

# **Working effectively with Interpreters Guidance for Primary Care**

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## Purpose and scope

The NHS is committed to providing high quality, equitable and effective healthcare services that are responsive to the needs of all patients.

The purpose of this policy is to set out the principles which are needed to ensure a safe, high quality interpreting and translation services in primary care settings.

The overall aim of this policy is to enable good communication between patients and healthcare staff by giving guidance on:

- Different types of interpreters
- Arranging interpreting services
- Working effectively with interpreters

This ensures that service users with limited or no English language receive equitable access to services which is a requirement of the Equality Act 2010. It is important to use professionally trained interpreters to protect confidentiality and assure quality. Please do not use interpreters that are not working for suppliers who have a service level agreement with the CCG. This is to ensure effective clinical and fiscal governance.

Whilst appointments can be made through **friends and family members** they should **not** be used to ask re patients' personal details or for to interpret in a consultation (except in extreme circumstances).

## Service Provider

The chosen interpreting service provider for patients' whose first spoken language is not English is Language Empire. Interpreters can be booked online at <https://www.language-empire.net/site/index.html> .

Each GP practice has its own access code.

The Health Integration Team has a list of all practice online access codes, and is contactable on: **Health Integration Team, 01226 731686**

Additional support/advice should be referred to Language Empire Customer Services: on [bookings@empire-groupuk.com](mailto:bookings@empire-groupuk.com) or 0330 20 20 270.

## **Telephone interpreting**

### **Benefits of telephone interpreting**

- Conference calls available (3 way telephone conversation)
- Average connection time 30 seconds
- Approximately 400 languages available
- Available out of hours and 365 days a year
- Ad hoc/unexpected interpreting sessions
- Available for “difficult-to-access” languages
- For speedy resolution to a situation
- Avoids charges for cancelled appointment /DNAs
- Cost effective for an appointment less than 60 minutes
- Only charged for the number of minutes used (face to face is 1 hour minimum charge)

### **When to use telephone interpreting**

- For setting up a future interpreting session that is face to face that meets the exception criteria or to confirm an appointment
- When there is an immediate need to access interpretation
- Emergency and urgent situations
- To ask specific questions which do not require exploration
- If a service user requests this service (e.g. to ensure anonymity)
- Where there is no necessary requirement for the patient physically attend the practice

Telephone Interpreting can take place either by:

- Using the loud speaker facility on phones, or; connecting the three different parties via conference call facilities\*
  - The service provider i.e. GP staff
  - The interpreter
  - The service user

\*Hearing impaired and non-speaking may benefit from use of a Hearing Support Kit used near telephone.

### **Face to face interpreting**

The following situations (not exhaustive) are likely to require face to face services

- If you anticipate the appointment will last 60 minutes or more
- If you are able to sequence several patients with a common language need in a row (interpreters charge in blocks of an hour) Safeguarding issues (including case conferences)

- Bereavement and breaking bad news
- When the service user has a cognitive impairment
- Where the service user has speech or hearing difficulties
- Where the consultation involves therapeutic counselling

Book the interpreter as early as possible; preferably allow five days advance notice, Language Empire will endeavour to fulfil short notice and same day bookings.

Where possible it can be arranged for the same interpreter to attend follow-up sessions, inform Language Empire of the interpreter's name and number when re-booking.

The following information will be required when booking an interpreter.

- Your name and the name of your GP practice
- Your service user's correct name
- Language
- Dialect, if applicable
- Day and date of appointment
- Time and estimated duration of appointment
- Venue of appointment
- If you require male or female interpreter
- Subject of the interview (this allows the interpreter to familiarise relevant terminology) e.g. mental health, physiotherapy etc.

Once the booking has been processed you will receive an e-mail or a telephone call to confirm the arrangements.

A Job reference number will be given and this should be recorded in the relevant documentation and quoted when referring to the booking.

When you have a job number please complete requisition form on aggro quoting job reference number (this provides an audit trail).

On completion of the session sign the interpreter's timesheet to confirm the time spent interpreting and any travel/mileage costs incurred. The interpreter will keep this form and you will receive a copy.

## **Support for patients with a hearing impairment**

**British Sign Language (BSL)** interpreters should be used for all appointments where a patient uses BSL and requests an interpreter.

Friends and family members of patients should not be used as interpreters. The reasons for this are outlined on page 3. Similarly, members of staff should not be used as interpreters.

It is important to be aware that not all Deaf people use BSL. Do not assume that a patient requires a BSL interpreter. They may lip read or use a note taker. Staff should determine what kind of support a patient needs and act accordingly.

## **Text Relay**

TextRelay formerly known as Type Talk is used by hard of hearing people, Deaf people and people with speech difficulties. TextRelay is a national private and confidential service, available 24 hours a day and used by both public and private sector. Text relay service has no additional charges and therefore charged at the telecommunication provider's standard rate.

## **Making a call from a Text Phone (Sometimes called a Minicom)**

People who are hard of hearing, Deaf people and people with speech difficulties may have access to a Text Phone to contact family, friends and services. To start a call dial 18001, then the full number of the person you want to call, including the area code. For more guidance on how to use a text phone please use the TextRelay website: [www.textrelay.org/](http://www.textrelay.org/)

## **Potential Problems**

- The interpreter and the service user may not speak the same language and dialect. (For example, there are 2000 languages in Africa.).
- The interpreter might not be acceptable to the service user. For example:
  - Gender or age or know socially.
  - They may have differences in religion, political allegiance, ethnicity or cultural identity

If any such needs of the patient are known, inform the interpreting service prior to booking an interpreter. If problems arise during the interview, politely close the interview and inform the interpreting service of the issues, make a note in the patient's communication needs section of their records and reschedule the appointment with a different interpreter.

