Introduction to Video Conferencing

What is Video Conferencing?
Video conferencing is a live connection between people in separate locations for the purpose of communication, usually involving audio as well as video.

What is the difference between video conferencing and teleconferencing?
Video conferencing is a live link involving both audio and video communication. Teleconferencing is a live link involving audio only.

What components are required for a video meeting?
Video meetings use either a dedicated video conferencing system or an application running on a desktop computer. In either case, the system needs a microphone, a camera, a monitor and either a speaker or headphones. The video conferencing unit or computer programme uses software to convert the inputs into a digital signal that is sent to the remote unit. The remote unit then decodes this signal and outputs the results.

What is a codec?
Codec stands for “Coder/Decoder”. It is a piece of equipment or software that takes the input from the camera and microphone and encodes it into a digital signal and takes the digital signal from the remote end, decodes it and outputs the results to the screen and speaker.

Can I use a regular telephone to participate in a video conference?
Yes, most systems will accept telephone participants.

What is an MCU or Bridge?
MCU stands for Multipoint Control Unit. It is a device that is used to connect more than two video conferencing endpoints at a time into one video conference session, allowing them to see and interact with each other. The participants will either see one site at a time as each participant speaks, or they will see some form of a grid showing all of the participants in a split screen.

When do I need to use and MCU or Bridge?
Most video conferencing systems will only connect two sites together at any one time. This is called a ‘point to point’ call. A meeting with three or more sites is a ‘multi-site’ call. If you want to hold a meeting with more than two sites participating, unless you are sure your system support multi-site calls, you must book space on an MCU.
How do I book an MCU or Bridge?

To book a bridge simply complete the bridge booking form http://www.vc.scot.nhs.uk/book-a-bridge/. If you need help, please contact the service desk on 01224 816666.

What is the difference between an MCU and a Bridge?

Nothing. A bridge is another name for an MCU (multi-point control units).

How many users or participants can I link together on a video conference?

Most systems will only allow 2 participants in a video conference. If you have pre-booked an MCU or Bridge for the conference you will be able to have a multi-site meeting. Most MCUs will allow a meeting size up to the capacity of the unit, in some cases allowing meetings of up to 40 sites. However please be aware that as the number of sites increases, it becomes more difficult to manage the meeting.

Where can I find a list of VC Systems?

Most video conferencing systems have a built in directory of systems. Use the directory button to bring up the list. If you are unsure how to do this, please check out the system specific http://www.vc.scot.nhs.uk/training-specific-systems/.

If you are on the NHS network, you can also view the online directory http://directory.vc.scot.nhs.uk/.