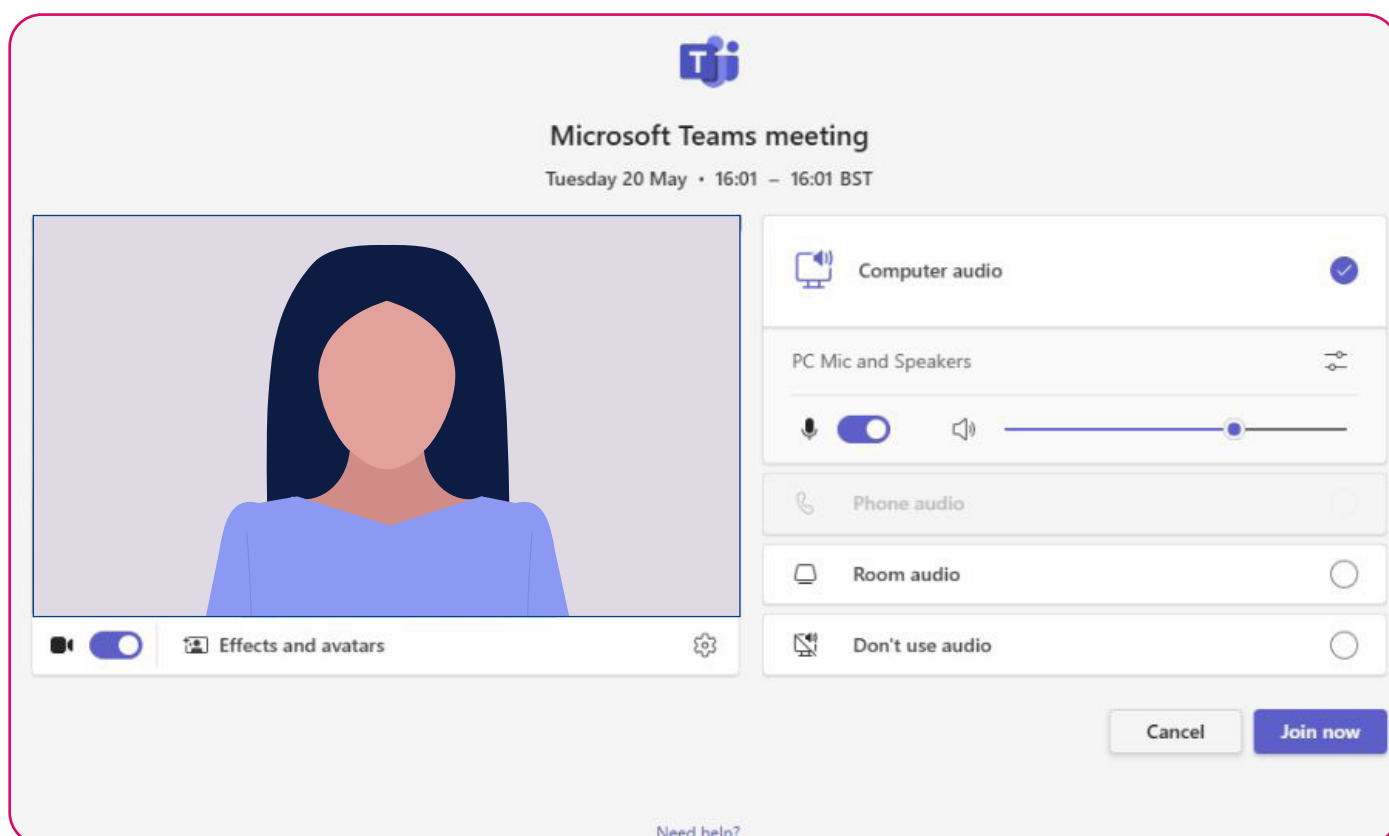
You can call using Microsoft Teams both through the Microsoft Teams application and through a browser (like google). Although using Teams on a browser will limit access to certain features, like chat. You can create an account for this, and download the programme at www.microsoft.com/en-gb/microsoft-teams/teams-for-home

An advantage of the Teams platform is that it is an instant messenger service as well as a call service. You can set up a chat with people in your meeting and the messages will be available to view even after the meeting is over.

You can join a call by clicking on a link you are sent through email or messenger, or by adding it to your calendar and clicking "join" when prompted. You can also click on a person in your Contacts to call them directly.

