

Virtual Fitness to Practise events: A guide for nurses, midwives, nursing associates and their representatives

Contents

Virtual Fitness to Practise Events: A guide for nurses, midwives, nursing associates and their representatives.....	3
Introduction	4
Receiving paperwork for a virtual event	6
Joining a virtual event.....	7
Preparing to join a virtual event	7
The virtual event	8
Virtual event tips	12
Supporting everyone	14
Contacting us	16
Version log	17

Virtual Fitness to Practise Events: A guide for nurses, midwives, nursing associates and their representatives

Our guide introduces you to virtual events and how we run them. Before attending your first virtual event we'd like to invite you to read this guide carefully. At the end of our guide you'll find information about how to contact us if you have any questions.

This guide contains useful information for you. Among other things, you'll learn:

- basic information about virtual events;
- how we'll notify you of a virtual event;
- how to set up or join a virtual event;
- how to send and share information electronically;
- tips for preparing for a virtual hearing; and
- what will happen during a virtual hearing.

Our legislation sets out our powers and how we can run our virtual events. You can see our legislation and our fitness to practise rules [here](#). We know that our legislation and rules can be complicated and difficult to read. If you have any questions about it we'll be happy to answer them.

You can also find information about the fitness to practise process on our guidance library [here](#). This can be helpful if you've never attended a fitness to practise event and you want to find out more information.



Introduction

What are virtual fitness to practise events?

They're a type of hearing or meeting that take place by using technology. When we say 'virtual event,' we mean that the event will take place using a video and audio conferencing.

The event could be a hearing or a meeting. If we're holding a virtual hearing we'll invite you to attend. If we're holding a virtual meeting we won't invite you attend but you can still send us anything you want the panel to see.

When we hold a virtual event, everyone taking part will do so from a location outside of our offices and hearings venues. Most people will attend the event from their home or a private office.

To hold virtual events, we use a system called 'GoToMeeting'. This allows everyone to see and hear each other. It also provides additional functionality like the option of sending messages and screen sharing.

How do they work?

When we hold a virtual event the people attending do this by video and/or telephone. To attend a virtual event you'll need access to a telephone or an internet enabled computer, tablet or smartphone. We'll send you a unique internet link or telephone number to call to join the event.

If you're joining a virtual event with an internet enabled device, once you've joined you'll be able to see and hear everyone else. They'll also be able to see and hear you. If you're joining a virtual event by telephone you'll be able to hear everyone else and they'll be able to hear you.

If we need to send you paper work, such as hearings documents, we'll send these to you by 'Egress Switch.' This is our secure email system, it allows us to send confidential information to you in a secure way.

To find out more about the type of event you are attending and the panel's powers please visit our fitness to practise guidance library [here](#).

What types of virtual events do you hold?

We currently holding Investigating Committee Interim Order events and Fitness to Practise Committee Interim Order events and Substantive Order Review events.

What's the difference between a virtual hearing and a virtual meeting?

When we hold a virtual hearing we'll invite the case presenter to attend and present the case on our behalf. We'll also invite you and your representative to attend if you have one. We may call witnesses to attend to give evidence and the nurse, midwife or nursing associate can do the same. A shorthand writer will attend to record the hearing, they'll be able to produce a transcript if we need one.

When we hold a virtual meeting the panel will make a decision about the case based on the hearings documents before it. Our panel secretary attends to support the panel and draft the determination. The legal assessor also attends to advise the panel on the law. We won't invite our presenter, you or your representative, if you have one, or any witnesses to attend a virtual meeting.

No matter what type of virtual event we run, the panel will make a written determination setting out the decisions they make and the reasons for it.

Setting up a virtual event

Notifying the nurse, midwife or nursing associate

When we hold a virtual event, we'll send you a document we call a 'notice of hearing'. This is a letter that tells you about the virtual event, why we're holding it, as well as information about your right to attend and be represented if we're holding a virtual hearing.

If we're holding a virtual meeting, we won't invite you to attend but we'll tell you how you can send us anything you want the panel to see. If you have a representative, you can also talk to them about this.

When we send a notice we send it in accordance with our Rules. Rule 34, of our Fitness to Practise Rules, says we can send the notice electronically, via email, or physically, via a postal service. We'll most likely send it to you via email. If we send the notice electronically we'll send it to an email address that you have registered with us. You can read our Rules [here](#).

We recommend:

- Checking that we have your correct email address;

- Checking your email account 'junk' folder to make sure you've not missed any emails from us; and
- Contacting us if you need to update your details. You can find our contact details on the notice we sent you.

When you get the notice, it'll tell you that the hearing or meeting is taking place virtually. When we hold a virtual hearing, the notice will tell you the date and start time of the virtual hearing as well as how to join it through GoToMeeting.

