

Interpretation, Translation and Transcription

Best Practice Guidelines

**WOLVERHAMPTON CITY COUNCIL – ADVANCING EQUALITY
AND VALUING DIVERSITY**

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Authored by: Arif Sain, Stuart Malpass and Delva Campbell

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Interpretation, Translation and Transcription Good practice guidelines

Definitions

Interpretation – Converts one spoken language into another (or sign language into a spoken language and vice versa), it can be face to face, by webcam or over the telephone.

Translation – Converts written text from one language to another.

Transcription - Converts speech or audio into text or converts written material into formats such as braille, large print or audio.

Principles

Wolverhampton City Council has a responsibility to meet the communication support needs of all of our service users and employees and to provide appropriate access to interpretation, translation and transcription services when needed. It is not the responsibility of the service user to book services, or to meet the costs of this. Making information accessible is vital to helping people feel that they understand what their Council is doing, and that it is relevant and effective.

The main reasons for providing interpretation, translation and transcription are to;

- ensure that those residents who are non-English speaking, have sensory impairments, learning difficulties or low levels of literacy are able to access essential services
- ensure everyone can take part in the democratic process, for example, registering to vote
- safeguard any non-English speaking person by giving them the opportunity to disclose any abuse they are suffering
- support local community groups working directly with new migrants or non-English speaking residents
- enable people to function effectively as citizens in society and be able to get along with others by ensuring that they understand the rules, for example, Council parking controls, rubbish collection
- ensure compliance with the legislation and to ensure that no one is substantially disadvantaged because of the Council's inability to communicate effectively with them.

The aims of these guidelines are to;

- ensure that language and other communication needs are met in order to facilitate equal access to our services

Interpretation, Translation and Transcription

- ensure a consistent approach to the provision of interpreting, translation and transcription across all Council services
- ensure the most effective and appropriate use of interpreting, translation and transcription services
- minimise risk around potential miscommunication with residents
- meet the Public-Sector Equality Duty
- ensure best value.

Wolverhampton City Council will not routinely interpret, translate or transcribe, but will make decisions on a case-by-case basis to ensure only those people who need the service receive it. We will use these services where it is essential to establish effective communication and where not to do so would disadvantage an individual or group and/or leave the Council open to legal challenge.

An assessment of an individual or group's circumstances needs to be made in order to determine whether they need information to be interpreted, translated or transcribed. For example, if English is not their first language, do they have sufficient English to effectively communicate? Where an individual's well-being, health or safety could be put at risk because information is not clearly understood by them or because we have not understood their needs, then the Council will need to provide translation, transcription or interpretation support.

The Council has a duty under the Children Act 2004 to take all reasonable steps to promote and safeguard the wellbeing of children and young people which include ensuring appropriate translation and interpretation services are provided. The Council has a similar duty to adults under the Community Care Act 1993.

Under the Equality Act 2010, the Council is required to make 'reasonable adjustments' to ensure that disabled people are not substantially disadvantaged. The Council must plan ahead and consider the communication needs of all disabled people from the outset of any project.

This guide covers:

- Printed information available to the public
- Letters and e-mails to members of the public
- Public meetings and events
- Public contact – at receptions, by telephone, at any meetings with service users in Council premises, in their homes or at any other location

These guidelines also apply when an employee of the Council requires the provision of interpretation, translation or transcription services.

Producing Written Communications

There are style layouts which enhance the legibility of printed text for those with visual impairments or those who lack confidence in reading. The Council's House Style Guide provides practical advice on designing, producing and planning accessible information. Design your documents to be as legible as possible, for example, using a minimum font size of 12, and preferably 14. The use of plain, straightforward English in any communication is vital in helping ensure the Council's message is clear and easily understood. This means explaining technical terms and avoiding jargon, to ensure our communications are accessible and reduce the need for translations. Consider using picture campaigns to communicate with service users where feasible. Pictograms are helpful and can easily be used to help the Council communicate and customers understand. By using visual imagery, materials can communicate key information to people with limited English skills.

Consider producing Easy Read versions of documents and using pictures, this should also reduce the need for translating. Easy Read is a way of making information easier to understand by using;

- short sentences
- easy words
- big writing
- pictures and photos
- sound in addition to text on websites

Easy Read was initially used for those with learning difficulties but has proved useful more widely for anyone facing language, learning or literacy barriers, including people who are not proficient in English.