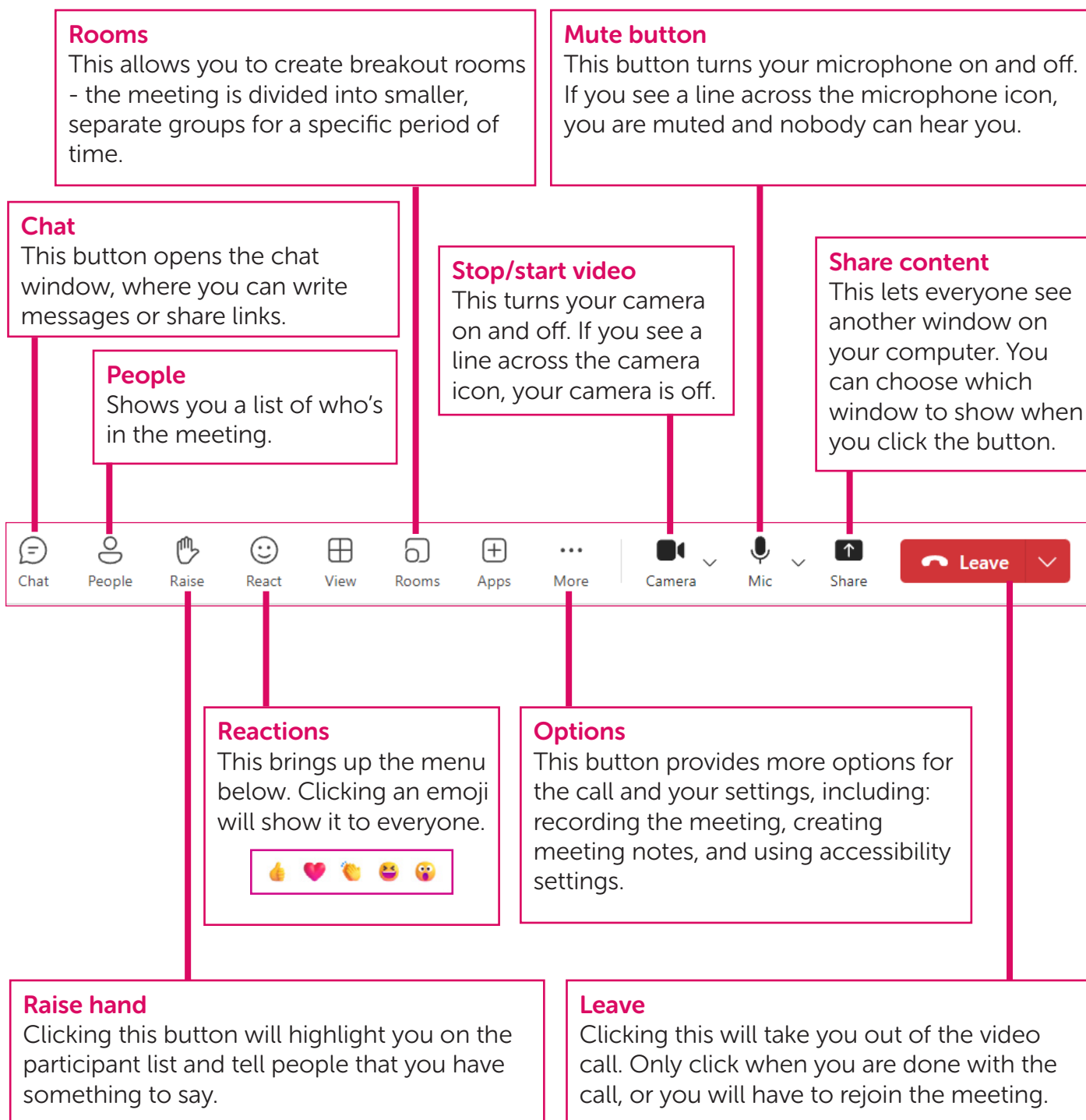
You will then see a window which allows you to adjust your camera, microphone, and speaker settings before you join the meeting. It is usually easiest to leave the settings on default.

If you are uncomfortable with the other people in the meeting seeing your room, you can click on "Effects and avatars" beneath the picture. This will give you a range of options to blur or replace the background of your image. You can even turn your camera off and create an avatar to represent you if you don't want people to see your face.



When you click "Join now", you may enter a waiting room. This means that someone else in the meeting will have to let you into the call.

