

Small Charity Support

Supporting small charities & voluntary organisations. Registered CIO: 1161963

Editorial Note: The following notes were prepared for a community group called "Open House" to send out to speakers and contributors who had agreed to come and give a presentation to the group.
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Promoting Social Inclusion

Notes for Speakers & Contributors

The Background

Since 2009 Open House has provided a regular opportunity for older people to meet, be entertained, and engage socially with others. Open House meets on alternate Thursday afternoons throughout the year, other than during Christmas, Easter and the schools' summer holidays.

During the recent Covid pandemic, Open House responded to the challenges of social exclusion created by Covid social "distancing" (*ie*: lockdowns) by developing its information technology resources to enable it to continue providing opportunities for social integration. Initially its meetings were held entirely "virtually" by internet video (Zoom®) instead of "in person". And then, as Covid restrictions were gradually lifted, by "hybrid" meetings with some participating "in person" and others participating virtually.

Those "hybrid" meetings were successful and much appreciated by those who were initially unable or reluctant to participate in even modest in-person social gatherings.

Consequently Open House meetings will continue to be provided in "hybrid" format (*ie*: both in-person and virtually) for the foreseeable future. This is to ensure that those who would benefit from its meetings would not feel socially excluded by being unable to engage in person, whether over an extended period of time (*eg*: due to disability or ill health) or just occasionally (*eg*: due to inclement weather or simply being out of the area visiting family or friends).

It also means that, in future, Open House can engage speakers and other contributors who can participate virtually rather than in person. That both opens up a wider range of potential speakers & contributors and offers convenience, cost and ecological benefits by avoiding unnecessary travel.

The New Practicalities

Ensuring that all Open House activities can be enjoyed by both those participating in-person and those participating virtually via an internet connection means that a broader range of factors, both technical and social, have to be taken into consideration.

And that is so not only when the presentation consists of a talk, perhaps illustrated by slides or videos or recorded sound, but when presentations include other forms of artistic activity, *eg*: flower arranging, painting or drawing, musical performance, dance, demonstrating or describing craft work.

This is also the case whether a speaker/contributor is participating in-person or virtually on-line

Speaking or Contributing In-Person

We can well understand why speakers and contributors addressing a meeting in-person might normally prefer to bring and use their own audio-visual equipment that they are familiar with – particularly when they are coming to speak in a venue that they are not familiar with.

So we always try to facilitate that when there is a particular need to do so.

But hybrid – in-person plus virtual on-line – meetings involve some additional audio-visual issues which can complicate matters and which might therefore need to take priority over speaker preferences. So we need to know well in advance whether speakers and contributors wish to use their own equipment.

Speakers and contributors intending to use their own audio-visual equipment should arrive at least ½hr before the meeting is due to start to ensure that any technical issues can be resolved.

Please also note that the on-line security of our participants is very important to us. We therefore subscribe to what we believe to be appropriate security services.

But all participants must also take appropriate steps to project their own devices.

Audio Issues – Microphones

Most experienced speakers do have a voice which is sufficiently loud and clear to be heard well-enough without the use of a microphone *{but that is not always the case, even when the speaker him/her-self thinks it is 😞}* And – inevitably – some of the Open House participants have impaired hearing (which, in some cases, is not adequately compensated by their use of hearing aids 😞).

So it has long been Open House practice to request speakers to use the microphones & speakers of the Centre’s audio-system, even if they feel they don’t need to.

More importantly, using some form of microphone system is now necessary to enable the virtual on-line participants to hear the speaker. That usually makes it essential for a speaker to use the Centre’s audio system. **{Note: special microphone arrangements are needed for contributions which are not entirely spoken – eg: which include a musical performance}.**

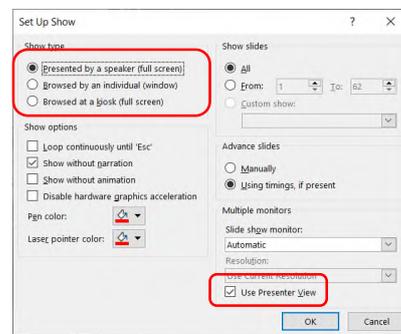
Audio Issues – Sound Systems

Where a presentation includes playing any form of recorded sound (voice, music, natural sound) it is similarly necessary for the sound device (eg: laptop, CD player being used) to be connected to the Centre’s audio system in order to make the recording available to the virtual on-line participants as well as to the in-person participants in the Centre.