You can find more information at;

<http://www.easy-read-online.co.uk/media/10612/comm%20basic%20guidelines%20for%20people%20who%20commission%20easy%20read%20info.pdf>

<https://inclusionnorth.org/uploads/attachment/600/care-act-easy-read-summary.pdf>

All Council publications should clearly display information explaining how to contact the relevant service if people need help or support to understand the document. Add the **alternative format prompt** in a minimum font size of 18 to all your documents.

When you are communicating by letter or email with an individual or group who have requested an alternative format, ensure you continue to use the alternative format in subsequent correspondence. This is particularly important

when an agreement or contract with the Council needs to be signed, they need to be fully aware of and understand the conditions of the contract.

Planning Meetings or Events

If you are planning a meeting or event that is open to the public you should aim to provide the best possible access in line with available resources. As well as ensuring physical access to the building and to rooms and facilities inside the building, consideration also needs to be given to meeting language and communication support requirements. Any meeting you are planning will need to be accessible to the people you are inviting. Whenever possible, ask them about any information/communication needs they have when you invite them to give you time to plan for and provide them.

When planning an open meeting or event, useful questions to consider are:

- Have you included information on communication needs and access provision on publicity, invitations and/or registration forms?
- Is there clear signage to the entrance and throughout the venue that is in large print (and with visual clues)?
- Is there a working induction loop in the main and any break out rooms?
- Is a portable loop system available?
- Are there signs (ear symbol with 'T') in all rooms where the induction loop is available?
- Is the PA system connected to the induction loop?
- Do any videos include subtitles and in-screen BSL interpretation?
- Do you need to arrange BSL interpreters? If yes, make sure they are registered with the National Registers of Communication Professionals working with Deaf and Deafblind People (NRCPD) or the Association of Sign Language Interpreters (ASLI)
- Is lighting flexible enough to allow for additional light for individual groups and can audio-visual equipment be used with some lighting still on so BSL interpreters can still be seen?
- Are there facilities available to accommodate a palantypist display (live spoken word to text translation)?
- Is there an audible alarm supported by a system suitable for Deaf or hard of hearing people if the building has to be evacuated in an emergency?
- Do you need to provide community language interpreters to enable wider participation?
- Are any printed materials available in large print? (Large print copies should generally be produced in 18-point Arial but, whenever possible, check for the preferred font size with the customer or service user.)
- Have you had any requests for information to be provided in Braille?
- Do you need to provide extra trained facilitators?
- Are there suitable, managed parking spaces?

Guidance on producing information in a range of formats including clear print, tape, Braille, videos, e-text, large print and signs is available on the RNIB website.

http://www.rnib.org.uk/professionals/accessibleinformation/Pages/accessible_information.aspx

Interpretation

Identifying the need for an interpreter

If a customer is unable to communicate in English, the staff member will need to identify the language they use. Staff should also identify if a British Sign Language interpreter is necessary and NRCPD registered. To check whether a person is NRCPD/ASLI registered, click on this hyperlink:

<https://www.nrcpd.org.uk/registration> then type in their name and press search. To filter your research, you can for example type in WV1, which will list registered NRCPD BSL interpreters in the West Midlands (i.e. Wolverhampton, Tipton, Walsall, Dudley, Wednesbury, Derby, etc.) For the ASLI hyperlink: <https://www.asli.org.uk/members/> click on the Advance Search, then select West Midlands as the region, then scroll down to “Registered with the NRCPD” and click on yes. This will list all ASLI BSL Interpreters in the Wildlands.

Use of multilingual staff

The Council does not expect multilingual staff to use these skills as they go about their daily work, except where staff are specifically recruited for their language skills. However, we realise that there are occasions where staff have offered to use their communication skills to assist customers, when approached directly.

