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Human Communication Sciences

Telehealth guidance

Contents

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Introduction

This guidance has been developed to support the online clinical practice within the HCS clinics. This is in response to the increasing utilisation of telehealth placement opportunities. This policy does not take precedence over NHS and other local policies for external virtual placements, but provides guidance alongside these policies. For external placements, students should seek guidance from their Practice Educator regarding local procedures and policies.

Before starting clinical placement activity, you must read this document and complete the self-declaration box in **HCS Community Central** on Blackboard. This confirms that you have understood the contents and will adhere to the guidelines.

It is important that you discuss the principles and practice contained in this document at your placement induction meeting with your HCS clinical supervisor or NHS/independent Practice Educators.

This document is very much a work in progress and it will be updated in line with national and local guidance as this emerges. If you have any queries about the contents of this document, or if there is anything missing that you need guidance on, please email Rebecca Hewitt (hcs-clinics@sheffield.ac.uk).

If you have any queries about the telehealth guidance in relation to your specific placement, contact the practice educator to discuss.

RCSLT has developed comprehensive Telehealth guidance which is available on their website. Students should take the time to read through this – website links can be found under further resources at the end of this document.

What is a Telehealth placement?

RCSLT describes telehealth as "the provision of healthcare services remotely using technology such as video conferencing. Telehealth is often used interchangeably with telemedicine, telepractice and, in the case of speech and language therapy, synonymously with telespeech and teleslp" (RCSLT, 2020).

We are using telehealth as a way for students to interact remotely with clients and their clinical supervisors, to provide clinical placements. We are also keen to continue our HCS support to clients who would otherwise attend our HCS clinics. We are conscious that telehealth is not an option for all clients, due to lack of access to, or significant difficulties accessing the hardware and/or software required for telehealth.

Managing your online placement

Students should be familiar with general expectations of students on placement (page 15 of the BMedSci/MMedSci Placement Handbook) including how to communicate effectively with your Practice Educator. As you will be supervised remotely for this placement you will also need to agree a supervision plan with your Practice Educator. This might outline, for example, how often you will meet, whether you will be observed, and how you will receive feedback. This will vary according to the placement, e.g. supervision might relate to observations of client sessions, discussions of

hypothetical cases, or feedback on resources you have created. Your Practice Educator may observe (part of) your telehealth session to provide supervision.

Confidentiality and professional responsibility

Confidentiality is an important principle in healthcare. It is imperative that we all safeguard the privacy and confidentiality of clients and colleagues while providing services via technology. Whilst working remotely, there are guidelines on confidentiality that apply to all written and verbally reported information. You also need to consider your location, other people who may be in your environment, and the impact of this on possible breaches of confidentiality.

It is expected that students adhere to the general guidelines in their Practice Placement Handbooks (e.g., relating to dress code, professional conduct and confidentiality). In addition to this, students need to consider the guidelines below which relate more specifically to telehealth.

<u>Professional Responsibility</u>

Always be professional in your interactions with clients, carers and other professionals.

- Students are expected to dress professionally when taking part in telehealth sessions – dress as you would for a face to face clinical placement.
- Telehealth calls should be carried out in a **quiet, private** space that is free from distractions including other people and pets. Ensure that you cannot be overheard by others in your household, to protect the confidentiality and dignity of the client. Ensure that external noise is reduced as much as possible so that the client can hear you clearly and is not distracted by ambient noise (ambient noise can be reduced by using headphones). Open windows in the room could cause a privacy issue for you and the client – use common sense to decide whether you can leave windows open.
- Use headphones wherever possible to ensure that only you can hear your client speaking.
- Video calls should be conducted with a background that is clear from distractions. Wall art or décor should not be offensive or overly distracting. Try to choose a neutral background if this is feasible.
- Ensure you have adequate lighting so that the client can see you clearly. Avoid having sunlight or lamps right behind you as they can cause glare and shadows so that the client may not see you.
- Be mindful of your eye contact during calls – if you are going to be looking away at times to write things down, then let the client know at the start of the call to set their expectations.

