

# Derbyshire County Council

## Video Conferencing Protocols and Best Practice Guidance



**Version control:**

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0.1	D Coxhead/A Nadin	Draft: pre-publication.
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## 1. INTRODUCTION.

### **What is video conferencing?**

Simply put, video conferencing is a technology that allows two or more parties to communicate with each other. The technology allows each party to see and speak to each other simultaneously and share presentations such as PowerPoint.

Video conferencing is becoming increasingly popular as a way to facilitate meetings and save money on travel expenses plus time spent travelling to meetings.

Video Conferencing can be used for:

- business meetings
- training and distance learning
- presentations
- remote/home workers.

### **Can our video conferencing equipment be used by the public?**

The VC project was established to provide an alternative to travel and help reduce mileage and CO2. However, in some circumstances it may be useful for members of the public or service users to communicate with other DCC offices or other authorities around the County (i.e. fostering and adoption or care and complaint issues).

All departments have members of staff who are trained to use the VC equipment and if service users or members of the public are using the VC then it is the responsibility of the department dealing with the issue to ensure that appropriate chaperone arrangements are in place (all VC units are located in secure building areas). If felt appropriate, then a risk assessment should also be carried out.

### **How can it help?**

Video conferencing already provides many of our partner organisations and authorities with the ability to work more effectively internally within their own organisations and with others over a distance at virtually no cost.

The following list includes several examples of the benefits of using video conferencing:

- Significantly reduces travel costs.
- Improved use of time – no time wasted travelling.
- Speeds up decision making.
- Keeps meetings brief and more focused than face to face meetings.

- Enables effective communication with employees working in multiple locations.
- Allows virtual project management via video and data conferencing with geographically dispersed peer groups at short notice.
- Provides an effective way of delivering cost efficient training to individuals without the requirement to travel to a central location.
- Creates a medium for conducting interviews if a candidate cannot attend but can get to a local video conferencing facility.

In 2013/2014 we spent over £5 million on car and train travel, with the current financial situation this cannot continue.

Case studies have shown that as well as making significant savings in travel additional often unseen savings are made in employee travel time, for example:

- £740 was saved by use of technology instead of three employees travelling to London for a meeting.
- Over £3,000 per year can be saved by one team by holding their monthly team meetings by video conference instead of rotating the location around the County.
- £4,000 was saved by using video conferencing instead of travelling internationally as part of a tender process.

## **2. THE VIDEO CONFERENCING PROJECT.**

DCC already had a single video conferencing unit at County Hall which was funded through the former Derbyshire Transformation Partnership; however it was rarely used through lack of promotion and ownership.

As part of the Smarter Travel Programme, case studies were done and it was clearly evident that expansion of video conferencing facilities at key locations around the County would help us reduce the significant spend on travel and reduce the amount of time 'lost' travelling to and from meetings.

Following consultation with members of the Smarter Travel Board, a business case (jointly written by Smarter Travel and Transformation Services) to purchase five additional units was submitted and approved by Cabinet on 11 February 2014.

A project team was formed and has worked to drive the expansion of video conferencing forward and ensure that its use becomes embedded in the way the Council works.

The project team were:

- Amanda Nadin – Smarter Travel Programme
- Dave Coxhead – Transformation Service
- Jo Hollick – Corporate Property
- Andrew Roberts – Transformation Service
- Mark Whelan – Transformation Service

If you have any questions about the use of video conferencing and how it could help you improve communication and reduce expenditure on travel, please email Amanda Nadin, Smarter Travel Project Officer at [amanda.nadin@derbyshire.gov.uk](mailto:amanda.nadin@derbyshire.gov.uk) or ring 01629 538061.

### **3. WHERE ARE THE VIDEO CONFERENCING FACILITIES LOCATED?**

#### **Derbyshire County Council sites:**

Video conferencing facilities are available at the following DCC premises:

- VC Suite (Room 48) – County Hall, Matlock.
- Room 10 - DCC Offices, Mercian Close, Ilkeston.
- Conference Room - South Derbyshire and South Dales Area Office, Civic Way, Swadlincote.
- Room 301a - DCC Offices, Saltergate, Chesterfield.
- Conference Room - High Peak and North Dales Area Office, Kents Bank Road, Buxton.
- Conference Room - Amber Valley Area Office, Long Close, Ripley.

#### **Partner sites:**

As part of the project undertaken by the former Derbyshire Transformational Partnership the following partner organisations/authorities already have compatible video conferencing facilities, meaning if you need to meet with them this can be easily done through video conferencing:

- Amber Valley Borough Council
- South Derbyshire District Council
- Bolsover District Council
- North East Derbyshire District Council
- Chesterfield Borough Council
- Derbyshire Dales District Council
- High Peak Borough Council
- Erewash Borough Council
- Peak District National Park Authority
- Derbyshire Constabulary

*NB No formal agreements are in place for use of facilities at partner sites.*

#### 4. HOW ARE OUR VIDEO CONFERENCING FACILITIES BOOKED?

All of our video conferencing equipment is located in dedicated rooms as a specially configured network port is required, but in certain circumstances it can be used in a different location within the same building.

However, to reduce the risk of damage the equipment must not be moved from its agreed location without the permission of “the responsible person” at each location. At the moment, this would be one of the VC champions.

