

# Going Virtual with Stammering Groups in Children's Therapies

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## Abstract

As a result of lockdown Solent Children's Therapy Service trialled different approaches for group therapy for stammering patients, which had previously been held face-to-face. One approach was to hold virtual groups using Zoom. Therapists adjusted the format and plan of sessions to enable them to work online. Feedback was collected from the children and their families and staff reflected on the experience of holding virtual fluency groups for the first time. Key learning and next steps for the future format of stammering groups have been identified.

## What We Did

- Through Zoom we used the 'breakout' functionality to create parent and teenager 'rooms' with a therapist in each, mirroring face-to-face therapy format.
- Group rules were established at the start of the first session. These included being respectful of others contributions and using the 'raise hand' function to support turn-taking .
- We used SurveyMonkey to collect feedback from patients and families about their experience of the sessions.

*[It's] very positive to feel we are doing something to support her stammer.*

*It was great to meet people in similar circumstances and to get strategies for help.*



*[I enjoyed] learning the techniques and how to use them*

*We both really enjoyed it, despite initial nerves.*

*Will using video increase some children's' anxiety?*



*How are the children going to interact with each other?*

*Will the children listen to each other?*



raise hand

Join Breakout Room

## What We Learned

- Therapists were surprised with how successful the sessions were and how well the patients engaged with therapy.
- Feedback from patients and families has been very positive.
- The findings from this single trial with a small number of patients suggest stammering groups work well for the teenage patients but are more challenging for the 8-to-10 year-olds who benefit from more game-based therapy.
- Attention levels of younger children are harder to maintain during virtual therapy.
- Internet connectivity issues can present a challenge.
- Parents have to be able to access the group on two separate devices to enable using the different breakout rooms.

## Next Steps

This was a single trial with a small group of patients and so we will need to do more trials of therapy in this way and gather feedback to find out how effective virtual stammering group therapy is. We are going to explore the wider functionality of virtual platforms to see if we can make virtual stammering groups work for younger children. This will include exploring the screen share function for using resources, such as game boards. We will compare the findings of this approach with learning from other approaches trialled in Children's Therapies to establish how best to move forward with stammering therapy groups as a service.