Telehealth applications used in HCS

Clinicians in HCS have been trialling various software with clients. We have selected applications that do not require you to disclose your personal information, such as your phone number or personal email address. This is to protect your privacy. Only use your university email address when contacting clients. Your Practice Educator will let you know which platform you will be using for your placement.

For external placements, liaise with your Practice Educator on how to access their approved platforms and ensure that you follow their policy and procedures for telehealth.

For HCS clinics, it is a good idea to familiarise yourself with the software before you start placement – you may wish to arrange a video call with another student to test the different functions. The links to the **approved** software are below:

a) Whereby **-** https://whereby.com/

   Whereby is a free tool that hosts video calls. A video call link can be set up and emailed directly to the client, you can also integrate it to email calendars. Whereby has a chat function, screen sharing, and you can 'lock' the room during the call to prevent anyone else from using the link to join. The client does not need a Whereby account to take part. It can be used on Google Chrome, Firefox and Safari, but not with Edge. Clients find Whereby simple to access and use – staff in HCS have had success using this with their clients.

b) Google Meet

   Accessed through your university email google account on the computer/laptop. The client does NOT need a Google account to be able to use this: they just need the link to the meeting. It is compatible with Firefox, Chrome, and Safari, but not with Microsoft Edge. You can share your screen, and the client can interact with this.

c) Zoom version 5

   The University of Sheffield does not generally approve the use of Zoom. However, HCS now has a licence to use Zoom for HCS clinical **group activity only**. It is not available to use for 1:1 clinical sessions. Students must not download and use Zoom themselves, but will need to contact Dr Caroline Haw (c.haw@sheffield.ac.uk) for further information on using the HCS Zoom licence.

Clients may request to use a different platform, perhaps one which they are already familiar with. If you are participating in an HCS clinical placement, you must use the platforms specified. If in doubt, seek support from your practice educator.

Please note that Whatsapp and Facetime are **not** approved platforms for students to use to discuss clients or contact clients since these rely on the use of your personal data.

Use of Mobile Phones

You may be required to use your mobile phone during a remote placement. When doing so, please adhere to the following guidelines. These are in place to protect your personal data and that of your practice educators.

a) Using your phone to contact clients

   If you need to ring your client, ensure that you have **enabled call blocking**. Mobile phones should have a setting that you can change to hide your phone number and turn on anonymous phone calling. Use Google to search how to do this for your particular phone model. Some clients do not answer to a private number unless they are expecting your call. If they don't answer, leave a message and try again a few minutes later. Do not disclose your personal phone number to your client or their family member/carer.

b) Using your phone to contact the Practice Educator

   HCS staff and practice educators in the NHS/independent practice will have different preferences about use of mobile devices. Once your placement is confirmed, contact your relevant practice educator to confirm their preferred method of communication.

Conducting telehealth sessions as part of your clinical placement

Telehealth is a different way of interacting with clients and providing therapeutic interventions. We need to ensure that both you as student SLTs and our clients are well prepared for the interaction, to ensure that you both have the best experience possible. RCSLT have prepared some comprehensive guidance for SLTs when conducting telehealth. You can find the guidance here:

https://www.rcslt.org/members/delivering-quality-services/telehealth/telehealth-guidance#section-6

We have identified some key points from this to think about when preparing to conduct a telehealth session. In this section, you will find guidance about preparing for, arranging and managing a telehealth session.

Preparing for telehealth

Below are some ideas for preparing yourself and your clients. As always, talk this through with your Practice Educator. There are many other resources which your Practice Educator may suggest you access.

