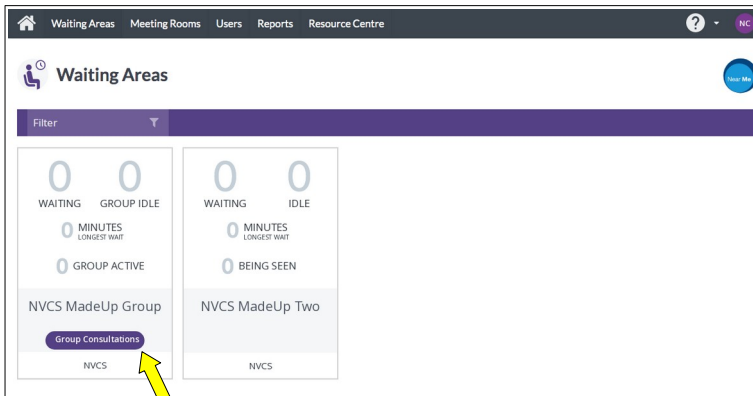


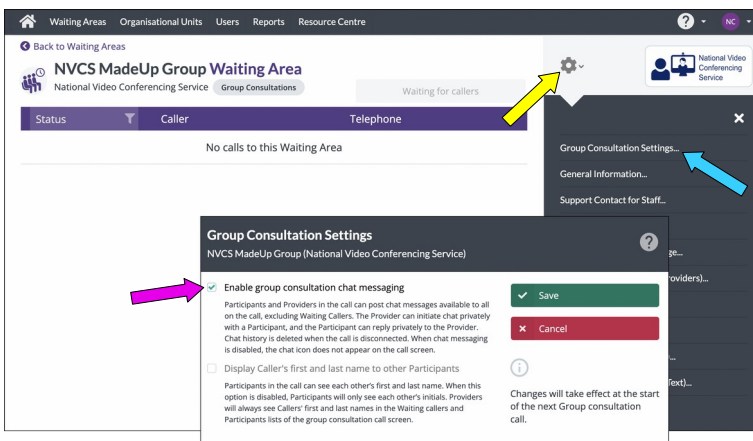


Near Me: Group Calls – Service Provider Detailed v.2.6

Basics



Once logged in, if you have a choice of Waiting Areas, you'll see Group Consultation ones clearly labelled.

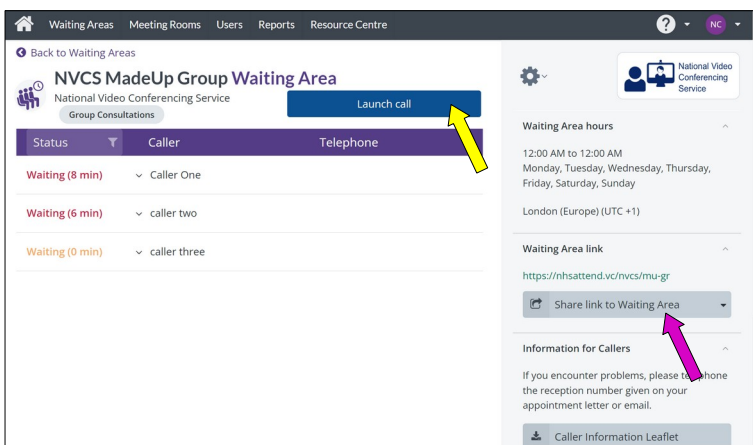


Before any callers arrive, you can decide whether or not you want chat enabled for your call. You may also be able to show callers' first and last names. The default is to show initials only. Providers always see a caller's full name.

To check or change those settings, click the cog button (yellow arrow) then Group Consultation Settings from the drop-down.

You'll then be able to tick/untick boxes to enable or disable chat and full names.

If you can and do enable caller names, please disable them after your call.



Functionality is similar to standard Near Me Waiting Areas, with you able to send the entry link to callers by [SMS or email](#) (pink arrow).

N.B. You cannot launch a group call before you have callers in the call queue.

