

Guidance for witnesses in virtual hearings

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Virtual hearings at the MPTS

Where we are required to hold a hearing virtually, rather than at the hearing centre, this will be done using Skype for Business. This technical guide is for witnesses to a MPTS hearing, that is taking place virtually using Skype for Business.

What is Skype for Business?

Skype for Business is a communication software tool that allows us to generate online appointments for external attendees to attend remotely. There is no charge for you to join using Skype for Business.

What to do prior to the hearing

This section of the guide explains what steps you need to take before the hearing starts.

It is the responsibility of the parties for ensuring you have the appropriate equipment, internet connection and environment to participate, as well as ensuring that there are no external factors that are going to impact on your ability to participate in the hearing.

Technical requirements

In order to take part in the hearing you should have access to a suitable computer or device that has a camera, microphone and speakers so that the live video and audio is available. Mobile phones are not an acceptable device.

Internet connection

You need an internet with a minimum download speed of 8mb and upload speed of 512kps. Variables that could impact the connection speed are others using the same internet connection for streaming services, online gaming etc, while you are connected to the Skype for Business appointment. You must ensure that you have charging facilities for your device close by.

Test call

A test call may be carried out prior to the hearing. Your key contact that has requested you attend the hearing will set up a test call with you, if required.

A test call is an attempt to replicate how you will give evidence by Skype for Business in a hearing. It will ensure that you have everything you need to successfully give evidence remotely. It will confirm that you have the correct software and that your equipment works correctly.

Please ensure that the device on which the test call is made is the same device you intend to use in the hearing for giving evidence. If a test call is unsuccessful, alternative arrangements may need to be made, eg using a different device or evidence by telephone.

Downloading the Skype for Business application

If you do not have Skype for Business installed, your key contact that has requested you attend the hearing should ensure that you have downloaded the application (app). This app is free of charge to download and use but we would recommend that the download is completed while connected to Wi-Fi to avoid any data charges.

Using the Skype for Business Web app

If you are unable to download the Skype for Business app, you should click 'Try Skype Web App' in the appointment invite:



Please follow your browser's instructions for installing the Skype for Business Web App plug-in as this is required for audio and video.

If you have an older device or will be using a work laptop with more extensive firewalls this may cause difficulty using Skype for Business. It is suggested that an alternative device is used if you encounter this problem.

Signing in to Skype for Business

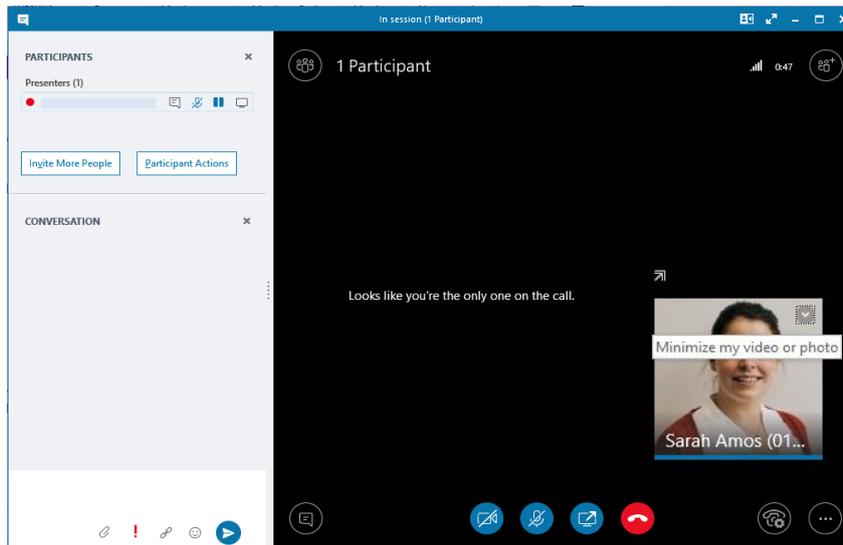
When asked to sign in, please select 'sign in as a guest' and enter the naming convention given to you by your key contact, which is likely to be your preferred pronoun and your anonymised letter, eg *Ms A*.