a)   Preparing yourself for telehealth

- Familiarise yourself with the video platform you will be using, so that you feel confident with it. Practise using the platform with peers/friends/family and get familiar with how it works, its features and functionality. It is worth spending time finding out what you can and cannot do on the platform.
- Set up your workstation, and attend to issues covered elsewhere in this document including privacy, confidentiality, professionalism.
- Ensure that your workstation is comfortable and that you will be able to sit and concentrate for the duration of the session. Have a glass of water or drink to hand.
- Think through what you will be doing with your clients and how activities may need to be adapted to the online platform.
- Before starting your telehealth session, ensure that you have your resources to hand. Make sure any files are open and minimised. This makes it easier when sharing your screen. Be sure to think about how tasks can be carried out to ensure that you can see your client's response.
- It is possible that a client may have a health or other emergency during the telehealth session. Your Practice Educator should give you guidance on what to do if this happens. For example, for HCS clinics, Practice Educators will ask you to take a note of the clients address and telephone number before the session. This is so that you can call 999 if necessary, even in the event that you lose internet connection. **Ensure to destroy confidential details immediately after the session.**
- If you have been invited to observe telehealth sessions, make sure to agree the etiquette with the Practice Educator before the call. This would usually involve introducing yourself at the start of the call and one of you explaining that you are there as an SLT student to observe the session. Then you will need to mute your microphone and the Practice Educator may wish you to turn off your video as well.

Technology Checklist:

- Internet connection is working and able to run the software
- Computer, laptop or tablet with internally integrated speaker, microphone, and camera.
- External microphone (if your device does not have a high quality one integrated)
- External camera (if your device does not have a high quality one integrated)
- Headphones are useful for added sound quality and privacy.
- **Update software** when prompted to get the most up to date version - usually related to security settings.

b) Preparing your client for telehealth

Your Practice Educator will set some expectations around the preparation you will need to do when preparing your client for the telehealth session. Practice Educators will obtain consent from the client for participating in telehealth sessions with students prior to you working with the client. HCS will be using a standardised 'consent to participate in telehealth' form.

Be aware that any preparation work will form part of your placement activity with clients. Any queries should be directed to your Practice Educator.

Ensure to check with the client:

- What equipment are they using? E.g. Phone, iPad, computer or laptop
- What web browser or app are they using?
- Is the software they are using up to date and able to access the telehealth application?
- Are they using Broadband internet connection or wireless 4g data (be aware that data could run out mid-session)?
- Have they got sufficient battery/access to a power source?
- Check that the client has everything they need for the session to hand e.g. AAC device, smartphone, paper and pen, communication book etc.
- Provide accessible written resources to support the client using telehealth including what to do in case of technical difficulties.

Ensure that you have a secondary method of communication in place with the client, in case of technical difficulties e.g. mobile phone (with number blocked) or email address.

Please note, students should only use their university email address when contacting clients. Never disclose your personal email address to clients and their families/carers.

Arranging the Telehealth session

Agree with your Practice Educator how best to contact clients to arrange telehealth sessions. This is most likely to be via email, but may differ in individual cases. Ensure to do the following:

- Arrange the date and time you would like to meet with your client.
- There is no set time limit for telehealth sessions, this may differ depending on the client's needs and you should engage the client in decisions about this. Some clients would like 30 minutes maximum and would tire after this; however, some sessions may be longer.
- Communicate to the client which video platform you will be using, how it is accessed, and what device they will need. We are developing a range of "how to" guides for clients to use

when accessing video platforms. Talk to your clinical supervisor about this before contacting clients.

It is good practice to run a test telehealth session with the client solely to check that the technical set up works, rather than to deliver therapy.

Starting a telehealth session

- On starting the call, introduce yourself and ensure that anyone present, participating or observing therapy sessions are identified to each other. This should be recorded in the client's progress notes.
- Students are **not permitted** to record telehealth sessions.
- At the start of every telehealth session, you must ask the client for their consent to take part in the activities and therapies you will be delivering - as you would at the start of a face to face therapy session.
- Make sure that you can see the client clearly, and that they can see you: acknowledge that this may be a new way of communicating for you both, and take your time for you both to settle into the session.
- Ensure that all other windows/websites that you are not using during the session are closed to maximise the performance of the video platform.

During the session

Managing a telehealth session is different to a face to face session. You need to be aware of factors such as the client's comfort in their home setting, the possibility of a carer entering the room, a telephone call coming in during the session. You will need to be prepared for these unexpected interruptions and agree that if the session ends unexpectedly, that you will follow up either by email or phone call.