Once you have a caller or callers waiting, as here, click the blue Launch Call button (yellow arrow) to enter the group call.



On entering, you will be presented with a self-view and a list of callers waiting in the lobby, to the right (yellow arrow).

To drop unwanted callers before admitting the others, click the small **X** button (pink arrow) to the right of their name.

Click Admit All to let your callers in. Their mics, but not yours, will be muted on entry.

Call controls will auto-hide but will reappear if you move your mouse (or tap in blank space, if using a tablet or phone).

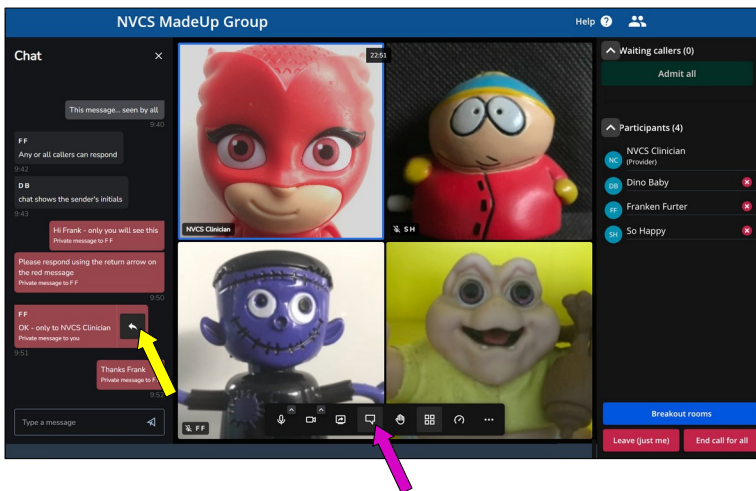


If further callers arrive later, they'll appear in the lobby. Their arrival is also indicated by the Waiting Callers icon (blue arrow).

Once admitted, you'll see participant names displayed below the lobby. The default setting only allows a caller see other callers' initials. Providers see full names.

Additional controls for each caller are accessed by clicking the three dots at the top right of their video tiles (pink arrow).

The end call options are in red.



To see chat, if enabled, use the chat button (pink arrow).

Chat can be sent to the whole group (text on grey background) or, by you, to individual callers (burgundy background).

Private chat is started using the three-dot menu on the caller's video tile. Callers cannot privately chat with other callers or with you, unless you've previously sent them a private message. To respond to you privately, they must use the arrow on the message you sent them (yellow arrow).

More detail: Call controls



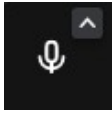
Provider call controls

Call controls are similar to many other video platforms.



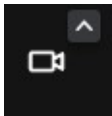
Your callers' controls

Your callers have the same buttons apart from the screen sharing button. Their microphone is muted when you admit them to the call.



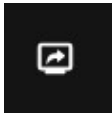
Microphone mute/unmute.

The arrow allows a change of microphones and audio output devices should the system in use have multiples of either.

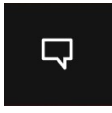


Video mute/unmute.

The arrow allows a change of camera should the device in use have more than one.

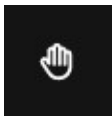


Screen-sharing. You can share individual windows or other browser tabs. **Do not share entire screen** as callers may then see the participants list with full caller names, to the right of your call screen. Don't forget to end screen-sharing when you are finished your presentation. Please see our guide on [PowerPoint sharing](#) within group calls.

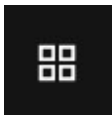


Chat sidebar open/close.

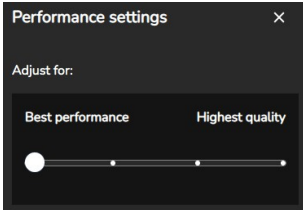
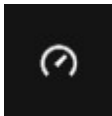
This opens the chat sidebar. If messages have already been sent while your chat sidebar is closed, the button will indicate the number.



Used to alert other users you'd like to speak.