Before confirming the date and time of a video conference, the organiser needs to either check with each participant that the equipment is available at their location or check themselves (this is particularly important on multi-way conferences). The organiser and participants need to be clear who has the responsibility of booking the facilities at each location.

All DCC and partner organisation/authorities video conferencing numbers should be pre-stored in the equipment’s phone book. Numbers not pre-stored can be easily entered and dialled (instructions are in the user guide).

VC is booked through the Council’s e-booking system on dnet.

***Video conferencing rooms are also used as general meeting rooms; however in most cases video conferencing will take priority over other meetings.***

#### 5. PROTOCOLS FOR VIDEO CONFERENCING FACILITIES.

- ✓ Ensure the room is left clean and tidy.
- ✓ Please leave the equipment ready to use for the next video conference. **DO NOT** alter the standard set up. In particular ensure that the two remote controls are left ready for the next users or handed back to Business Services for safe keeping.
- ✓ Where the equipment is room based, a video conferencing meeting takes priority over all other meetings in that room where it is possible to do so.
- ✓ Please make yourself aware of the local Health and Safety and evacuation procedures – copies are available at each site.
- ✓ On the completion of a video conference call please ensure you complete the form that is with the user guides so that the benefits of using the equipment can be captured.

## 6. ON-SITE AND TECHNICAL SUPPORT.

At each site there are 'video conferencing champions' who have received basic training in the use of the system and who can 'trouble-shoot' simple problems – contact details are given in the folder which is kept with the video conferencing equipment.

The 'video-conferencing champions' are supported by Transformation Services who act as a link to the equipment supplier if required.

## 7. HOW TO RUN A SUCCESSFUL VIDEO CONFERENCE.

Video conferences can be more focused and effective than face-to-face meetings. However, without some forward planning they can become frustrating for all concerned.

Here are some tips to help you avoid some common pitfalls:

**Create an agenda for your video conference** - provide all participants with an agenda prior to the video conference (by email). Include a timetable for the conference and stick to it. Doing so will ensure that all participants have the opportunity to participate and that they are respectful of each other's time.

**Try to create a relaxed atmosphere** - as in a face-to-face meeting, it's a good idea to allow a few minutes for participants to mingle prior to launching into the business at hand. But, don't let the pleasantries eat into the conference time.

**Who's running the meeting** – a chair or organiser of the meeting should initiate the video conference call(s) and ensure any papers are distributed in advance.

**Do's and don'ts** - a successful video conference has all the hallmarks of a well run meeting, with a few additional considerations specific to the medium:

### **In advance.....**

- Where video conferences are planned which include organisations from outside the Derbyshire video conferencing network, communication tests should be scheduled a few days before the time of the conference. This will allow us to verify that the network addresses given are correct and that the equipment to be used at the external organisation is compatible.
- Ensure the environment is set-up in good time (It may take a several minutes before the unit makes the connection to the network).– the technology is up and running, lighting is right (closing curtains/blinds, turning off lights for better quality picture), phones etc. are muted and doors closed. Set the camera so it is just not on your face but to include upper body and hands – communication is not all verbal.

- Polish your image. Prior to the call, use the picture-in-picture 'near side' view function to see how you will appear to those on the far end. With multiple participants, ensure everyone is visible in the frame.
- Have back-up telephone numbers or readily accessible email to hand to communicate unavoidable delays or technical glitches – no one likes sitting there waiting for something to happen.
- Know how to call in technical support if necessary.
- Have easy to use 'getting started' guides to hand.

### **Getting started...**

- Be punctual.
- Introduce everyone.
- Introduce yourself before speaking.
- Check everyone can be heard – re-site microphone as needed.
- Adjust the volume to avoid feedback and set to the right level so voices are clearly audible. It's important to remember that the volume control on your remote dictates the sound level that other sites can hear. If the sound level from the other site is low they will need to use the remote to increase their volume (or unmute their microphone if there is no sound at all)
- Be aware that you may be transmitting sound and/or images before you receive them – make sure that both the camera and microphone are off, if you want to keep pre-meeting discussions private.

### **During...**

- Speak clearly, but don't shout.
- Say when you are muting your microphone – otherwise others will think you've been cut-off.
- Minimise background noise if you can.
- Don't interrupt other speakers – indicate with your hand that you would like to speak.
- The microphone is very sensitive – any whispering will probably be heard!
- Maintain eye contact (with the camera).
- Video conferences are much more interpersonal and interactive than telephone calls or emails and attentiveness, non-verbal cues and facial expressions matter.
- Say when people join or leave the video conference.
- Relax, stay engaged and have fun! End the meeting formally so everyone knows its finish and remember to turn the equipment off before making and post-meeting comments!



**After**

- Remember to leave the room tidy and as you found it (if you've moved any of the furniture).
- Return the remote controls to either the VC stand or back to Business Services (different arrangements are in place at different sites) .
- Switch the unit off at the wall if you can access the plugs.
- **IMPORTANT** – complete the user pro-forma so that we can capture the equipment's use to ensure that savings are captured (a report is being provided to Corporate Management Team every 6 months on usage – or lack of!).

This all seems a lot to remember but once you've taken part in a couple of video conferences it becomes normal behaviour. By keeping these tips in mind, you can avoid the most common pitfalls and ensure that your videoconferences run smoothly and efficient.