

Remote Hearings During Covid-19 Public User Guidance – Updated October 2020

The guidance below sets out the options that will be provided by NICTS for remote hearings via audio and video conferencing during this period using **Sightlink**.

Guidance on the operation of the courts during Covid-19 can be found on the JudiciaryNI website - <https://judiciaryni.uk/coronavirus-covid-19>

SIGHTLINK

NICTS will use a Sightlink to facilitate remote hearings for urgent court business, Sightlink is a cloud based video conferencing solution that enables multiple parties to meet using video and/or audio in a Virtual Meeting Room (VMR) from any type of device. The solution facilitates video and telephone conferencing.

The court clerk will manage the Sightlink remote hearing with all parties.

Court Offices will advise participants of the appropriate Sightlink details to be used for their specific case and the scheduled time the case has been listed for.

Please note the courts are using multiple Sightlinks for all remote business and it is essential that users connect using the details provided to them by the court for the scheduled hearing – previous details given for a different hearing may not be appropriate.

If a test of Sightlink is required this can be arranged by the court office in advance of the court hearing. Alternatively a test Sightlink VRM is available to test audio and video connection at any time - <https://my.sightlink.net/meet/17113581/>

ADVICE TO PARTICIPANTS USING REMOTE HEARINGS

- **Select a space that is quiet and private** with no distractions.

- Sit with the light in front of you so your face is not in shadow.
- Have **device fully charged** or plugged in so you are not cut off during the hearing.
- For those courts which are “courts of record” the only permanent recording of the proceedings will be that made by the court. **No party, other than the court, is permitted to make any video or audio or other recording or image whatsoever of any part of the proceedings.** This absolute prohibition includes a ‘screenshot’ or ‘screengrab’ etc.
- **It is an offence under the Coronavirus Act 2020 to record proceedings.**
- **Microphones must be muted**, particularly when another person is speaking.
- At the outset of every remote hearing the presiding judge will normally summarise the basic protocol to be observed.
- The normal sequence of oral presentations to the court will apply unless otherwise directed in advance or by the presiding judge.
- Where a party or legal representative wishes to make an intervention, permission should be sought e.g. by raising one’s hand.
- All **participants may address the court seated**, unless otherwise directed by the court.
- Where the court considers it appropriate to do so, the affirmation/oath will be administered from the remote court location.
- As in the context of conventional hearings, **permission to confer privately may be requested** of the presiding judge by a participant at any stage. In such event the presiding judge will make appropriate directions to ensure the privacy of such communications.
- You should note that the name supplied to join by video or the number used to connect via telephone will be visible to all other participants.

Set out in the attached **Annex A** are technical instructions to enable a user to log on to the Sightlink session – **please remember that you must use the Sightlink details provided to you by the court office to ensure that you are joining the correct remote court hearing.**

Annex A

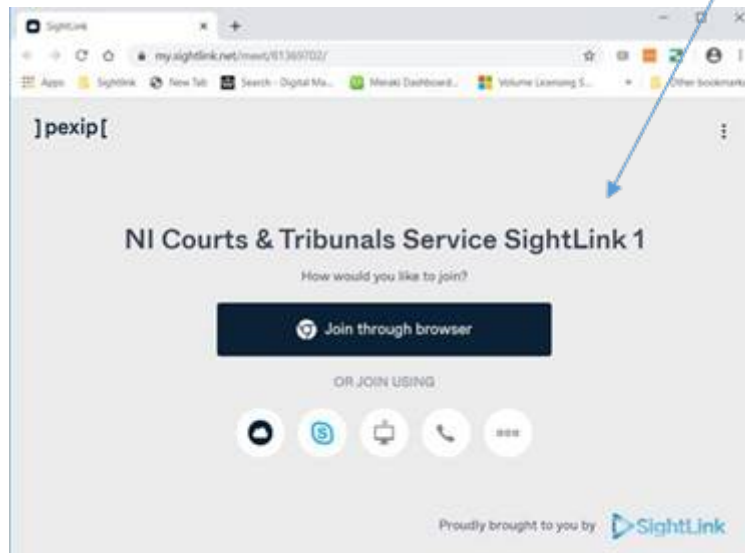
How to Connect to SightLink

- **Connecting From a Laptop**

The easiest way to connect to SightLink from your laptop is to do so via a web browser such as Chrome or Internet Explorer (it is recommended that you should use Chrome if possible).