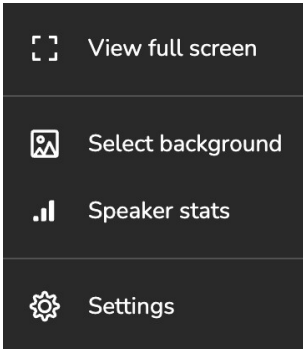
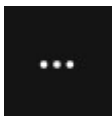


Alter tile layout. This does not alter the layout for your callers – they can alter their individual layout in the same way as you. To view an individual caller, click on their video tile. To return to grid view, click the tile button.



Change bandwidth usage, should problems be encountered. Moving from highest quality, towards best performance, can often help.

N.B. Adjusting all the way to 'Best Performance' results in an audio only call.



Other controls:

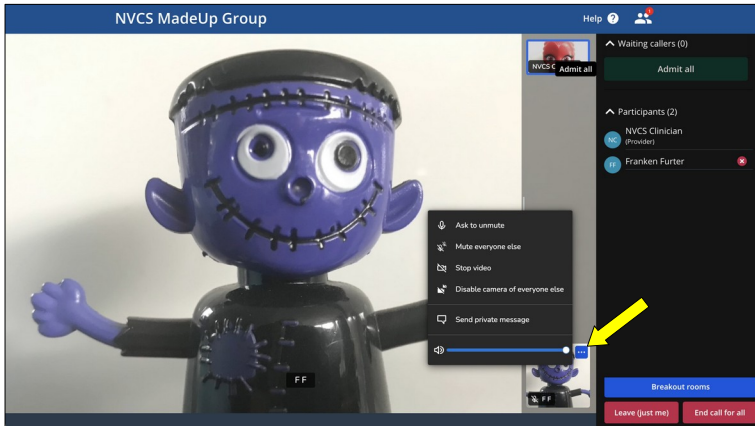
View full screen (use your Escape [Esc] key to return from full screen).

Choose background e.g. blur (use with caution – processing is done on your PC, not the platform).

Stats of the currently speaking participant.

Settings – a further selection of controls, including those for your hiding/restoring self-view.

Further controls



You have control over individual callers. To exert that control, click on the caller's tile. You'll see a three-dot icon at the top-right corner of the tile, (yellow arrow). Click it.

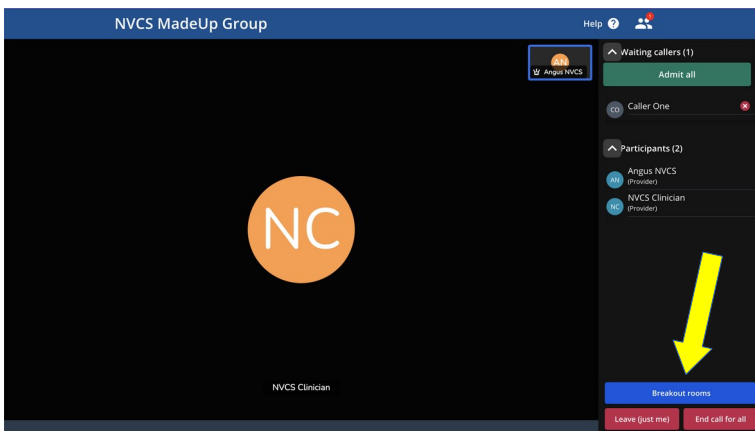
You can:

- Send an individual, on-screen request for them to unmute;
- Mute all other callers except them;
- Stop their video;
- Disable all others' cameras;
- Send a private chat message;
- Change the volume received from them.

Breakout rooms

Breakout rooms allow Service Providers to split Group Consultations into smaller sub-groups for certain activities. To do so, a Provider must join using a Windows or MacOS system. The feature is not available to Providers if they are using a smart-phone or tablet. (Callers using mobile devices can be moved.)

In the following example, we will create a single breakout room to split a group consultation into two groups. In this scenario, we have decided we require two Service Providers. As we do not want a group or individual guests left without the support of a Provider, even for a short period, one of those Providers should enter the breakout room before we begin moving guests there.