## **Written translations/ Information in writing**

Before considering written translations, consider the following:

- What type of translation is needed?
- Are there other sources of information, for example Easy Read documents, that could deliver the required message?
- Is the written document from a reliable original source?

Simple language translation is available through **google translate** however be mindful that medical terminology and grammar can mis-interpret meaning, but this solution should help for simple brief messages, waiting room notices, etc. (some GPs have found this useful in consultations).

## **Non-verbal Communication**

As well as ensuring that you are speaking slowly, clearly and using as little jargon as possible you should also think about non-verbal signs during the consultation.

### **Non-verbal signs**

Health workers and patients may misinterpret each other's intentions if the nonverbal signals they use are based on different conventions. Many of these conventions are culture-based and largely unconscious. It is important that assumptions and judgements are not made without checking them out first.

### **Some examples**

**Listening** – which is shown by eye contact, nodding or encouraging noises can be very easily misunderstood by second language speakers who may use silence, stillness and even looking away to demonstrate their attentiveness.

**Silence** – This usually conveys unease but may equally show that a second language speaker is taking the topic of conversation very seriously.

**Politeness** – words and gestures associated with politeness and good manners also vary from culture to culture. For example in many Asian languages the words please and thank you are not normally used except in very formal occasions. Gratitude and polite requests are expressed in other ways through forms of address, etc.

Understanding such differences can help avoid misunderstanding and resentment.

### Good practice Guide

Below are some useful tips on working with interpreters.

#### ***Do make a note in patient's records***

- Every time you use an interpreter
- Every time you use an interpreter to obtain patient consent
- If a patient refuses an interpreter
- If the patient insists on using family or friends to interpret
- If you are unable to get a trained interpreter either face to face or on the telephone

#### **Do not**

- Do not allow interpreters to wait in the same area as the patients
- Do not allow interpreters to escort patients
- Do not ask the interpreter to explain anything while you are not present
- Do not expect the interpreter to decide what should or should not be conveyed
- Do not expect the interpreter to be a cultural expert
- Do not expect the interpreter to offer support to the patient
- Do not expect the interpreter to be a Chaperone.
- Do not take it for granted that the interpreter or the patient has understood what you are saying because they nod their head or say 'yes'

#### **Before the interpreting session**

- Ensure that the gender of the interpreter is appropriate for the patient
- Clarify your role.
- Take a little time to brief the interpreter.
- Make sure the interpreter and the patient speak the same language (and dialect).
- Arrange the room so that the seating allows the most direct communication between yourself and the patient. With users of Sign Language, this will include that the lighting in the room is adequate to allow the patient to clearly see the interpreter without any glare from the light etc.
- Ensure that the interpreter understands the purpose and desired outcomes of the session.
- Describe the telephone equipment you are using (conference phone, dual handset, single phone) and where you are (room).
- Let the interpreter know who will be at the appointment (one person, family, and other members of staff).

## **During the interpreting session**

- Allow enough time for the session. Remember it is likely to take at least twice as long as an appointment with an English speaking patient
- Speak clearly and use short sentences and avoid using too much jargon
- Give the interpreter the chance to interpret
- Don't make assumptions. Check you have been understood
- Please check before assuming that the interpreter is adding to your meaning. It may be necessary for them to use more words to convey the sense of what you are saying in a different language
- If you would like the interpreter to interpret written information, read it out. Do not assume that the interpreter will automatically be a translator as well
- Treat the interpreter as a professional and be aware of the pressures on them
- Remember the interpreter is not an advocate or community worker
- The interpreter will interpret everything that is said, so say what you mean.
- Ask open questions during consultations e.g. 'How are you feeling?' rather than questions which require a simple 'yes' or 'no', to check level of understanding

## **Concluding the interpreting session**

- Allow the patient to clarify things
- Check with the patient that they have understood everything
- If a follow up appointment is necessary, make the appointment there and then. If you wish to use the same interpreter for that appointment, check the interpreter's availability, fill out a direct booking form and inform the interpreting service
- If the session has been particularly distressing offer support to the interpreter and inform the interpreting service manager
- Complete and sign the second part of the claim form to confirm that the assignment has taken place. Give it back to the interpreter.

## Top 10 Tips for Telephone Interpreting

Here are **10 Top Tips** for successful communication between you, your customer and the interpreter.

### Once connected:

1. Identify yourself and your purpose clearly and distinctly – speaking a little slower than usual.
2. Consider the interpreter as a human language link, facilitating communication between languages and cultures. Make sure you direct your questions to your client, as opposed to the interpreter.
3. Give the interpreter a brief outline of the situation.
4. Be prepared to hear accented English from some interpreters. Feel free to ask the interpreter to repeat a response.
5. Allow the interpreter a few moments to introduce themselves to your customer.
6. Let the interpreter know the information that you wish to deliver or obtain from the limited English speaker.
7. Understand that there may be some delay before the interpreter can elicit the information you need from the limited English speaker due to cultural differences, or a need on the part of the limited English speaker to establish trust.
8. Be aware of linguistic differences. Different languages often require a different number of words.
9. Expect occasional periods of what might appear as idle chatter between the interpreter and the limited English speaker as the communication bridge is built. Please be patient; the interpreter will get back to you but feel free to interrupt if you believe it appropriate.
10. Request input from the interpreter as to what extraneous information the limited English speaker is conveying.