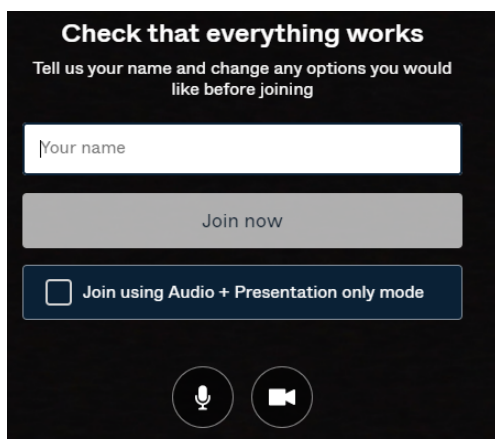
In the address bar enter the web address of the Sightlink that the court office has provided you with;

The link will take you to a page similar to below – in this example it is SightLink 1 that is being used. **Check that you are connecting to the correct Sightlink VMR** for your venue and then click on “Join through browser” to join the meeting.

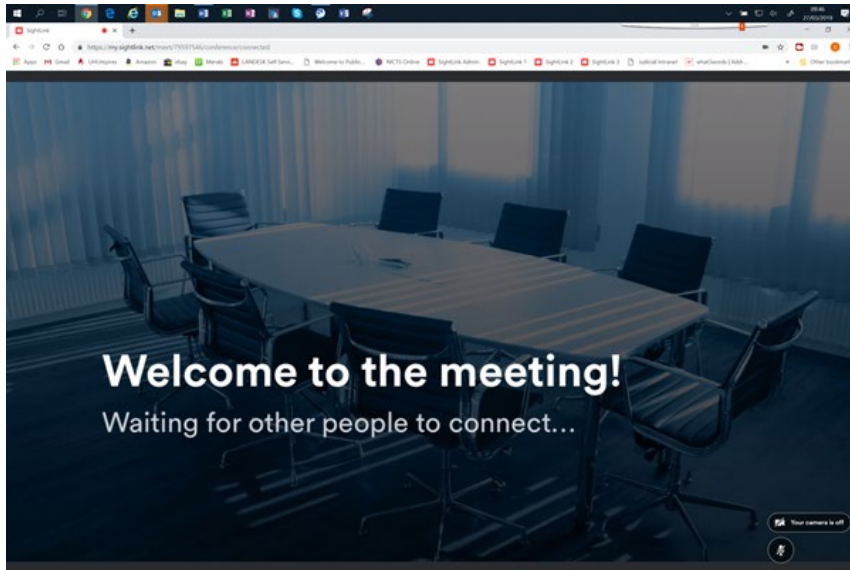


If you use Internet Explorer, you may be prompted for a one time additional step to install a Pexip application before you can connect to the meeting. This will not happen if you use Chrome.

You will be asked to enter your name. Once you have entered your name “Join Now”



Once you have joined the hearing, if you are the first person in the conference, you will see the following screen until the other parties connect:

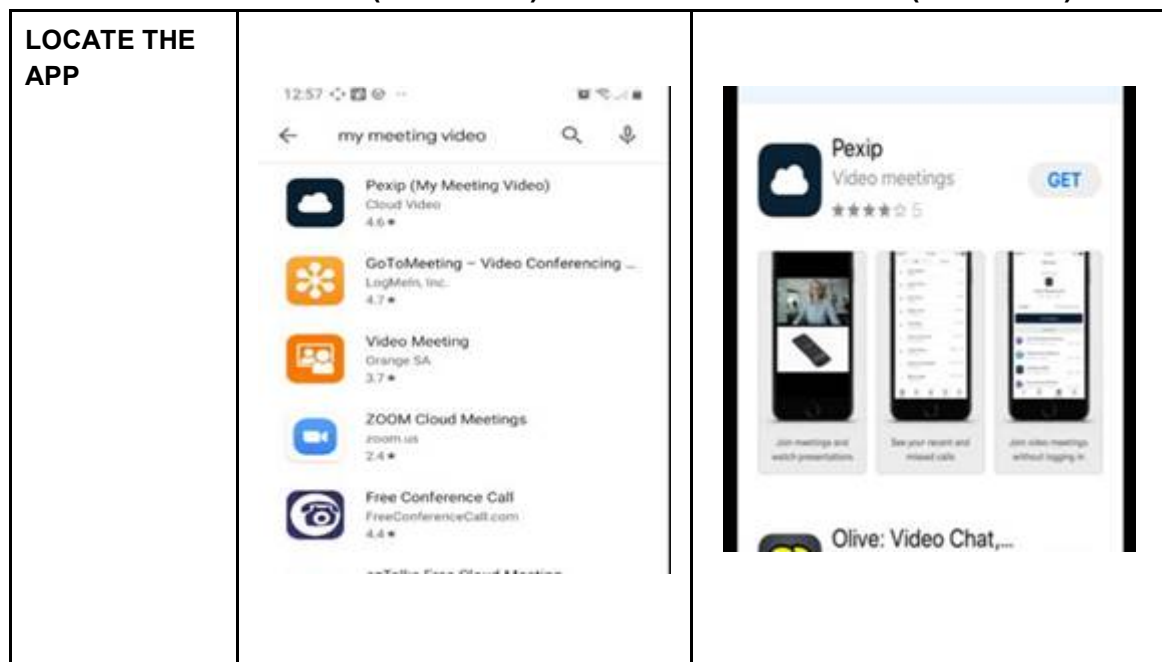


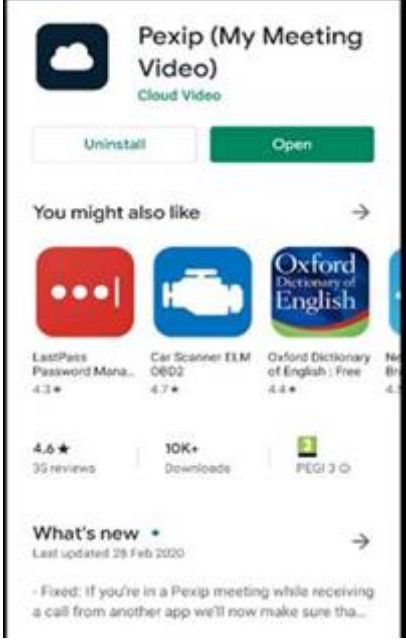
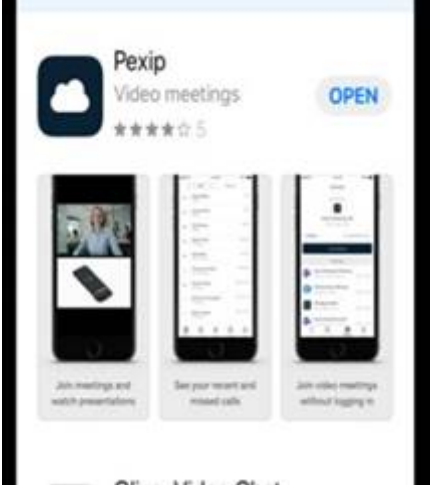


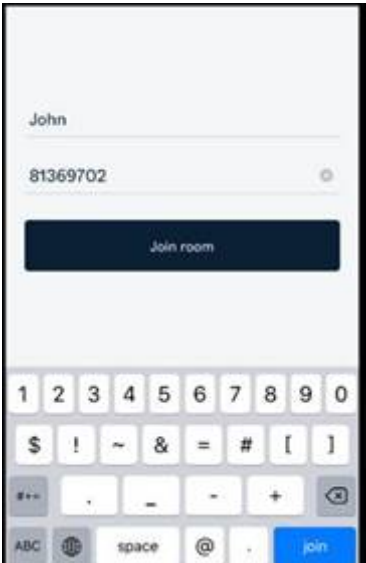
- **Connecting from a Smart Phone / Tablet**


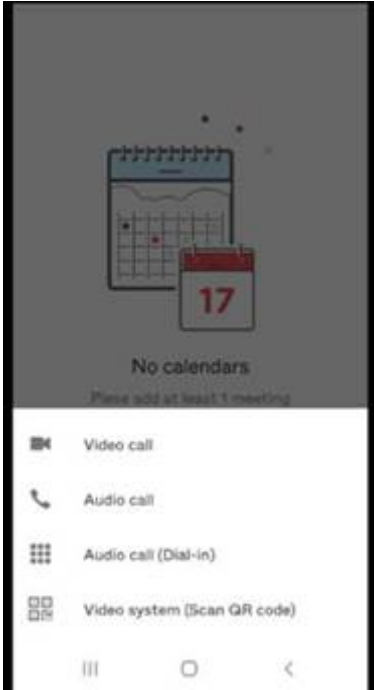
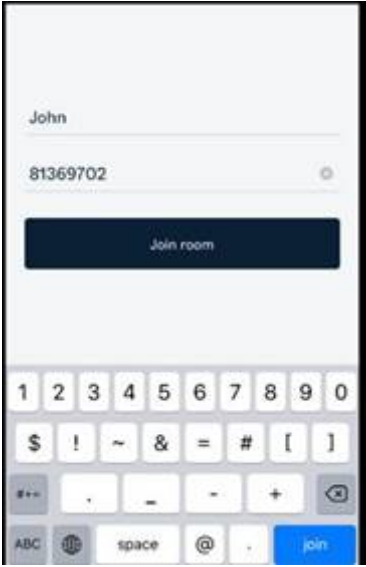
You can connect to SightLink using an Android or iPhone/iPad mobile device, but first you will need to download a free app called ‘Pexip (My Meeting Video)’ to your mobile device. The screen shots below demonstrate how you can download the app and connect to SightLink for both Android and Apple devices:

GOOGLE PLAY STORE (ANDROID)

APPLE STORE (IPHONES)



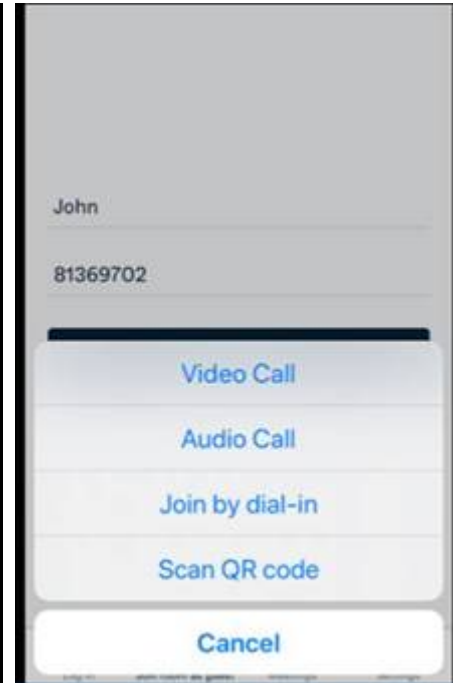
<p>INSTALL APP</p> <p>Once installed 'Open" the App from here or the by selecting the icon on your phone (see below).</p> <p>IOS</p> <p>Install the app by selecting "Get", then open the app</p>		
<p>LOCATE APP ON YOUR PHONE</p>		
<p>LAUNCH APP</p> <p>Select the "Join as a Guest" via the 3 dots on the top right of screen and Enter the relevant Sightlink Conference ID XXXXXXXX. then "Join Room"</p> <p>_____</p> <p>IOS</p>		

<p>Select <i>“Join room”</i></p>		
<p>On the Next screen select <i>“Video Call”</i></p> <p>IOS</p> <p>Enter your name i.e “John Smith, Smith & Co Solicitors” (to identify to other conference users who you are), then enter the relevant Sightlink Conference ID XXXXXXXX. then <i>“Join Room”</i></p>		
<p>Enter your name i.e “John Smith, Smith & Co Solicitors” (to identify to other</p>		

conference users who you are), then select “Join”

IOS

Select “Video Call”

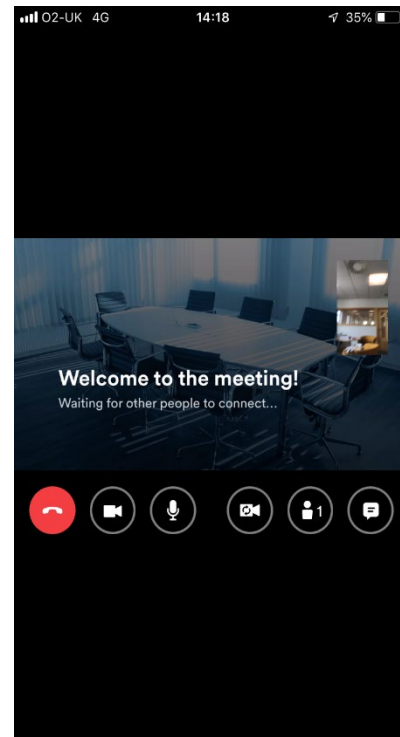
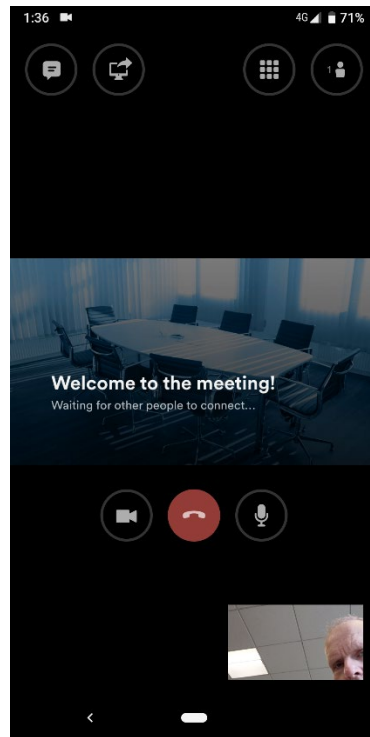


Once you have joined the conference, you will see a screen similar to this.

If required you can turn your screen to landscape and you will see a larger image.

In this example, there were no other callers in the Conference.

To hang-up, simply touch the screen and then press the red telephone symbol



- ***Connecting from a Standard Telephone***

SightLink also allows for voice only telephone connections. From any standard phone dial the telephone number: **020 39174600**, then enter the 8 digit conference ID (details will be provided by the court office) followed by the #.