Please do not enter your name unless this has been agreed with your key contact as this will be available to all participants in the hearing.

Skype for Business controls

The participants pane shows who is connected to the session

The comments box should only be used to ask for a break or if you are having technical difficulties.



You can minimise your own video by clicking the downward arrow in the top right-hand corner of your video. Your video will still appear to the other participants.



You should turn your video on by clicking once on the video camera and then clicking on 'Start My Video'.



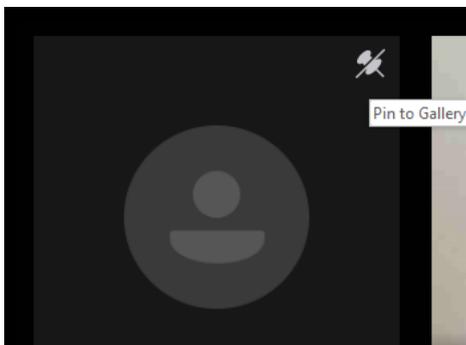
Turn your microphone on when speaking but remember to mute it again when you have finished to reduce feedback.

If you are using an Apple device and are having difficulty with the audio you should go to the settings on your device, select the privacy option, then select microphone and ensure that the toggle next to Skype for Business shows green.



Ends your participation in the appointment.

The Pin to Gallery function keeps a participant visible in the gallery view. Click the top right-hand corner on a participant's video to bring up the pin:



The hearing environment

It is the responsibility of the parties to ensure that you have a suitable environment to participate from. The room should be quiet, private and secure. The background should be neutral with nothing that causes offence to or distracts other participants. The lighting should be good.

Your attendance by video link still requires the same attendance as that if you are attending the hearing centre in person.

Oaths/Affirmation

Attendance at a virtual hearing will typically require you to give an affirmation. Where you wish to give an oath, it is your key contact's responsibility to ensure the appropriate arrangements have been made for the correct holy book to be available.

Virtual hearing appointments

The hearing appointment through Skype for Business will be sent to you the day before the hearing, which will be attended by MPTS staff, tribunal members and parties for the virtual hearing.

You should accept the invite from the MPTS. The appointment invite will include a specific Skype for Business hyperlink. When you click on the hyperlink, you will be automatically connected to the 'in session' hearing.

If you have not received the invite by 4pm the day before you are due to participate in the hearing, please check your spam or junk inboxes before contacting your key contact that has requested you attend the hearing.

MPTS support

During the virtual hearing there will be several MPTS staff present through audio use only:

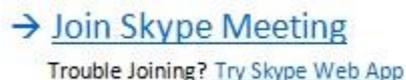
- ▶ Hearing host – responsible for monitoring the hearing to ensure the correct participants are connected to each appointment and they have their video and microphone (when speaking) turned on.
- ▶ One or two tribunal clerks – responsible for drafting determinations and managing administration.

During some appointments, IS support may also be present.

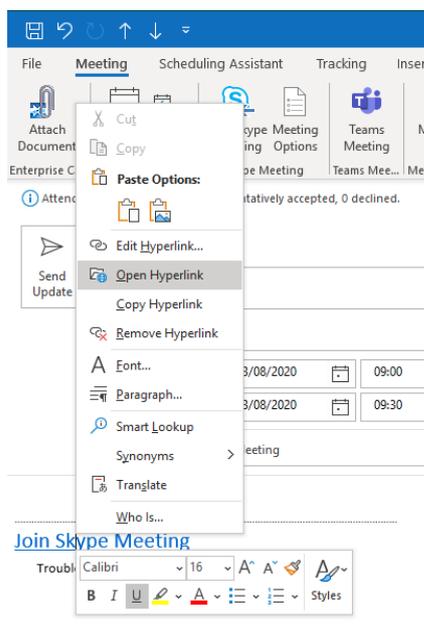
Joining the virtual hearing

This section explains how to join the hearing.