Visual Issues – Showing Pictures & Videos

PowerPoint® is now the most common way for speakers to show slides and/or video clips to illustrate their talk. In that case, the laptop running the PowerPoint® presentation will need to be connected not just to a projector but also to the Centre WiFi network. That is so that the virtual on-line participants can also see the speaker’s slides and videos using Zoom’s “screen-sharing” facility. And note that, if the pictures or videos include sound, the laptop also has to be connected to the Centre’s audio system.

Important – Please Note: When showing pictures and/or videos using PowerPoint® we need to know whether that will be using the “Presented by a speaker” – with or without “Use Presenter View” – or the “Browsed by an Individual” option under the “Set up Slide Show” command in the “Slide Show” tab at the top of the screen. This is because the option chosen determines where the laptop being used for the presentation has to be positioned in the Centre allow it to be connected to both the display projector and the Centre’s audio system, and also to be accessible for the speaker to see and control the presentation.



If you are intending to show pictures and/or videos other than by using PowerPoint®, or if you are not already well-versed in showing pictures and/or videos to virtual on-line participants in in-person & on-line hybrid meetings please let us know what software you will be using at the earliest opportunity so that we can make sure that all the appropriate support facilities are available.

Visual Issues – Cameras

To promote the sense of feeling socially included we use a separate video camera in the Centre which is not static (like the built-in webcam in a laptop computer) but can pan from side-to-side and zoom in and out. That enables the virtual on-line participants to both see the speaker/contributors in the context of the Centre and, where appropriate, other in-person participants in the Centre too.

Our audio-visual resources to deliver the virtual on-line elements of our meetings are not yet up to “BBC Outside Broadcast” standards – neither in equipment nor in expertise. Nor do we aspire to them achieving such “dizzy heights” in future. But they are better than the equipment built into standard laptops.

Speaking or Contributing On-Line

Static or Moving Presentation

It is envisaged that most contributors giving their presentation virtually (*ie*: on-line by Zoom®) will be giving a static presentation – *ie*: seated in front of a laptop or computer. And in some cases their presentation will include a presentation of pictures, video or sound, usually using PowerPoint®.

But some virtual presentation may require the contributor to move away from their laptop or computer – *eg*: to play a musical instrument, or perform some dance or exercise, or to demonstrate a craft activity such as painting, pottery, needlework. In that case they will need more sophisticated audio-visual equipment to be able to give their presentation effectively.

In the case of moving presentations it is assumed that the contributor will have all the relevant equipment and know how to use it effectively. But if was felt desirable (*ie*: necessary) to have a trial run in advance of the actual presentation to Open House we would be happy to arrange that to ensure that any “technical hitches” – actual or potential – can be identified and dealt with.

Visual Issues – Cameras

The cameras in most modern laptops are usually adequate for presenters sitting in front of their laptop. However external USB webcams can be purchased relatively inexpensively. They offer higher quality images and the flexibility to position the camera and laptop separately.

But note that it can be distracting for remote viewers if the camera is positioned to the side of the laptop so that the presenter is constantly having to turn away from looking at the camera (*ie*: from looking at the audience) in order to look at the laptop screen.

You only have to look at the images of the other participants in a virtual on-line meeting to see how few of them realise that the image of them being picked up by their camera and presented to the other participants isn't showing them “in the best light” – both literally and metaphorically.

It has been fascinating watching how the BBC's “The Papers” programme encountered similar problems in the early days of the Covid pandemic when, of necessity, it had to switch from in-studio to virtual presentations from its commentators. The “social inclusion” of the commentators has since been greatly improved, presumably by the BBC tutoring them on the best ways to position their camera.

You have probably already thought about your camera positioning and worked out what is best for you. But some illustrations of the problems that can (and do !) occur – and how to deal with them – are given in the companion leaflet “Checking Your Camera Setup”.

Audio Issues – Microphones & Speakers

The microphones and speakers in most modern laptops are usually adequate for most presenters sitting in front of their laptop.