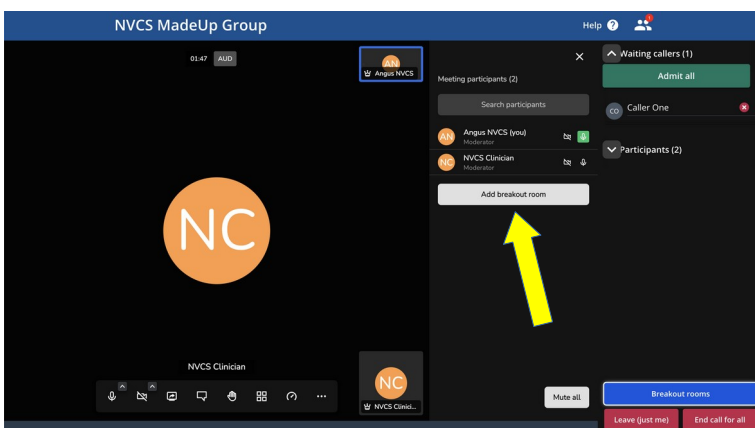


If you wish, you can start creating breakout rooms as soon as you've launched your group call. You do not have to admit any guests into the call before doing so.

At this stage we have two providers in this call and one caller waiting. (i.e. the call has been launched but no guests admitted.)

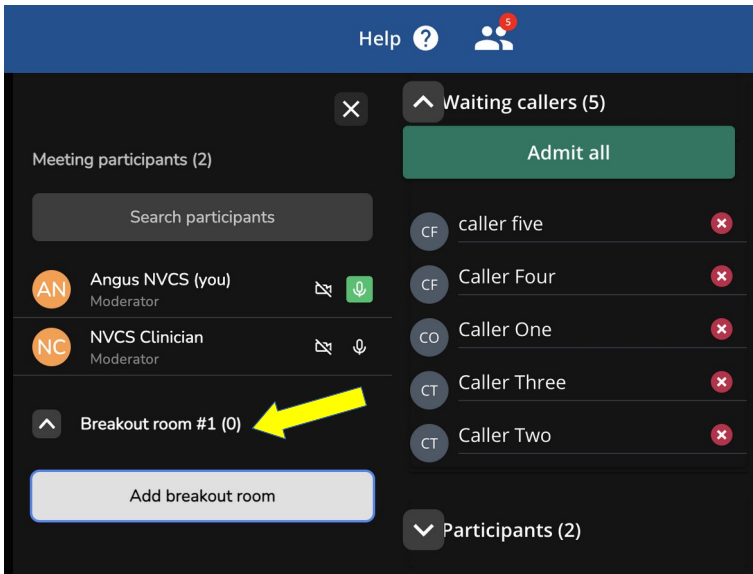
Creating breakout rooms is simple...

Click the blue "Breakout rooms" button to open the breakout bar.



Click the "Add breakout room" button (yellow arrow) to create a new room.

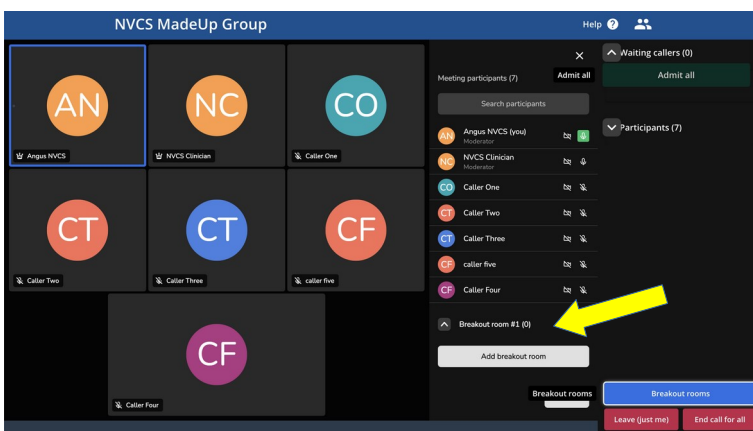
You can add as many rooms as you need from here.