The key controls for a Teams call are below:



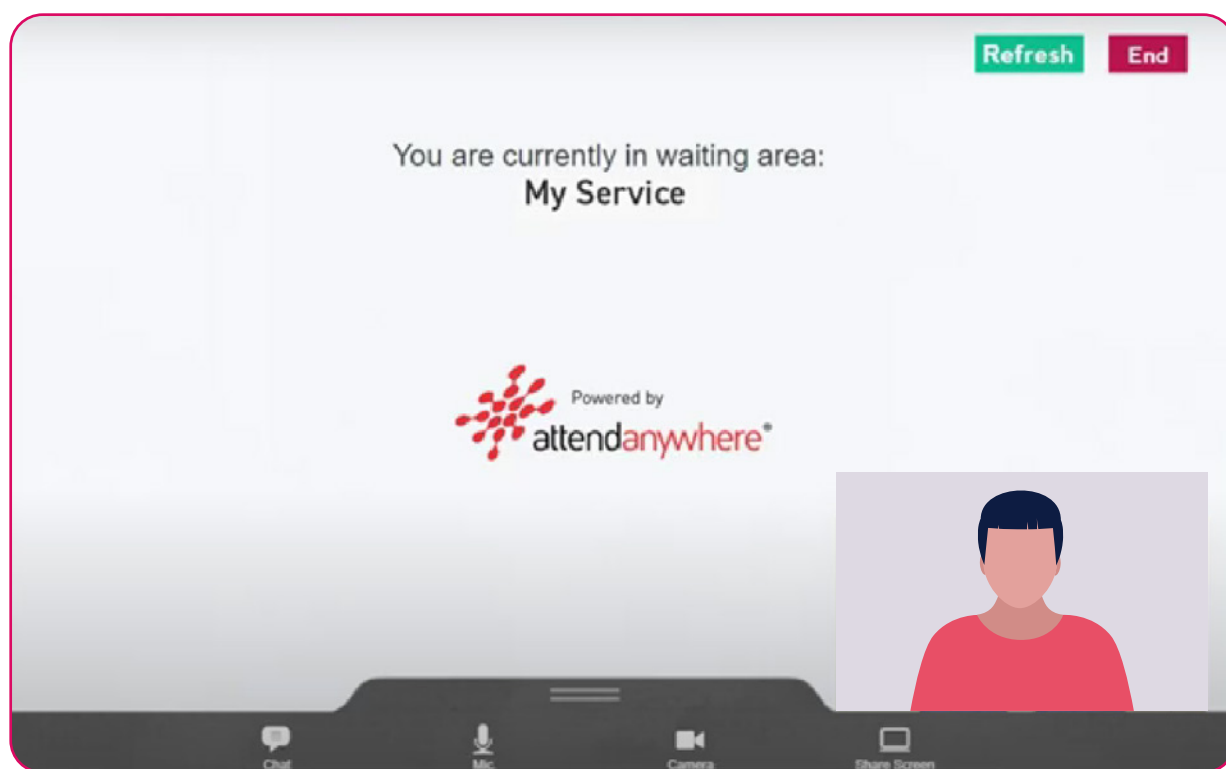
Using NHS Near Me

Near Me appointments are accessed through your web browser (the programme you usually use to go online). They might also be called "Attend Anywhere" - this is the platform which the NHS uses to host Near Me appointments.

Open the Chrome, Safari or Edge browser. Enter the website address your service has given you (for example, in your appointment letter) into the address bar. The system automatically checks whether you have a suitable microphone, camera and network connection. You may be asked for camera, microphone and audio playback permissions for your service's website. Click "Allow".

You should see a large "Enter Waiting Area" button with the Waiting Area's Name and a brief description. Click or tap it. From there, you'll be given more information on the waiting area you're about to enter. Follow the instructions, using the Next Step buttons to continue.

Enter your details, including a phone number where you can be reached during the call. If you tick the box to agree to the terms and policies you can start your call. The call window looks like this:



Chat

Opens chat, where you can share messages and links.

Microphone

Turns microphone on and off.

Camera

Turns camera on and off.