5 minutes before you are due to participate in the hearing, you should click on the hyperlink in the invite you have been sent:

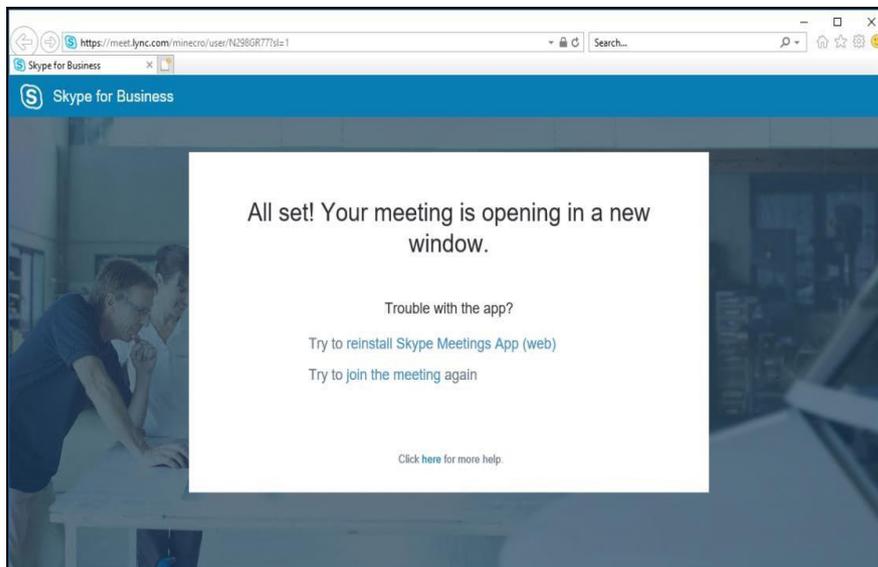


If the Skype for Business hyperlink doesn't work, you can try right clicking the link and select 'Open Hyperlink' or 'Copy Hyperlink' and paste it into a web browser:



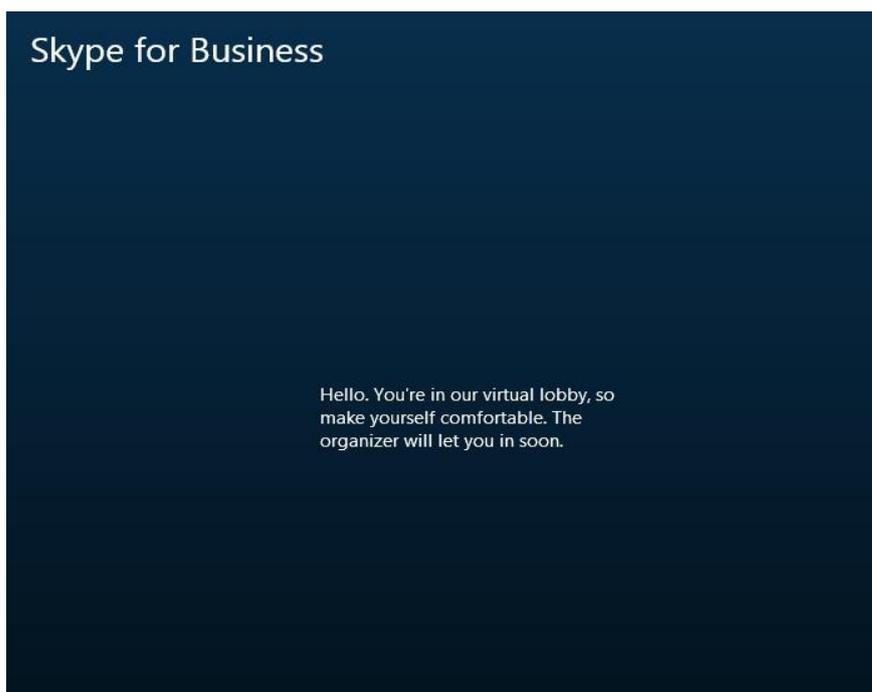
When asked to sign in, please select 'sign in as a guest' and enter your details, [as above](#).