Our example shows the single breakout room we've created (yellow arrow).

We now also have five callers waiting in the lobby.

To proceed with the group call, we can close the breakout bar, if we wish, by clicking the X at its top right hand corner.



Once the callers have been admitted to the group call, we can move them to the breakout room(s) when appropriate.

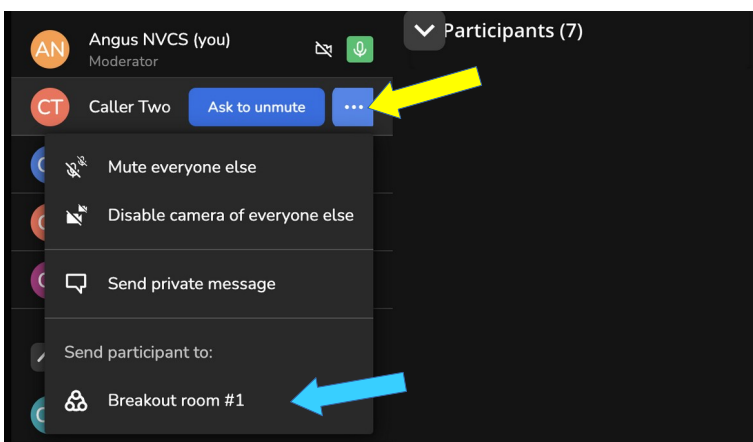
To do so, open the breakout bar again by clicking the blue Breakout rooms button. You'll see the breakout room(s) you created earlier still available to you, at the bottom of the participant list.

[If you didn't create any earlier, you can create breakout rooms now.]



A Provider can add themselves to a breakout room when they're ready (or another Provider can move them to the room, just as they'd move a caller).

To join a breakout room yourself, click on its name and then the Join button.



You can move any call participant to a specific breakout room by hovering over their name and clicking the three-dot menu icon (yellow arrow) then clicking the breakout room to assign them to from the drop-down menu (blue arrow).

If you don't want callers to be left unaccompanied by a provider, a provider should enter a breakout room before moving any callers to it.

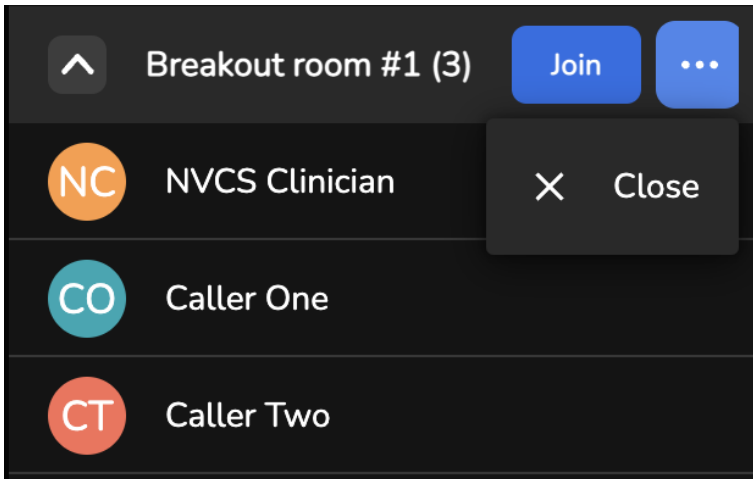
Here, we're moving Caller Two, to Breakout room #1.



You can view all the participants and which breakout room they're now in from the Breakout Room sidebar.

In our example, we can see Breakout room #1 (yellow arrow) holds two callers and our other Provider.

In the main group, we're left seeing our self-view (top left) and the other three callers.



When finished with a breakout room, click the three-dot menu icon next to the room name and click "Close". This will instantly return all that room's participants, including the Provider, to the main group.

(You, or the other provider, can move individual callers between breakout rooms or return them to the main group. Callers cannot move themselves.)

