



# VC Links for Speech Therapy Services

## Scotland | Sweden | Ireland | Northern Ireland

### Overview

An existing transnational network of speech therapists has been expanded across the Northern Periphery. Scotland and Sweden had both previously delivered remote speech and language therapy (SLT). VC has the potential to reduce travel and releases time for therapists to see other patients. VC also facilitates the provision of intensive therapy courses requiring more frequent sessions. Various patients benefit from SLT, and ITTS implemented services with stroke patients in Northern Ireland, SL disorders and head and neck cancer patients in Sweden, and children with speech difficulties in Ireland. VC systems were located in patients' homes in Sweden, or within local community hospitals in remote or island regions such as the Aran Islands in Ireland and the Scottish Highlands. Maximising the use of existing VC units and promoting the clinical use of VC in other disciplines has allowed an economically viable multi-professional clinical network of VC facilities to develop.

"We have used [VC] with quite a variety of patients and I think it's enabled us to provide a better service – either because it meant that I didn't have to travel, or somebody else didn't have to travel. One patient has been using VC to access a very specialist speech therapy service. Now that just wouldn't have been possible without the VC."

*Speech therapist, Scotland*

Speech therapists are connecting not only with patients but also with national centres of excellence for specialist advice and creating professional networks for education and support

### Benefits

- VC facilitates less travelling and frequent therapy sessions which are less tiring for patients
- Experience has shown that remote VC therapy works particularly well with children

Operating out of the Norrland's University Hospital in Umeå, the SLT department has successfully deployed VC systems in patients' homes. This allows treatment to follow evidence-based best practice in the form of intense 4-times weekly sessions, which have been shown to improve outcomes for patients with Parkinson's.



Knowledge exchange is key to optimising the implementation and sustainability of new services. Collaboration provides a mechanism for advancing telemedicine into everyday practice and creating professional networks.



In Scotland, VC links for SLT have been extended across the North Highland region, widening access to different patient groups and specialist services including: stroke, pain management, head and neck, paediatrics, Parkinson's and dysphagia.



Our Scottish and Swedish partners have created a manual to help therapists who want to start using VC: Connect! An Introduction to Clinical Video Consultations can be downloaded from the ITTS website.

Parents are now more involved in their children's therapy, sitting in on the sessions at the remote end. In the past, SLT clinics were just conducted between the speech therapist and the child; early signs suggest that parental engagement reflects positively on the child's progress.



In southwest Ireland, travel to the islands is often restricted by the weather, especially in winter, but the new VC service avoids the risk of appointments being cancelled at short notice.



Expanding  
Exporting

" I get my work done and the children that I work with seem to be ok with it – some of them love it. I would recommend it to others, absolutely. I've been converted! "

*SLT clinician, Ireland*



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