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## Good practice in using language support

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### When do I need to use professional language support?

**The Commission for Equality and Human Rights (2009) advises if a health and social care provider fails to take appropriate steps to communicate effectively with a service user, this may amount to unlawful discrimination in some circumstances.**

Praxis Interpreting + provides first person word for word interpreting and translation service. This is needed when a service provider:

- Is taking a decision with a service user
- Needs to inform a service user about process or procedures
- Needs to raise issues related to a service users' health, safety or well being
- Is undertaking a formal assessment of a service users' needs
- Is undertaking any legal proceedings
- Is relaying information regarding children's educational achievement and well being.
- Is applying for benefits or services with the service user or
- When a client requests an interpreter.

### Children as interpreters

Most Public services have a policy that prohibits the use of a child to interpret for their parent. It is recognised children may be used for simple communication, but not for any of the circumstances above.

### Booking an interpreter

When booking an interpreter, give clear information about the proposed assignments. You will be asked to provide the following information:

- The language you need (remember, name of country of origin is not always indicative of the respective language, there are no such languages "Indian" or "Swiss", please ask for advice if unsure).
- The date, time and duration of the assignment.
- The contact name and designation of the staff member working with the interpreter and who to contact in case of delay.
- The assignment address and whereabouts you wish to meet them (e.g. reception, meeting room, etc.).
- The name of the service user, so that the interpreter can identify if the service user is known to them and could compromise their impartiality.

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- What the case is about, so that the interpreter can find out about any terminology or procedures in advance, if there is time.
- The number of people who will need interpreting at the meeting. For large meetings we may advise using two or more interpreters.

## Late bookings

Praxis Interpreting + does not charge you for late booking. However, our interpreters work on freelance terms and booking within 48 hours before your session is essential if we are to ensure assigning an interpreter for your needs.

## Cancellations

- A booked assignment can be cancelled at any time.
- Please note that, for cancellation made with less than 48 hours (working days) notice, the full charge of the booking will be charged.
- If you cancel a booking with more than 48 hours (working days) notice, no charge will apply.

## Working with interpreters

### During the interview:

**Interpreters should not be left alone with the client at any time.**

The following rules should also be considered:

- Choose a quiet space if you can. Interpreters have to be able to hear and be heard.
- Arrange the seating. You and the service user facing each other (probably on either side of a small table), and the interpreter sits between you. This means that you can talk directly to the member of your service user and, if possible, forget the interpreter is there. At the same time the interpreter is not physically perceived as being on one 'side' or the other.
- Address the service user directly, for example "What is your name?" rather than "can you ask her what her name is?". Our interpreters are trained to interpret in first person and this will make the interview go more smoothly and enhance the feeling of talking to each other directly.
- Introduce yourself by name and ask for the name of the service user, if you do not know it.
- Explain what your role is. Be aware that there are often no direct equivalents of some of your services in other countries and the interpreter may need to contextualise when interpreting.
- Introduce the interpreter.
- The interpreter will explain his/her role and that she/he will adhere to the following principles:
  - **Confidentiality**
  - **Impartiality**
  - **Word for word accuracy**
  - **Non-advocacy**
- The interpreter will also explain that she or he may make notes to aid recall, and that these will be destroyed after the interview.

- Behave as you would if you shared the same language – as much as possible recognising and respecting individual backgrounds.
- You are responsible for the meeting.
- Do not speak for more than a few sentences at one time.
- Explain words and procedures. Make sure the client understands what you are saying.
- Ask the service user directly if you are not sure of relevant, culture-based facts, attitudes or perceptions.
- You cannot always rely on being able to read non-verbal signals accurately across a culture. For instance, in some cultures it is discourteous to make direct eye contact – this should not be interpreted as being shifty. If you are not sure what something means, ask the service user directly. Remember, a smile means the same in any language.
- Summarise what has been decided and clarify the next practical steps to be taken – when, why and how.