Some contributors to virtual events prefer to use separate headphones and microphone rather than their laptop/computer's in-built ones. And there are advantages to that by cutting out background noise. But some participants in on-line events feel that the use of rather obvious separate headphone & microphone (see the last 3 illustrations from the BBC's “The Papers”) can create an impression of “remoteness” and, therefore detract from the social inclusion of the person using them. We do not specifically request that virtual on-line contributors do not use separate headphones & microphone, but we draw attention to the issue so that appropriate informed decisions can be made or whether, or not, to use them.

Other Resources

There is an excellent article on organising hybrid meetings by the Act Build Change team. You can find it in their [Community Organising](#) blog.

Checking Your camera

Here are some things that you can do to ensure that your presentation is received by the audience in a way that makes everyone feel socially included – *ie*: the audience feels that they are, effectively, all together in the same room as you, regardless of whether they are in the Centre or watching at home.

If you are using a computer/laptop in a room where you wouldn't normally take visitors to your house, do remember to check that there aren't any pictures on the wall, or books on the shelf, or "dirty crockery" on the desk that you wouldn't want your group visitors to YOUR HOME to see.



Make sure that your screen/camera isn't pointing upward and, particularly, not towards ceiling lights. The camera should be at the same height as your head when you are sitting upright.

If the computer/laptop is in front and below you on a desk – lift it up by putting it on a "biscuit tin", or a pile of books.

Or sit on a lower chair.

Similarly Make sure that you are not sitting with a window or bright light behind you. The light from the window affects the camera and can make your face very dark so that it is difficult for others to see you.



Even though you are giving your presentation from the privacy of you own home, do think about how you are dressed.

If it would be discourteous to invite the audience physically into your home when you are scruffily dressed, it would similarly be discourteous to invite them "virtually" into your home to listen to your on-line presentation.

Don't sit too close to the camera/laptop.
Being too close can not only create a rather "socially unfriendly", "in yer face!" impression it can also, with some cameras, make your face look like a balloon



Be careful if using the virtual screen facility in Zoom® to replace the view of the room behind where you are sitting. This can be convenient if, without it, viewers could see things that you would prefer they didn't. But the background image can break up when you move – particularly if the view behind you is very varied. That not only defeats the reason for using a virtual screen, it can also be very disconcerting for the viewers.

In summary:

Sit far enough away from the camera/laptop for the whole of your head and the upper part of your body to be visible.

Contrary to what one might expect, far from creating an impression of being rather "remote", it actually enhances the impression of being part of, and present with, the audience. It therefore appears more, rather than less, socially inclusive.



The above suggestions owe much to the BBC showing how to do it well (*see next page*).

Some Tips From The BBC

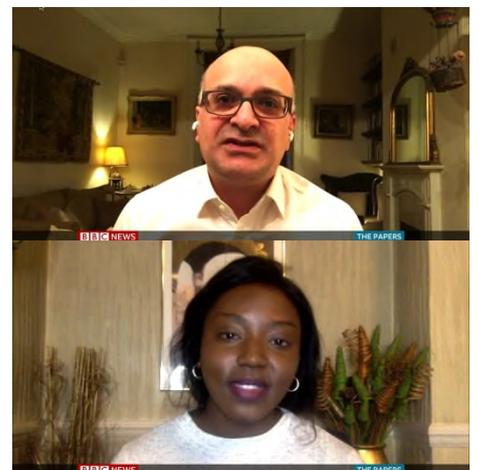


The following screen-shots have been taken from “The Papers” on the BBC News channel.

© BBC Copyright acknowledged

Learning from the BBC

When the Covid lockdowns were first introduced the BBC was unable to bring journalists and commentators into the Studio to report on the Papers. So they contributed virtually on-line from home instead. At first the home presentations were a bit “motley”. But the BBC quickly learned to tutor its remote participants in how to set up their room and camera and, as the illustrations below show, the quality and sense of social inclusion improved dramatically.



Examples of contributors using headphones

The contributor on the left is using full-cover headphones and boom microphone in front of the mouth. This is rather obvious. The other two contributors are using more discrete “in-ear” headphones.



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Open House Copyright & Intellectual Property Rights

Introduction

Open House is a charitable outreach activity, primarily but not exclusively for older adults, including those who are house-bound and/or lonely and/or isolated.