Using professional Interpreters

Professional interpreters should always be used;

- when there might be lack of objectivity or a conflict of interest between the customer and a friend or relative
- when the information gained may potentially be used in legal proceedings to avoid any misunderstanding when the case reaches court
- to protect confidentiality
- when technical information is being provided
- when the subject matter is of a sensitive nature
- when dealing with possible or actual domestic violence, issues involving safeguarding children or adults, sexual violence, ‘honour’ based violence or where there are mental health assessments or concerns

Face to face interpreting should usually be used;

- for most formal procedures, such as assessments and form filling
- longer interviews
- for interviews/situations involving more than one client
- when the subject matter is complex, highly detailed, seen as high risk, or of a sensitive nature.

Telephone interpreting may be more appropriate for;

- unplanned and emergency situations
- instances where a face to face interpreter is unavailable
- resolving relatively simple issues
- contacting customers at home.

Use of informal interpreters

In some circumstances it may be appropriate to use informal interpreters such as a family or friend. However, problems may arise using family members, who may find it difficult to translate accurately and neutrally. The Council **will not** use children to interpret, other than in an emergency situation to gather basic information.

If the customer wishes a family member or friend to interpret, the officer may agree to this in certain circumstances:

- In a first interview, where the subject matter is straightforward, brief and uncontroversial.
- Where the customer's confidence or trust would be undermined by a refusal to accept the relative or friend as an interpreter. In this case, however, the officer may arrange for an independent interpreter to also be present.

A guide to working with interpreter is attached as an appendix to these guidelines

Translation

Translation and printing are both expensive. More than 70 languages are spoken in Wolverhampton, and no publicly funded organisation could afford to undertake the publication of translations without clear evidence of need. If a resident or group of residents needs information in a particular language in order to understand and exercise their rights fully, the Council will take reasonable steps to accommodate that need. This would not necessarily mean providing translated publications; it might mean providing interpreters, audio/CD translations, or translations of individual relevant documents. It might be that by adding the document to the Council website, the Google translate function would be sufficient. (This has limited uses but is constantly being developed – the Council is not responsible for it.)

There is no legal reason for all materials to be translated. The Equality Act simply says that all parts of the community should have access to services, and although that might involve translation, it does not always have to. The Human Rights Act only requires translation if someone is arrested or charged with a criminal offence.

Communicating by letter or email with an individual or group

When you are communicating by letter or email with an individual or group who have requested translation, ensure you continue to translate in subsequent correspondence. This is particularly important when an agreement or contract with the Council needs to be signed, they need to be fully aware of and understand the conditions of the contract.

Checklist for deciding when to translate a printed document

1. Is it essential to translate this document? Consider:

- Who is the target audience and is there any evidence that they would otherwise be disadvantaged?
- Does it include people for whom English is not their first language?
- Which languages do they speak?
- Could the information be more effectively shared by visiting community organisations or using community advocates?
- Would it be adequate for the document to be included on the website and Google translate used?
- Is there a statutory duty for providing written information in a translated format?

2. If you need to translate, does it need to be the whole document?

- Are you confident that people across communities have the literacy skills to understand the document?

- Would it be better to translate an easy-read version of the document?
- Would it be better to wait until you receive requests for translations rather than proactively translate? If so, can you provide translations quickly and will you need to extend any deadlines for responses?
- Could you produce a summary for translation?

3. How accurate is the data you have on the languages needed for translation?

- Do you know the language needs of your service users?
- Are they different to the city's language profile?
- Are the translation needs of your service users different to the interpreting needs?

4. What is the cost/benefit analysis for this translation?

- What will happen to this material once translated?
- What is the potential impact to the Council of not translating documents?
- Will there be a change in resident satisfaction ratings?
- Are there any anticipated risks to the Council such as reputation, quality of service delivery by not translating documents?
- Would there be an additional burden on public services?

5. Have you explored whether other local agencies might already have these materials in translated form?

- Have you networked with other local authorities to find out if they have already translated this material?
- Are other partners such as the Police or the Clinical Commissioning Group (NHS) translating similar documents?
- Is there any national best practice?

6. Will providing translations help to build integration and cohesion?

- Opinion is divided as to whether translation is a barrier to integration, or whether it is a stepping stone to better language skills, but when new communities arrive they will always need initial information in appropriate languages.

Procedure for booking and accessing interpreters, translation or transcription services

Wolverhampton City Council has a contractor for face to face and telephone interpreting, translation and transcription services. The contractor meets the National Accreditation Authority for Translation and Interpretation standards.