Notifying a representative

If you're representing a nurse, midwife or nursing associate, we'll send you the same notice of hearing. In line with our Rules we can send this to you via email and/or postal service. We'll most likely send it to you via email.

Again, this notice will tell you that a hearing or meeting is taking place virtually. When we hold a virtual hearing, the notice will tell you the date and time of the virtual hearing as well as how to join it through GoToMeeting.

We recommend:

- Checking that we have your correct email address;
- Checking your email account 'junk' folder to make sure you've not missed any emails from us; and
- Contacting us if you need to update your details. You can find our contact details on the notice we sent you.

Receiving paperwork for a virtual event

Sending you the documents you need: Using egress to send and receive documents and private emails

For every hearing or meeting there's going to be documents you'll need and documents that you'll want to send to us.

Protection of our hearings and meetings documents is important to us. We want to ensure that you have all the documents you need while protecting the private and sensitive information that might be in those documents or emails. If you're sending and receiving documents or emails we'll need you to use Egress Switch to ensure they're protected.

For more information on using Egress Switch, please see our guide: Virtual Fitness to Practise events: [A guide to Egress Switch and GoToMeeting](#).

You can find further information about Egress Switch by visiting our website [here](#).

Joining a virtual event

Using GoToMeeting

If we've told you that we're going to hold a virtual hearing, you'll be able to attend, attend with a representative or ask a representative to attend on your behalf. If we're holding a virtual meeting, we won't invite you or your representative to attend.

If you attending a virtual hearing, we'll ask you to do this by using GoToMeeting.

GoToMeeting will allow you to see and hear the other attendees. They'll also be able to see and hear you. You can access GoToMeeting by using a telephone, computer, tablet or smartphone. If you're using a telephone you'll only be able to hear what's happening and speak. If you're using a computer, tablet or smartphone you'll be able to see and hear what's happening if your device has a camera. How you decide to attend a virtual hearing is up to you.

You can find more information on using GoToMeeting in our guide: Virtual Fitness to Practise events: [A guide to Egress Switch and GoToMeeting](#).

Preparing to join a virtual event

Before you join the virtual hearing

We know that attending any type of hearing can be daunting and difficult for some people, especially if this is your first time. There are things that everyone can do to prepare in advance of a virtual hearing.

It's important that you're ready to join the virtual hearing and that you're prepared for the hearing to start once you've joined. To ensure a smooth virtual hearing and to reduce delays,

We recommend:

- Checking the date and start time;
- That you have access to the hearings documents and any additional documents you need;
- If you're represented, that you've discussed and agreed any documents that you want your representative to send to us for the panel to see;
- If you're not represented, that you want to send to us for the panel to see
- That you have a pen and paper to make notes;
- Using two devices if you have them available to you, one for joining the virtual event and one for accessing hearings document;
- That the device you're going to use to access the virtual event is connected to the internet or mobile phone network, is fully charged or connected to a power outlet;
- Having access to a headset with a microphone. This can make the audio clearer. Many smartphones come with earphones that have a built in microphone that can be plugged in to your computer or tablet; and
- You're in a location that's comfortable, private and free from interruptions.

If you're nervous, upset or worried about attending a virtual hearing, we've provided more information about the support we can provide you later in this guide.

The virtual event

In this section we'll look at what happens during a virtual event.

If you'd like to see the people who attend a virtual event, you can find that information [here](#).

The morning of the event: Joining and pre virtual hearing conversations

Our panel secretary will coordinate the virtual hearing that you're joining and they'll be your first point of contact throughout it. Please make sure you follow their instructions.

When our panel secretary needs to contact you, on the morning of the virtual hearing, they'll do this by telephone and/or email. We recommend

that you have access to your telephone and your email account for the whole day of the event.

We aim to start our events at the time we told you'd they start. But we know delays can occur. If you're delayed please tell our panel secretary so they can let everyone else know.

Before we start an event, we know it can be helpful for the attendees to have a conversation. Doing this allows our attendees to talk about any issues they may have or to explain things to each other. We know this is important and it can help reduce delays to the virtual hearing. Our panel secretary will coordinate any pre-hearing conversations.

When our panel secretary contacts you they'll let you know what time they'd like you to join the virtual hearing. The time you join will depend on who you are. Please do not join the virtual event until the time our panel secretary asks you to.

Joining if you're the nurse, midwife or nursing associate and/or a representative

If you're attending the virtual hearing our panel secretary will contact you before it starts. This will usually be done via email and/or telephone. Our panel secretary will check you can access the event and run a test. This test may take place using the internet link or the telephone link, depending on how you to join the virtual hearing.

If you're represented our panel secretary will ask your representative to join the virtual hearing at the same time. Our panel secretary will also check that your representative is also able to access the virtual event and run a test.

