

Delivering training during pandemic times and beyond

Kah Long Aw ¹, Danica Fernandes,² Ramona Malek,² Nick Theobald,³ Luciana Rubinstein⁴

During the COVID-19 pandemic, many face-to-face training courses are being redesigned to be delivered virtually. In the UK, the Sexually Transmitted Infection Foundation (STIF) Course is traditionally a 2-day training programme split into two modules: STIF Core and STIF Plus. Both days consist of a mixture of facilitator-led sessions and small group workshops, and this is accompanied by 8–10 hours of e-learning that the participants undertake in advance.

Here we report how, in Barnsley and Buckinghamshire, we piloted the delivery of the Online STIF Foundation courses using Microsoft Teams (MS Teams). In both cases, the usual full-day training was replaced by shorter sessions as it was felt that uninterrupted full-day virtual learning was not conducive for learning.

ADAPTING TRAINING TO THE PANDEMIC

The Buckinghamshire STIF Plus Course was delivered online over 4 weeks in June 2020, in a series of 2-hour lunchtime sessions. All 27 attendees were staff members from the Buckinghamshire Sexual Health service. A STIF 'Team' was created on MS Teams, and registered attendees were added in advance, facilitating early logistical planning and correspondence. All PowerPoint slides were redesigned to be more visually appealing and use interactive quizzes on platforms such as Kahoot (kahoot.com) and Microsoft Forms (forms.office.com). The format of the live small group workshops was changed to online case-based discussion. Questions were encouraged during the sessions via the chat function, which were moderated by a facilitator. Each session was recorded and uploaded for participants' future learning.

The Barnsley STIF Core and Plus Course was held over four half days in July 2020. This was attended by 18 candidates (17 from Barnsley Sexual Health service and 1

external). The Barnsley STIF courses were delivered without modification.

Facilitators used a variety of methods to deliver the course, including screen sharing of PowerPoint slides, videos and opening a blank Word document as an alternative to flipchart paper.

With the Barnsley STIF courses, MS Teams meeting rooms were set up as follows:

- ▶ Core group; containing all candidates.
- ▶ Colour groups (red and yellow): each containing half the group.
- ▶ Colour and number groups (red 1, red 2, yellow 1, yellow 2): small group workshops containing four to five people each.

Each course participant was allocated a colour and number ahead of the course and received Teams meeting invites accordingly. Speakers were invited to attend all meetings so that they could go between meeting groups and supervise as required. Questions were encouraged during sessions using the chat or by virtually 'raising their hand'. These facilities were monitored throughout by one facilitator.

FEEDBACK

Attendees

Attendees found the presentations to be well delivered and enjoyed interactive elements, such as the online case-based discussions and Kahoot quizzes. Nine out of 27 of the attendees appreciated being able to rewatch sessions at their own pace, as some sessions felt rushed. There were also comments about exhaustion from virtual learning.

Twenty-four out of 27 of attendees would recommend this course being delivered virtually via MS Teams.

Facilitators

Facilitators found the chat and raise a hand functions on MS Teams useful to enhance interaction. They felt there was an advantage of reduced travel and disruption to routine duties. However, the difficulty in seeing participants when sharing slides made some feel that they had lost some of the visual feedback while presenting. There were some technical difficulties, such as attendees accidentally joining the wrong meeting room or slides not being displayed as intended.

Seven out of nine facilitators of the Buckinghamshire course and six out of nine facilitators from Barnsley felt that their session had been successfully delivered on MS Teams. Six out of nine facilitators from Buckinghamshire and all seven facilitators from Barnsley would consider MS Teams to be an effective way to deliver STIF course content in future.

Key recommendations

- ▶ IT support for facilitators prior to and during the course to attend to technical glitches.
- ▶ A separate facilitator working alongside the speaker to assist participant's interaction by monitoring the chat and raise hand facilities.
- ▶ Recording live sessions to enable re-watching at own pace.
- ▶ Always expect the unexpected and have a backup plan such as having multiple slide formats in case one is unsupported by MS Teams.

We do believe that MS Teams can be a successful and effective way for delivering STIF course content both in response to the COVID-19 pandemic and to improve course accessibility. Further courses are already planned on Zoom and MS Teams; the STIF steering group is also planning a national STIF online course in early 2021.

Handling editor Anna Maria Geretti

Twitter Luciana Rubinstein @rubinsteinLS

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ORCID iD

Kah Long Aw <http://orcid.org/0000-0003-4405-576X>

¹Oxford Health NHS Foundation Trust, Aylesbury, UK

²Buckinghamshire Healthcare NHS Trust, Aylesbury, UK

³Chelsea and Westminster Healthcare NHS Trust, London, UK

⁴Hillingdon Integrated Sexual and Reproductive Health Centre, London North West Healthcare NHS Trust, London, UK

Correspondence to Dr Kah Long Aw, Oxford Health NHS Foundation Trust, Aylesbury HP20 1EG, UK; awkahlong@gmail.com