Depending on the device you are using, Skype for Business may issue a notification that you are about to enter the hearing by advising that the meeting is opening in a new window, as shown below:



The new window should automatically open, although in some instances you may have to wait for a couple of minutes.

For security reasons you will be required to wait in the virtual lobby (the waiting area in Skype for Business). This message will appear:



This window may time out if you have clicked the hyperlink before the hearing host is ready to join you to the hearing. If this happens a message showing “You were not admitted into this meeting” will appear and you will then be required to close the window and repeat the process and clicking on the “Join Skype Meeting” hyperlink in the appointment invite.

The tribunal will then join you to the hearing when they are ready.

During the virtual hearing

Once you have joined the hearing you will be able to see the tribunal. MPTS staff will have their cameras switched off but you will be able to hear them.

Remember to turn your video on and mute your microphone when you are not speaking. Remember to say your name before you speak.

The hearing host will confirm who is present.

Breaks

If you need a break at any point you should write *'Please can we take a short break'* in the comments box or say when you are giving evidence. Note that this is visible to all participants. The hearing host will monitor the comments box and, if necessary, draw it to the attention of the Chair.

Once the tribunal has confirmed that a break is occurring the Chair will indicate the time for you to re-join the appointment.

Frequently Asked Questions

What if I have not received an invite for the hearing?

If you have not received an invite for the hearing you should check your spam or junk inbox as it may be there. If you still have not received it, please contact your key contact that has requested you attend the hearing.

I am not sure how to use Skype for Business, will someone show me how it works?

Your key contact that has requested you attend the hearing may contact you to arrange a test call to ensure you know how to use Skype for Business. If this has not been done and you need further guidance please contact them.

What device can I use to attend the hearing by video link?

You can use any tablet or PC device that has video and audio capabilities. We recommend that you are in a suitable environment with internet connection that has a minimum download speed of 8mb and upload speed of 512kps. If there are others using the same internet connection eg for streaming/ gaming this may impact the connection. If you have any concerns about the suitability of your device, connection or location for attending the hearing by video link please contact your key contact.

I have still not been joined to the hearing, what has happened?

If there is any significant delay to the scheduled time that you were supposed to be admitted to the hearing from the lobby, you should be kept informed by your key contact who requested you attend the hearing.

As hearing timings may adjust subject to matters that arise it may be that you are joined slightly later to the hearing. If you have not been joined to the hearing more than 10 minutes after the expected time, please contact your key contact.

I cannot hear/see the tribunal- what can I do?

Please check that your microphone, speakers and camera are switched on - if they are switched off, the microphone or camera icon may display with a line through it or may not be highlighted. Click on the icon once and it should turn on the microphone/camera.

If you still cannot hear and see the tribunal you may also wish to ensure that your device has video capability, that the camera is not covered and that your speakers for your device are plugged in and switched on. If this still doesn't work, please contact your key contact.

Can I have anyone with me while I am attending via video link?

You should ensure that the room you are giving evidence from is private and without interruption. No-one should be present during the hearing. If you need a supporter with you, please raise this with your key contact who requested you attend the hearing at the earliest stage.

I already have Skype installed; can I use that to attend the hearing?

When you have Skype rather than Skype for Business installed you will automatically be directed to download the Skype for Business app when you click on the hyperlink in the appointment invite. You can only attend the hearing through the Skype for Business app or Web app. Further information can be found on the Microsoft website [What's the difference between Skype, Skype Meetings, and Skype for Business?](#)

I am not sure if my personal circumstances will enable me to participate in the hearing using Skype for Business. Can you help?

The tribunal will make sure appropriate support is provided to ensure a fair hearing. If you have a disability, we may be able to make adjustments to the way we approach a virtual hearing at the request of anyone participating in a hearing. We consider these requests on a case by case basis in the same way we do for all hearings.

If specific reasonable adjustments are required please contact us before the hearing. Further information on [our commitment to equality and diversity can be found here](#) and information about the built-in [accessibility support features of Skype for Business can be found here](#).