Share screen

Shows the other person what you see on your computer

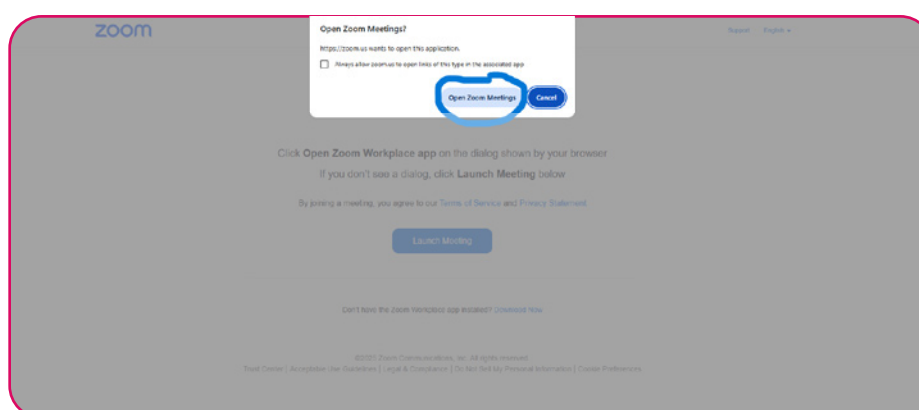
You can find tutorial videos and guidance on using the system at www.nearme.scot/how-to-make-a-near-me-call

Using Zoom

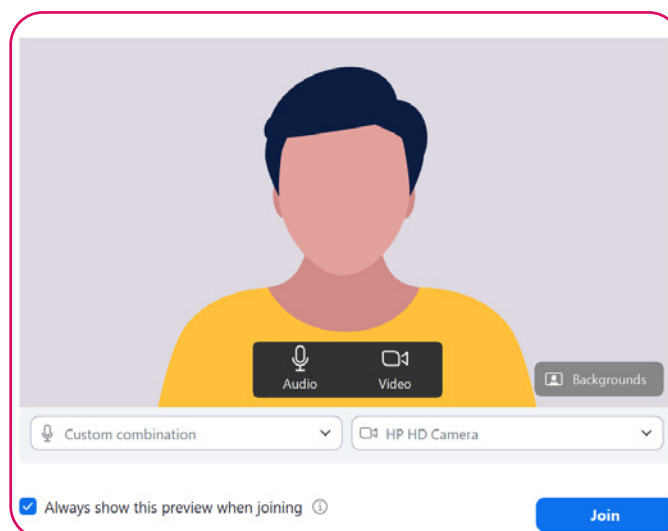
You can access Zoom in your internet browser, or by downloading the programme at zoom.us/support/download

You do not need a Zoom account to join a meeting. You will be sent a link through your email or messaging service. Clicking on this link will send you to a page that looks like this:

Clicking on "Open" will download the programme if you do not already have it. You will then see a screen that invites you to log in (if you have a Zoom account) or "Proceed as guest".



Before you join the meeting, a pop-up will show you what your camera sees. This allows you to check that you are clearly visible, that you are comfortable with how you look, and that you have the correct webcam selected. You can then choose to keep your video on or, if you are uncomfortable with being seen, join without video. You can do the same for joining with your audio on or off. A line through the audio and/or video icon shows they are turned off. These decisions are not final. You can still turn you camera and microphone on or off while you are in the call.



You may be placed in a waiting room. This means that the host has to let you into the meeting.

This page highlights the key buttons on the toolbar you will see at the bottom of your Zoom screen:

Mute button

This button turns your microphone on and off. If you see a red line across the microphone icon, it means you are muted and nobody can hear you. Press this button to mute or unmute yourself. You can also press the space bar to unmute yourself - when you release the space bar, you will be muted again.

Stop/start video

This button turns your camera on and off. If you see a red line across the icon, your camera is off and others cannot see you.

Leave

Clicking this button will take you out of the video call. Only click it when you are done with the call, or you will have to rejoin the meeting.



Participants

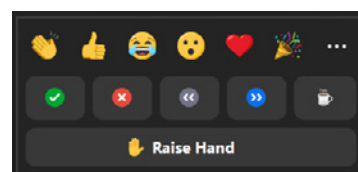
Clicking this button will show you a list of everyone in the meeting. The number next to the button is the number of people on the call, including you.

Chat

This button opens the chat window. In this window, you can type messages to the whole meeting, or select someone to message from a drop-down menu.

Reactions

This brings up the menu below. Clicking an emoji will make it pop up on everyone's screen.



Record

If this icon is red, the call is being recorded.

Share screen

This lets everyone see what is in another window on your computer. This button is not always visible - the meeting host has to give you permission to share your screen.

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