The full process for staff placing orders can be found here:

<http://portal/city/agressoinformation/Pages/procurement.aspx>

Text Relay

Text Relay formerly known as Type Talk is used by Deaf and hard of hearing people and those with speech impairments to communicate by telephone. Text Relay allows communication to or from a text phone and is a national, confidential service, available 24 hours a day. Relay assistants provide a text-to-voice and voice-to-text relay service. This is charged at the telecommunication provider's standard rate. You can use Text Relay with a textphone, telephone or mobile.

For more guidance on how to use this service see www.textrelay.org/

Speech to text reporters (palantypists)

Speech to text is a process of computer-aided transcription in which a trained reporter takes down the spoken word on a special palantype keyboard. This is simultaneously translated into English and displayed on a television or monitor, or for meetings or conferences, on a large screen.

Appendix - Working with Interpreters

Preparation

- When booking the interpreter make absolutely sure that they speak the same language as the service user. For BSL interpreters make sure they are NRCPD/ASLI. Our contractor DA Languages Ltd only provides BSL interpreters that are NRCPD registered.
- Allow more time than you would for an English-speaking client, everything needs to be said twice and extra time is needed for checking back, but remember interpreting is very tiring so you may have to arrange two meetings or build in a break.
- Provide the interpreter with the opportunity to examine and translate any documents that may need translation during the session (letters, forms etc.).
- Arrange for the interpreter to arrive before the service user.

Briefing the interpreter

- Outline the purpose of the meeting, the issues to be discussed, any technical language and any potential uncomfortable situations that may arise.
- If appropriate, tell the interpreter of any particular needs of the service user, e.g. learning difficulties, mental health problems.
- Ask the interpreter to tell you whenever you need to slow down, pause or repeat a sentence.
- If you have an agenda or meeting plan provide the interpreter with a copy.
- Establish seating arrangements, it is usually recommended that the interpreter sit next to, but slightly behind you, this allows the service user to see you both clearly and allows you to speak directly to the service user.
- Negotiate the timing of any breaks.

During the interview

- Take time to welcome the service user and put them at their ease, allow the interpreter to introduce you both, clarifying your roles. This will include the facts that the interpreter will translate everything said, that the interpreter has a neutral role and is not there to act as an advocate and that they will always maintain confidentiality.
- Speak and look at the service user, not the interpreter, to begin with this can feel strange when the interpreter is speaking.
- Speak directly, e.g. 'How are you today?' not 'Ask him how he is today.'
- When speaking to the interpreter, always assume that the service user may understand what you are saying.
- Give plenty of non-verbal reassurance.
- Simplify your English;

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Speak clearly but do not raise your voice.

Try not to speak too quickly.

Avoid acronyms, idioms, slang and metaphors.

Simplify the form of each sentence.

Avoid long and complex sentences.

Use the simple forms of active verbs.

Try to speak in a clear logical sequence.

Stick to one topic at a time.

Avoid jargon or technical terminology where possible.

- Take extra care when explaining procedures, regulations and reasons for asking for certain types of information.
- Always let the interpreter finish before starting the next point.
- Summarise and check what you have understood.
- Always check back that the service user has understood any important points and explore any inconsistencies you may have noticed.
- Allow the service user to ask supplementary questions or seek clarification.
- At the end of the meeting get the interpreter to write down any important points clearly and simply for the service user to take away.
- Keep fuller case notes. This avoids subjecting the service user to repeated, unnecessary or complicated questioning.

After the interview

- Review the meeting with the interpreter.
- Ensure your notes are completed.
- If there needs to be a follow up meeting, try to ensure you use the same interpreter. (Unless the service user would prefer a different interpreter.)

Extra points when using a Sign Language Interpreter

- Check whether the service user uses British Sign Language (BSL), Sign Supported English (SSE) or another form of sign language before booking the interpreter.
- Allow the service user and the interpreter to arrange the best seating positions.
- Ensure the room is well lit.
- The service user may also be relying on lip reading so make sure that they can see your lips and don't try to overemphasise words.
- The deaf person can only look at one thing at a time so if you are using any visual aids allow extra time before starting to speak again to allow them to access both the interpreter and the visual aid.