When assigning participants to breakout rooms, the order callers are listed in the breakout bar will change based on who is speaking. If you are having difficulties moving participants to breakout rooms, you can use the "Mute All" button (yellow arrow) to prevent the order changing further. Once the participants are moved to a breakout room they will be automatically unmuted.



Chat from the main Group is not seen while in a breakout room. Any chat created within a breakout room is not seen by the main group.

If a caller's connection drops while they're in a breakout room and they rejoin the group consultation, when you readmit them, they'll join the main group, not the breakout room they were in. If their presence in the breakout room was desired again, you would have to move them from the main room to that breakout room.

Tips (many apply to both providers and callers)

OS and browser requirements are slightly different from standard Near Me calls. The most notable difference is the minimum iOS level. IOS is the operating system used on iPhones and iPads. iOS 14+ for group calls. More info [here](#).

If Providers would like to make a test call, please contact our help-desk on 01224 816666. We'll ask you to email your Waiting Area link to vc.support@nhs.scot, then join you as a caller.

There's information for callers, including the ability to make a test call into a standard Waiting Area at our public facing site – <https://nearme.scot>.

As with all browser based video calls, many problems can be prevented from happening by clearing your browser's cache before your calls. It's simple and quick. See the first guide [here](#).

We'd advise other applications that may use camera or microphone, or are heavy users of system resources, such as MS Teams, are completely shut down before logging into Near Me.

Wired network connections, rather than wi-fi or 4G are preferable. If using wi-fi, try to be reasonably near your wireless access point. If forced to use 4G, a location near a window may provide a more stable connection.

If working from home, even with decent broadband provision, please ensure others on the same connection refrain from online video streaming or gameplay while you take part in the call.

If using a tablet or smartphone, prop up your device in landscape orientation i.e. position it wide, not tall. Callers should be asked to position their phones or tablets that way. (You cannot share content from a mobile device but can receive it.)

If working away from NHS premises, remote access methods such as VPNs, DirectAccess, etc. can often give problems with WebRTC calls. If working from home, it's perfectly acceptable to use a personal device for the video call while using your NHS laptop for data entry. Callers, using corporate devices, may have the similar VPN problems. They may have better calls using personal devices.

Background blurs or pictures have their processing done on your local device. If that device is an older, slower one, it can affect call quality, such as audio sync quite badly. It can also stop working, revealing your background. Use with caution, if you feel you need to use it.

Camera or microphone can't be accessed? Try: [clearing browser cache](#); closing applications such as MS Teams (then a cache clear); swapping USB port, if the camera/mic is USB; restarting PC/laptop (remembering to shut down applications such as MS Teams if they restart automatically, before restarting your browser). If that all fails you may end up having to call your IT help-desk – they will probably be able to access your system remotely and help.

If a group call is to have more than one Provider and you'd like to enter into the call before your callers arrive, why not use a mobile phone's browser to join the lobby using your Waiting Area's caller link. Once the phone is in the lobby, providers can launch the call before any guests arrive. Once in, the providers can just drop the mobile from the lobby.

At present, the maximum run-time for a Group Consultation is 2 hours. That should rise to 4 hours from early December 2022. Don't forget to schedule comfort breaks. When one is due, remind your guests they'll have to re-join, then end the call for everyone. When ready to rejoin, all your callers have to do is refresh their browser tab, enter their details again and they can rejoin. (That also restarts the 2 or 4 hour run-time.)

Larger groups can be harder to chair. Although the supported number of participants in group calls is 60, providers will only see 30 callers on screen at a time under optimum conditions. You may wish to limit your attendees to 30 or less.

If running MS Teams is absolutely essential while using Near Me, please consider running it [within a browser tab](#), rather than using the client.

Should your callers continue having problems accessing your group, after they've tried the basic problem solving above, you can contact us to call them and provide assistance, if thought appropriate. We require a first name, telephone number and a time range you've agreed with them, preferably between 10:00 and 16:00. Callers should not be given our contact details or asked to contact us directly.

**Provider help-desk: information, advice and problem solving
Monday – Friday, 08:00 – 18:00 01224 816666**

vc.scot.nhs.uk