Once you and your representative, if you have one, join, our panel secretary can answer any questions you have about the hearing or how it will run. Our panel secretary will also check that you have access to all of the documents that the panel have. They'll also check if there are any other documents that you want to give the panel.

Our panel secretary will also facilitate any conversations that need to take place. If you have a representative, speak to them about anyone that you'd like to talk. They'll be able to suggest who to talk or might be able to answer your question. For example, we know that you or your representative may find it helpful to speak with our case presenter and the legal assessor. If you or your representative want to speak to someone specific, let our panel secretary know.

Once the pre-hearing conversation are finished, our panel secretary will ask you to leave the virtual hearing or remove you from it. They'll do this so the chair and panel members can join the virtual hearing and have a pre-hearing discussion. Our panel secretary will let you know when you can re-join the virtual hearing. When you return, it's likely that the hearing will be ready to start.

Starting the virtual event

When the hearing is ready to start, our panel secretary will invite you and your representative, if you have one, to join the panel and legal assessor in the virtual hearing. You can access the virtual hearing in the same way you accessed the pre-hearing conversation. If you're experiencing difficulties in re-joining you can contact our panel secretary to let them know and they'll try to resolve your issue.

Our panel secretary will tell the chair when everyone has arrived. They'll tell the shorthand writer they can start to record the hearing. They'll then hand the hearing over to the chair.

The chair will remind everyone that the event is taking place virtually. They'll make sure that everyone can see and hear.

We recommend:

- Muting your microphone or telephone until you need to speak.

The chair will open the virtual hearing by doing some introductions. This means everyone will say their name and what their role is. If you're attending you'll be asked to state your name and you NMC PIN. If you're not attending but your representative it, they introduce themselves and tell the panel they're representing you.

The chair will tell everyone why the virtual event is taking place. They might read out the allegation the panel will be considering or the order they'll be reviewing. The chair will also tell everyone what decisions the panel could make and that there will be a written determination of their decision.

Before the panel starts to consider the case, the chair will make sure that everyone is ready to begin and they have everything they need.

The chair will also ask if there are any preliminary matters. Preliminary matter are things the panel may need to know and decide on before they consider the case.

When the preliminary matters have been dealt with the chair will ask our case presenter to open the case for the NMC. Our case presenter will make submissions and reference the evidence in the hearings documents. If we're calling a witness, they'll be called during by our case presenter during their presentation of the case. Once they've given their evidence the case presenter, you or your representative, if you have one, and the panel can ask the witness questions.

When our case presenter has finished, it'll be your turn or, if you have a representative, to make submissions on the case. If you have a witness, they'll be called during your case presentation. Once they've given their evidence the case presenter, you or your representative, if you have one, and the panel can ask the witness questions.

Before the panel make their decision, they'll get some legal advice from the legal assessor. The chair will ask if anyone has any comment to make on the legal advice.

Now the panel's heard everything they're ready to make a decision.

Moving to make the decision

When the panel is ready to make a decision it will do it in private. This means everyone but our panel secretary, legal assessor and the panel will leave the virtual hearing. Only the panel will make the decision. The panel secretary will draft their decision and the legal assessor will make sure it's within the law.

The chair will tell everyone that the panel is going in private to make their decision. They'll ask our panel secretary to provide a provisional time for everyone else to return. Our panel secretary will update everyone with a more definite time once the panel has made their decision. We recommend having access to your telephone or email so our panel secretary can give you this update.

Our panel secretary will ask everyone else to leave. If you've joined the meeting via a computer, tablet or smartphone you can close the website link. If you've joined via the telephone you can hang up. If you've not managed to leave the event in a reasonable amount of time, our panel secretary will remove you from it.

Please **do not** re-join the event until you're instructed to by our panel secretary.

Announcing the decision

When the panel is ready to announce its decision, our panel secretary will contact everyone and ask them to return.

Our panel secretary will invite the shorthand writer to return first. This is so that when everyone else has returned, the decision can be announced. Next, our panel secretary will invite everyone else to return.

Our panel secretary will tell the chair when everyone has returned. They'll tell the shorthand writer that they can start to record the hearing. Our panel secretary will then hand the hearing back over to the chair.

The chair will remind everyone that the event is taking place virtually and make sure that everyone can see and hear.

We recommend

- Muting your microphone or telephone until you need to speak.

The chair will then announce the panel's decision. This means that the chair will tell you what the panel has decided. If you have a representative, the chair will then tell the panel's decision. If you have any questions about the decision your representative will be able to ask them on your behalf.

The chair will then ask our panel secretary to send the panel's determination to the case presenter, you and your representative if you have one. Our panel secretary will send this via email using Egress Switch.

