



Coventry City
Council

How to work effectively with Interpreters

Practice Guidance



How to work effectively with Interpreters?

Responsibility for ensuring effective communication with the non-English speaking service user rests with you. If language is a barrier then a professional Interpreter must be used in order for the service user to fully understand what is being said to them and the message you are trying to get across.

Working with Interpreters can be challenging but a vitally important aspect of dealing with service users who have limited or no English.

In this guide you will find very useful information on working effectively with an Interpreter.

Booking an Interpreter

Please see the attached leaflet on the process of booking Interpreters.

Role of the Interpreter

The interpreter's primary role is to facilitate communication between you and the service user or a group of people. The Interpreter will be impartial, will not give advice, will interpret everything that is said during the session, will not add or omit any information and will clarify any linguistic or cultural ambiguities.

Meet with interpreter

Before you start please check the Interpreters ID badge. It is always a good idea to meet with the interpreter before the session to briefly discuss what you will be talking about and explain the purpose of the meeting.

Please be mindful that you will need extra time for appointments when working with Interpreters.

Please remember this is your meeting and you control it!

At the start of the session

Introduce everyone in the room, including the Interpreter.

After that allow the Interpreter to introduce him/herself and his/her role as an Interpreter and the fact that they are impartial and will treat all matters as confidential and abide by their code of practice.

The Interpreter must check with the service user that they understand each other well.

Inform everyone present in the room that they are bound by the General Data Protection Regulations and everything discussed is confidential.

During the session

Speak to the service user directly, preferably in the first person and maintain eye contact with the service user NOT with the Interpreter.

Use short, concise sentences and pause frequently to allow the Interpreter time to interpret.

Please be mindful that a short sentence in English usually requires paraphrasing in the other language and therefore may seem longer.

Check that the service user has understood everything while the Interpreter is there.

Do not ask the Interpreter his/her opinion. The Interpreter's job is to interpret and aid communication, not to render personal opinions. If you need the Interpreter's opinion for cultural, linguistic or other reasons then it is okay.

Debrief the Interpreter and clarify any questions you have after the appointment.

If a follow up visit is required please ring the CITU office to book it. Follow up appointments cannot be booked directly with the Interpreter. If you need the same Interpreter for continuity please mention the Interpreters name at the time of booking.

Before the Interpreter leaves, please sign their duty record sheet, enter the end time and write down any comments, if you wish.

Remember

Avoid the use of unofficial interpreters, e.g. Family members, friends, children or others as this can lead to a conflict of interest. They are unlikely to have been trained as interpreters and their involvement could undermine objectivity and confidentiality.