

Tips and information for virtual sessions

With the coronavirus pandemic ongoing, we are offering all our clients the option of virtual sessions instead of face-to-face appointments.

We will be using virtual sessions wherever feasible, to make sure that you continue to receive support.

This guide is designed to help you with any questions you might have, as well as provide some tips about how to access support through virtual methods.

Most importantly, please remember that the Gateway team are here to support you during these difficult times. We will be distributing more information and tips where we can, and your clinician is committed to making sure your sessions continue.

1. How Gateway is conducting virtual sessions

We have a variety of options and programmes available for video and virtual sessions. These include:

- Skype
- Zoom
- WhatsApp
- Google Hangouts
- Telephone

Please do not worry if you haven't used these apps or programmes before. We have how-to guides available and dedicated technical support here at Gateway. There might be some teething problems at the beginning, but we are confident we will all get used to these new methods.

2. How will the process work?

Your clinician will manage and arrange your video, chat or telephone sessions. Please speak to him or her about what programme or method you would prefer.

We will send you a how-to guide before your appointment. If you have any questions, please contact us, and we will do our best to help.

Please be advised that because we are not seeing you face-to-face, we may need to make adjustments to your sessions. We might increase parent support sessions, for example. Your clinician will be able to talk to you in more detail about this.

Any changes we make to the way your therapy or assessment is conducted will be thought about very carefully. Any alterations will be made using expert clinical judgement. We believe that you should be able to access some level of support rather than nothing at all. We hope that our clients will be open and flexible to any adjustments we need to make.

3. Frequently asked questions

- **What equipment do I need?**

We are doing our best to make virtual sessions as accessible to everyone. With this in mind, you do not need very specialist equipment to continue your appointments.

For video calls:

- A laptop or desktop computer
- A webcam (either in-built to your PC or a separate device)
- A microphone (either in-built to your PC or a separate device)
- Speakers (either in-built to your PC or a separate device)
- Wi-Fi or internet connection

It is also possible to conduct video calls through your smartphone. To do this, you will need:

- A smartphone or tablet device
- An in-built camera, microphone and speakers (this is standard for most smartphones)
- 4G or Wi-Fi connection (remember that 4G can be expensive for video calls if you do not have a big data plan. Wi-Fi is a better option if you can use it)

We suggest that you use earphones with a microphone attached if you have them. This will help you hear and be heard clearly. Your iPhone/Samsung/other phone headphones should be ideal for this.

For telephone calls:

- A mobile or landline phone
- Signal

You may want to use earphones with your mobile device as well, as going hands-free may make it easier to manage for longer sessions.

For text-based chat:

Depending on the programme you choose, you will likely need any of the following

- A smartphone or laptop
- Wi-Fi or internet connection
- The relevant app or programme

- **Do I need to download anything?**

For video calls on your laptop, you will not need to download any special programmes if you do not wish to. There is more information in the how-to guides.

If you use your phone for video calls, you may need to download the relevant app. There is more information in the how-to guides.

If you choose a telephone call session, you do not need to download anything.

- **How do I join my video session?**

Our how-to guides have all the information you need for joining your video session. Please refer to this when it is time for your session to take place.

- **I don't think video sessions will work for my child/young person**

We understand that parents and carers might be concerned that a video or telephone session won't work for their child or young person. We believe that it will still be possible to conduct some sessions with children via virtual methods, although we understand that this will need to be considered on a case-by-case basis. If you are concerned, please speak to your clinician.

We do not think that the best course of action will be to postpone or hold off appointments entirely. We may ask to see the parents/carers instead to provide you with advice and techniques for supporting your child/young person. This is likely to fit in well with most therapeutic plans and should have a positive impact for both you and your child. Once again, your clinician will be able to talk to you about this.

- **Do I have to attend my video, chat or telephone appointments?**

Yes, if we have arranged a video, chat or telephone session with you, the same attendance rules apply. Please attend your chat, telephone call or video session on time.

If you cannot attend your chat, video or telephone session, please let your clinician know at least 24 hours before your session is due to start. If you do not do this, we will need to mark this as a missed session. If you are a private client, you will still be charged. If your appointments are funded by the Local Authority or another organisation, you will lose a session from your overall package.

- **What happens if I experience technical difficulties before or during the call?**

We will do our best to minimise any technical difficulties, but please be aware that these might occur.

Issues like:

- Internet speed
- Speaker quality
- Microphone quality
- Problems with Zoom

Could all impact on your session. If we experience any technical issues, we will endeavour to continue the session with the video feed turned off. If this does not work, we will continue the session by telephone.

If you are struggling to connect before your appointment, let your clinician know, and we will make any adjustments necessary to your session.

4. Tips for helping your session go smoothly

Some other tips for helping your video sessions go smoothly include:

- Choose a quiet place for your video session. Somewhere with a neutral background and not too much noise is usually best.
- Use earphones with a microphone attached to improve sound quality (just earphones could be fine too!).
- Try to avoid interruptions as much as possible. If you are a parent/carer and can, ask your partner to watch your children while the session is underway.
- Ask all family members to keep the noise down while your session is underway.
- Keep pets away from the room while the session is underway to avoid distractions.

- Test your microphone and video before you join the call.
- If you want to, you could restart your computer 30 minutes before the session to make sure your technology is running as quickly as possible.
- The same attendance rules apply to video sessions. Please attend your appointment on time. If you are unable to attend, please let the clinician know at least 24 hours before your session is due to take place.
- If you need any adjustments making to the schedule of your call (for example, if you would prefer two 30 minute sessions a week rather than one 1 hour session), we may be able to accommodate you. Please speak to your clinician about this.
- If you have any technical difficulties, please contact Lauren (lauren.forse@gateway-psychology.co.uk) or Charles (charles.forse@gateway-psychology.co.uk). We will do our best to help.
- If you have any other questions or concerns, please speak to your clinician.

5. Thank you for your patience!

We know it is a difficult time at the moment, with guidance from the government rapidly changing as the situation progresses.

We are doing our best to ensure our clients still receive support from Gateway Psychology. We hope that video sessions will help us do just that and will endeavour to keep all appointments in the diary.

We will keep you updated with how the situation is progressing and advise when appointments can return to normal.