

Conducting virtual meetings during the pandemic



Alison Large, dento-legal adviser at the Dental Defence Union (DDU), discusses what to do if you are asked to attend a virtual meeting during the pandemic.

As we are all too aware, the coronavirus pandemic has had far reaching impact on many aspects of our everyday lives. This includes how we interact with colleagues and other professionals. It is now common for many meetings, and even disciplinary hearings to be conducted online rather than face to face.

There are advantages to holding meetings or hearings online. They can be more convenient, avoiding the need to travel, and less stressful as participants are in familiar surroundings.

However, it is still important to remember to present yourself as you would when appearing in person. Here are the DDU's tips on getting the most out of a virtual dento-legal hearing, or for that matter, a formal work meeting.

Prepare in advance

You should be sent all the information you need prior to your attendance. If you feel that anything is missing let the organiser know in plenty of time and make sure you have downloaded the necessary app to allow you to join the meeting. Check the technology works in advance and that your internet connection is good enough to make sure that you do not suddenly drop out of the meeting. If there is any confidential documentation that you need, ask for this to be emailed to a secure email address, preferably in an encrypted form.

Review the background

On the day, make sure your device is fully charged and you have your charger and

an electric socket close by. Make sure your mobile phone is turned off. Review your background suitability, for example, is there any confidential information visible? Dress appropriately as you never know whether you may have to stand up or move - so consider your entire outfit - not just the top!

If you are required to, or prefer to stand, make sure your camera can accommodate this. Try to locate yourself somewhere quiet that isn't affected by external noise and, if necessary, close and lock the door to prevent interruptions.

feedback or unwanted noise. You may be asked to turn off your video if you are not contributing so make sure you know how to turn it off, and back on again when it is your turn to speak. When your video is on, be aware of your posture and body language. Make sure you are central within the frame. Behave in a way that you would if you were attending in person.

If appearing at a formal hearing giving evidence, follow the instructions you are given and make sure you have understood the question and if you're not sure, ask. Speak

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Log on early and make sure you have all the necessary documents with you. This will give you time to flag up any problems and ensure you are ready to start. If you know you are going to have to speak, and not just listen, have a glass of water close by. It may seem obvious, but if the meeting is going to be lengthy, there may be scheduled breaks but it is worth making sure you have all you need before you start and that you've had a comfort break.

Presenting yourself

During the attendance itself, unless you are speaking, mute your microphone to prevent

clearly whilst looking at the camera. Have any documents or notes you need to rely on in front of you and any relevant pages marked for ease of reference.

Follow up actions

If you're tasked with any follow up actions, make sure you are clear on these and that you complete them as soon as you are able to.

If you have any concerns about appearing at a virtual dento-legal hearing, contact the DDU or your own dental defence organisation for further guidance and support or visit www.theddu.com.

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