The Background

Open House provides bi-weekly (other than in holiday periods) opportunities for its participants to meet socially to share a time of light entertainment in a convivial environment. Meetings are held in person at the Centre when circumstances permit but can also be joined virtually by electronic means (eg: on-line by Zoom or by telephone) for those who are unable to participate in person for whatever reason.

Where Open House meetings include a talk, presentation or other activity involving pictures or other visual materials (eg: PowerPoint® presentation, display of artwork or artefacts) the organisers will endeavour to provide appropriate printed pictures in advance to those who participate in the meeting remotely by non-visual link (eg: by ordinary telephone). This is to ensure that those who can only participate remotely by a non-visual link are not further disadvantaged by being unable to see the materials being presented live to participants in person or by visual link.

The organisers of Open House recognise and acknowledge the presenter's legitimate copyright and intellectual property rights in the materials that they present to Open House meeting.

It is the organisers' intention that all participants in Open House meetings are aware of those presenters' rights and will take all reasonable measures to protect those rights at all times.

Policy & Procedures

1. Open House recognises and acknowledges presenters' legitimate copyright and Intellectual Property Rights (IPR) in the materials that they bring to, and present at, meetings of Open House;
2. For the purposes of this policy:
 - a. **organisers** means those persons who organise and manage Open House meetings and activities;
 - b. **presenters** includes anyone who participates in an Open House meeting, whether in person or virtually by internet link, to give a talk or other form of demonstration or entertainment for the benefit of the participants, and whether or not they receive any form of payment for their contribution to the meeting;
 - c. **materials** include not just images presented by projection onto a screen but any physical items (eg: printed pictures; paintings and other artwork; photographs; artefacts) and other art-forms (eg: music; dance; acting; magic) made available for participants to look at, and/or listen to, at Open House meetings.
3. A key priority of the organisers of Open House is to ensure that the presenters' legitimate copyright and IPR interests in the materials they present are fully and appropriately protected at all times;
4. Where presenters are making use of materials which are the copyright of a third party, it is the responsibility of the presenter to ensure that their use of those materials in their presentation to Open

House, both in person and/or virtually, is also consistent with the copyright and/or intellectual property rights of that third party.

5. Presenters will be made aware of this policy, and their acceptance of it confirmed, prior to entering into any commitments to present those materials to an Open House meeting;
6. Participants in Open House meetings will be made aware of this policy and of their obligation not to share with non-participants any copies of the materials provided by the presenter or to make use of those materials for any purpose other than to participate in and enjoy the meeting;
7. Where materials are shared with those participating in Open House meetings virtually (*eg*: by on-line software such as Zoom) the ability of virtual participants to record the meeting will be disabled to the maximum extent possible by the virtual software being used.
However, it is recognised that it is impossible to prevent virtual participants recording the meeting by independent means – *eg*: by setting up their own audio/video recording device.
8. Where people participate in Open House meetings virtually by means which do not include visual links (*eg*: an ordinary telephone without a screen), the organisers will, with the cooperation of the presenter(s), use reasonable endeavours to make printed copies of visual materials, or photographs of physical materials, available to such participants prior to the meeting.
This is to ensure that participants who are disadvantaged by being unable to join the meeting in person are not further disadvantaged by being unable to see the visual materials being presented to the meeting.
See the technical note on the preparation of such printed visual materials which accompanies this policy.
9. Copies of the visual materials will be provided only to those who are participating remotely by non-visual means (*eg*: by ordinary telephone) and only in standard laser-print quality on ordinary paper (*ie*: not high quality print on photo paper).
The copies can be over-printed with a disfiguring “Copyright” notice if required.
10. The cover-page of copies of visual materials distributed to those who are participating remotely by non-visual means will include a clear notice of the copyright restrictions on the copies.
The organisers’ preferred copyright notice makes use of the Creative Commons “Attribution–NonCommercial–NoDerivatives 4.0 International License but are willing to negotiate an alternative copyright notice with presenters;
11. Where organisers become aware of participants failing to comply with this policy appropriate action will be taken promptly, including excluding such persons from future participation in Open House meetings, where it is clear that their breaches of this policy were intentional.



Important:

Please read our [Legal Notice](#) on the [Small Charity Support website](#) **BEFORE** making any use of this document.

Thank you.