Once you have the panel's decision, the chair will close the hearing and you'll be able to leave by closing GoToMeeting or hanging up your telephone.

Virtual event tips

Tips for the nurse, midwife or nursing associate and representative

- If you're attending the virtual hearing via video please raise your hand if you wish to interject. If you have a representative please raise your hand if you need to speak to them in private. If you're attending via the telephone please wait for an appropriate pause to interject;

- Avoid cutting across people when they're talking, wait patiently to come in and say what you want to say;
- If you need to talk about anything private, please remember to say this before you start talking about private matters. This will help the shorthand writer to mark what parts of the transcripts should be private. You can also say when you've finished talking about private thing; and
- If there are further documents you want the panel to see, make sure you send these to our panel secretary. If you have a representative, talk to them before sending any further documents to us. We know it can be difficult to scan and send original documents to us. If you're unable to access a scanner, we recommend taking a picture of the document you want to send us. If you're doing this please make sure the image is clear and legible.

Tips for everyone

- Please follow the instructions that our panel secretary gives, they're there to ensure that the virtual event runs smoothly;
- If you're not talking please mute yourself and remember to unmute yourself when you're ready to talk or invited to talk;
- Speak clearly and slowly so that everyone can understand everything you're saying;
- If you're referencing a document, say the exhibit number and the page number of the document that you want everyone to look at;
- If you're connection drops out, contact our panel secretary to let them know. They'll ask everyone else wait while they try and help you get reconnected;
- We know technical problems can be frustrating, keep calm and we'll do our best to resolve your issues;
- Some technical issues are beyond our control. If you've experienced issues please let our panel secretary know and we'll do our best to find out why the issue happened and how it might be resolved;

- If you're relying on a mobile phone connection, moving from one place to another can help improve your reception;
- We know it can be tiring to sit a computer or on the phone for long periods of time. We want you to be as comfortable as possible. If you or your representative need a break, just let the chair or our panel secretary know;
- You're welcome to make notes of the virtual event but please don't record it or take any photographs of it; and
- If you need to access any of our guidance, such as the fitness to practise library you can do that [here](#). Our panel secretary can also send you guidance via email. If you need any guidance please ask them to send it to you.

Supporting everyone

We know that attending any type of fitness to practise event can be an upsetting and difficult experience. Whether you're attending a face to face hearing or a virtual hearing we expect everyone involved to **treat each other kindly, with dignity and respect.**

We expect our panel secretary to support you by answering any questions you may have and by providing you with clear information about the way in which the virtual hearing will run. During the event day, our panel secretary will be your first point of contact. If you do have any questions, please speak to our panel secretary.

We expect the chair to make sure that everyone is able to fully participate and to create an inclusive environment. If you need a break for any reason, the chair will make sure that this happens. We also expect the chair to manage the questioning of anyone giving evidence. If the questioning is inappropriate, we expect the chair to stop it and explain why it was inappropriate. The chair may also intervene if the questioning is vague or misleading. Again, the chair will explain why they're interrupting and their reasons do this.

The panel also has the power to remove anyone from the virtual hearing that is being disruptive. This power is only used when absolutely necessary.

We'll also try to meet your needs if you need further assistance from us. If you have any specific needs please let us know so that we can prepare before the virtual hearing.

I'm nervous about attending

We understand that you might be nervous about attending a virtual hearing. Hopefully our guide has answered some of the questions that you had. But we understand you might have more questions.

Our website is also full of useful information about how our hearings run. You can find out more information [here](#).

What if I get upset during the virtual hearing?

It's ok to be upset.

We all display our emotions in different ways. You might find yourself crying, feeling angry, frustrated or any other type of way. If you feel upset during a virtual hearing it might be more obvious to the chair, for example if you're crying. But we also know that you might be upset and not showing your emotions.

Where someone is visibly upset we expect the chair to take a break until that person is ready to continue. If you're not visibly upset it might be harder for the chair to know you're upset. Whether you're visibly upset or not, if you need a break for any reason please tell the chair.

More support for the nurse, midwife or nursing associate

We know it can be helpful to talk to someone about how you're feeling. You can talk to us about that but we know you may not want to. We would encourage you to talk to someone you trust.

We have an independent support line if you want to talk to someone. You can contact the FtP Careline on the Freephone number below, 24 hours a day, 365 days a year.

Call 0800 587 7396

You can find out more about the FtP Careline and support [here](#).



Contacting us

If you have any questions, please contact your case officer. You'll be able to find their details in emails or letters we've sent you.

You can also find general contact details on our website [here](#).



Version log

If we make changes to our guide we'll put them here. We'll let you know what section or sections of the guide changed and what date we made that change. This will help you find any new information.

Just so you know, we first published this guide on 4 May 2020.

What's changed?	What pages is that on?	What date did we make that change?