### At the end of the interview

- Sign the interpreter’s timesheet. This is a form requiring your signature once the assignment has been completed by the interpreter. This is to confirm the number of hours that the interpreter has interpreted.
- If you require to make arrangements for any follow up appointments with the same interpreter, please complete the Booking form and contact our administrator via email **inewterpreting@praxis.org.uk** , Tel. **0207 749 7607/ 7610**, Mob. **079 3152 5962**, Fax **0207 729 0134**. We will do our best to ensure the same interpreter is assigned for you.
- Be aware of any contentious or distressing issues – debrief the interpreter, allowing a few minutes to discuss how the interview went, as you would with any other colleague. Do not, however, expect the interpreter to offer an opinion about the client or their circumstances.
- Complete and return the Client Interpreting Monitoring Form and email to PI+ **interpreting@praxis.org.uk** . Please state if the interpreter arrived late, or any other points you wish to raise regarding the assignment.

### Points to remember when using interpreters

- Remember that you, not the interpreter, are the ‘chairperson’ who controls the three-way conversation.
- The interpreter is an equal member of the team and is there to facilitate communication between staff and clients.
- If possible, brief the interpreter before you start your session with your service user.
- Please remind the interpreter of the need to respect confidentiality.
- Remember, the interpreter may have to develop a relationship of trust and cooperation with both sides.
- Be aware of your own verbal and non-verbal messages both towards the client and the interpreter.
- The interpreter will only interpret communications and not act as an advocate.
- Remember to talk directly to and address the client and not the interpreter.
- The interpreter should not be asked to take on duties other than interpreting.

- The interpreter is not responsible for the client's behaviour or complaints, or for the decisions of the professionals.
- The interpreter's cultural knowledge is very important. As part of his/her duty, the interpreter can advise professionals on cultural matters, which will enable them to give a better service to the client.
- Please make sure the interpreter's time is not wasted. They are paid for all the time they spend, including waiting time. Remember, time is money.

## Practical things to do

- Make sure you know exactly which language and dialect your client speaks. You should try to avoid making assumptions based on where your client is from.
- If your client is with you, our language ID card may be useful. Together with English, this list of 30 languages accounts for approximately 90% of the world's population.
- Check that the interpreter and the client speak the same language or dialect.
- You can request the interpreter to be of the same sex as the client, unless agreed otherwise.
- Remember to allow at least twice as much time as you would for an 'English-only' conversation.
- Ensure a quiet room is available for the interview.
- Use simple language.
- Actively listen to the interpreter and involve the client.
- Observe non-verbal messages between the parties.
- Encourage open discussion.
- At the end of the interview check that the client has understood everything and is aware of the plan.
- If necessary have a post-interview discussion with the interpreter while the client is still present

## Interviewing with an interpreter

- The interpreter should have time before the interview to talk with client and professional together in order to establish some sort of relationship.
- Interviews through an interpreter take longer than normal, possibly twice as long.
- Always allow sufficient time for this.
- Remember that even when translating word for word, other languages are not always as concise as English. Certain concepts do not exist in other languages.
- Do not tell the interpreter anything you do not want translated in front of the client.
- For the purpose of confidentiality, any accompanying relatives or friends should not be present at interview, unless requested by the client.
- The seating arrangement should allow for direct eye contact between the three participants.
- Welcome the client. Address them by name and confirm which name the client prefers to be addressed by.
- Encourage the interpreter and client to seek clarification if he/she does not understand something that has been said.

- Sometimes the interpreter may need to let the client talk on if the client is upset or emotional. Frequent interruptions may inhibit the client from revealing his/her feelings.
- Trust the interpreter's judgment and allow him/her to stop the client when he/she feels it is appropriate.
- Summarise what has been agreed.

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## Related links

**The National Occupational Standards (NOS) in Interpreting set out what individuals need to do, and the knowledge and skills they need, to be competent professional interpreters.**

[http://www.cilt.org.uk/home/standards\\_and\\_qualifications/uk\\_occupational\\_standards/interpreting.aspx](http://www.cilt.org.uk/home/standards_and_qualifications/uk_occupational_standards/interpreting.aspx)

**The Scottish Translation, Interpreting and Communication Forum has produced a comprehensive set of good practice guidelines.**

**The Welsh Language Board has published advice on commissioning translation.**

**The Royal College of Nursing Congress urges the Government to invest in skilled interpreters within the National Health Service.**

**Multilingual Matters is an international independent publishing house, with lists in the areas of bilingualism, second/foreign language learning, sociolinguistics, translation, interpreting and books for parents.**

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