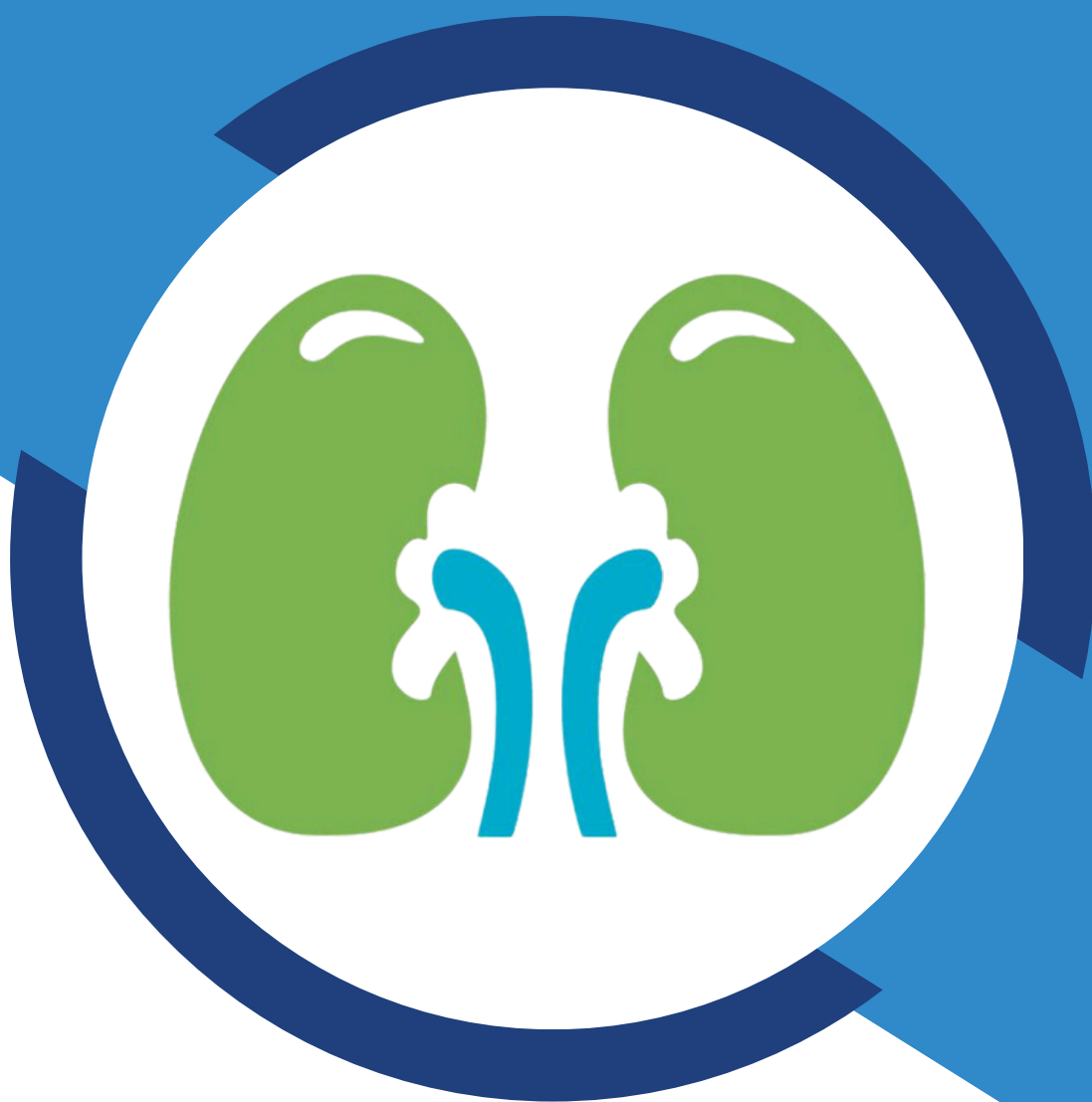


How-to Guide

Remote Consultations and Virtual Clinics



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UK Kidney Association

How-to Guide: Remote Consultations and Virtual Clinics

Project: Sustainable Kidney Care – Implementing Best Practice

Collaboration: UK Kidney Association and Centre for Sustainable Healthcare

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Although this guide has been developed by experts in sustainability and sustainable kidney care, local teams should use their discretion in its implementation according to local context and requirements



Purpose

To provide nephrologists and renal teams with a structured approach to implement and optimise remote consultations and virtual clinics. This guide supports improved patient access, reduced environmental impact, and operational efficiency in kidney care.

Introduction

Virtual consultations are increasingly vital in nephrology, especially for patients with chronic kidney disease (CKD), transplant follow-up, home dialysis programs, and routine monitoring. These models reduce in-person visits, promoting safety and convenience, while also supporting NHS environmental sustainability goals.

A systematic review by Purohit et al. (2021) estimates that each virtual consultation can save between **0.70 and 372 kg CO₂e**. At scale, this represents a significant opportunity to reduce the carbon footprint of renal services (Purohit et al., 2021).

Benefits in Nephrology

Environmental Benefits



- Reduces patient and staff travel-related emissions.
- Supports the NHS's Net Zero goals and green kidney care initiatives.

Clinical Benefits



- Enables proactive management of CKD, transplant, and home dialysis patients.
- Reduces infection risk, especially in immunosuppressed populations.
- Facilitates interdisciplinary team involvement.

Patient-Centred Benefits

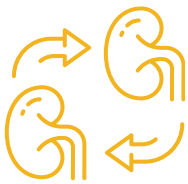


- Minimises travel burden, especially in remote or underserved regions.
- Reduces disruption to patients' daily lives, including work and caregiving.

Implementation in Renal Clinics

For successful implementation, **collaborate with your organisation's Sustainability Manager and Digital Transformation Leads**. This ensures alignment with local green plans, IT infrastructure, and workforce readiness. Resources to support this are available through the [NHS Digital Technology and Innovation Hub](#).

Clinical Pathways



Suitable for:

- Routine CKD and transplant follow-up
- Anaemia management
- PD and home HD check-ins

Less suitable for:

- New-onset oedema
- Urgent complications needing physical examination

Technical and Clinical Set-Up



- Use secure, NHS-approved digital platforms integrated with electronic records.
- Coordinate local or community phlebotomy to avoid unnecessary travel and ensure lab results are available before appointments.
- Train nephrologists, nurses, and allied professionals via the [Health Education England Digital Learning Hub](#) and your Trust's digital leads.

Patient Engagement



- Provide digital literacy support and equipment guidance.
- Offer telephone alternatives if video is inaccessible.
- Emphasise flexibility and reassure patients they can request face-to-face care.

Best Practices



- Incorporate virtual visits into a **hybrid model of care**.
- Treat and document virtual consultations as formal clinical encounters.
- Ensure consent and robust documentation.
- Conduct regular audits on safety, outcomes, and patient satisfaction.
- Involve sustainability and digital teams at every stage to embed practices at the kidney centre level.

Conclusion



Remote consultations are a cornerstone of modern nephrology, offering clear clinical, environmental, and patient-centred benefits. By working closely with sustainability managers and digital leads, kidney centres can implement scalable, efficient, and environmentally responsible models of care.

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