Make sure that you attend to your client, as you would in a face to face session. Check with them periodically to make sure that they are comfortable to continue. Attend carefully to signs of fatigue or other difficulties.

Think about ways of making the session more comfortable for your client:

- Give the client opportunity to raise any questions at the beginning and/or at the end of the session.
- Build in short breaks in activities.
- Remind the client (and yourself) to take a break from looking at the screen.
- Agree with your client that you can finish the session earlier - the client may find telehealth tiring and more difficult than face to face therapy.

Closing a telehealth session

Ensure to:

- Check with the client that they are happy to continue with the telehealth sessions.
- Determine the date and time of the next session with the client and carer/family member.
- Hang-up (remember to smile and wave as you do so!) and close down the program site.

June 2020

<u>After the telehealth session</u>

- Notify your Practice Educator that you have finished the session and let them know the date and time of the next scheduled session.
- Write up any notes (see guidance below for further information about writing up clinical notes remotely).
- Email the client/family with the details of the next session.
- Email any follow up activities or resources to the client/family.

Troubleshooting technical difficulties

A range of technical difficulties can arise when conducting telehealth sessions, such as video or audio not working. Some tips for resolving technical difficulties can be found below:

1. Make sure that you have agreed at the start of each session that you can communicate via mobile phone or email if the video technology fails (see above for use of mobile phones). If the connection fails and you can't make contact with the client via phone or email, then seek guidance from your Practice Educator.
2. Reassure the client (and family) that technical difficulties do sometimes arise, and that this is not their fault.
3. Check what sort of device the client is using - iPad, tablet, laptop phone. Older models may not support the software used.
4. Check which internet browser the client is using (Chrome and Firefox seem to be most reliable).
5. Advise the client to switch the equipment off and on again - it is surprising how often this can solve the issue!
6. If the difficulty cannot be resolved, agree to stop the session and say that you will seek advice from your practice educator.
7. Consider following up with a phone call.
8. Keep calm and professional!

As this is a new way of working, it is likely that we will encounter various technical difficulties and solutions to this - please feedback any solutions you've found helpful. This troubleshooting checklist will be updated as we progress. If you have any tips to add to this section, please email hcs-clinics@sheffield.ac.uk.

Attendance

If you are unable to make the telehealth session at short notice, you must contact the client as soon as possible to let them know. You must then contact the Practice Educator or module coordinator as soon as possible. Non-attendance should also be notified to hcs-clinics@sheffield.ac.uk.

Whilst the department is working remotely, we cannot guarantee that we can contact the client to cancel a session on your behalf at short notice. If a client cannot attend a session, please also report this to your Practice Educator.

June 2020

Writing up case notes

a) <u>HCS clinics</u>

Case notes or any information in written form about the client should be written on a Google Drive word document through your University email google account here: <u>https://drive.google.com/drive/my-drive</u>

You can share the document directly with your practice educator by clicking "share". You should ONLY share the document with your Practice Educator. Refer to your placement handbook for further confidentiality guidelines when writing notes.

b) <u>External placements</u>

Some NHS organisations will not allow for confidential information to be shared via email or email attachment and use software such as Egress for file sharing. Check with your Practice Educator their preferred/required method of sharing this information (access to these sorts of platforms will vary from placement to placement).

Further resources

RCSLT telehealth guidance: <u>https://www.rcslt.org/members/delivering-quality-services/telehealth/telehealth-guidance#section-1</u>

Maintaining security and confidentiality throughout the telehealth process: <u>https://www.rcslt.org/-/media/docs/Telehealth/INFO04RCSLT-Infographic.pdf?la=en&hash=D15EB355BC74DB59944CD3474EC4E75E87AABD80</u>

This document has been prepared by Rebecca Hewitt and Dr Caroline Haw in collaboration with SLT clinical staff in the Division of Human Communication Sciences.

This guidance will be reviewed in September 2020.

June 2020