

1. Background

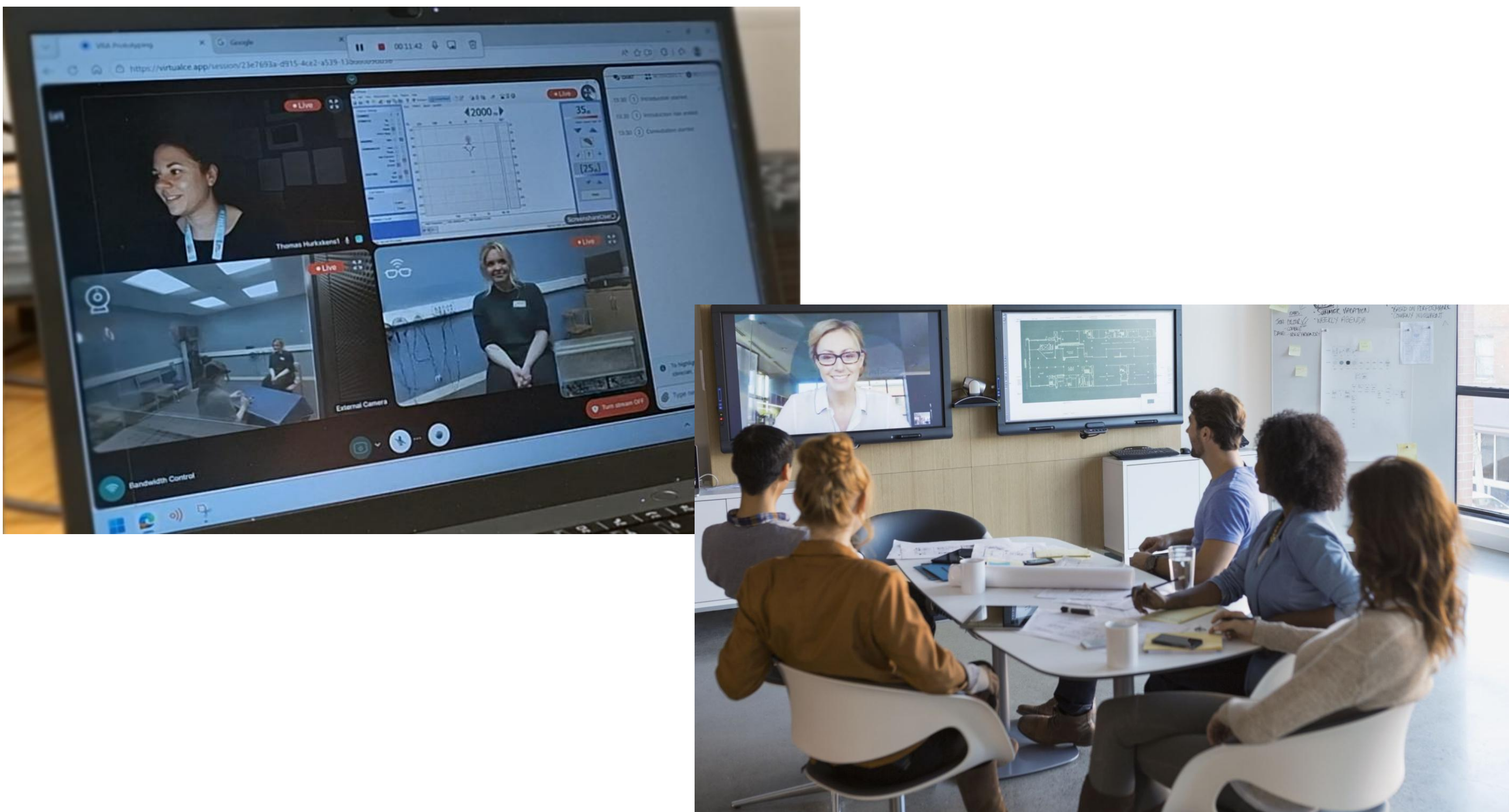
Clinical placement capacity is an ongoing challenge across healthcare education. In audiology, access to specialist clinics such as paediatric assessment, vestibular services, auditory implants and complex rehabilitation pathways can be limited by workforce pressures, clinic space and geographical constraints.

Virtual Clinical Experience (VCE) uses livestreaming technology to allow learners to observe authentic patient encounters remotely through a secure digital platform (Gomez et al. 2024; Grafton-Clarke et al. 2022). A pilot study using this technology was carried out at the University of Leeds, while piloted within diagnostic radiography education, the findings have important implications for audiology education, workforce development and continuing professional development (CPD).

2. Pilot Study Audiological Considerations

To explore whether findings from a livestreamed clinical education pilot can inform future approaches to:

- ☐ Undergraduate audiology education
- ☐ Postgraduate clinical training
- ☐ Continuing professional development
- ☐ Sharing specialist expertise across services



4. Pilot Study Key Findings

Students Reported

- ☐ Improved understanding of clinical reasoning
- ☐ Better appreciation of decision-making processes
- ☐ Enhanced understanding of patient-centred care
- ☐ Increased awareness of professional behaviours
- ☐ Opportunity to observe subtle communication strategies
- ☐ Valuable reflection and discussion opportunities

Patients Reported

- ☐ Technology was generally unobtrusive
- ☐ Positive experience of participation
- ☐ Satisfaction in contributing to healthcare education

Challenges

- ☐ Occasional audio difficulties
- ☐ Connectivity issues
- ☐ Not a replacement for hands-on clinical skills development



3. Pilot Study Methods

Pilot Study Design

- ☐ Qualitative pilot study conducted over two days
- ☐ Nine students, one clinical skills tutor and seven patients participated
- ☐ Students alternated between direct participation and remote observation

Data collection

- ☐ Student focus groups
- ☐ Semi-structured interviews
- ☐ Data analysed using inductive thematic analysis

Although conducted within a diagnostic radiography setting, findings were reviewed for their relevance to audiology education and clinical practice.

5. Potential Benefits for Audiology

- ☐ Increases access to specialist services
- ☐ Supports placement capacity challenges
- ☐ Promotes equitable learning opportunities
- ☐ Enhances exposure to authentic patient encounters
- ☐ Facilitates dissemination of best practice
- ☐ Livestreaming is not intended to replace clinical placements but may provide a valuable complement to traditional experiential learning.

6. Conclusions

Virtual Clinical Experience offers a promising approach to expanding educational capacity while preserving exposure to authentic clinical practice.

Although evaluated in a radiography setting, the findings suggest significant potential for audiology education, CPD and workforce development.

Future research is needed to evaluate effectiveness within audiology-specific clinical environments.

One specialist clinic could support learning for multiple audiology students and clinicians simultaneously, extending access to expertise without increasing pressure on clinical services