

Oldham Language Shop

A Guide to Good Practice – Working with Interpreters

ROLE OF OFFICER (ORGANISER)

Things to Remember

1. For an interview or any interpretation do not use family members or friends but get a properly trained interpreter through Oldham Language Shop. Make sure you are familiar with the role of the interpreter based around the "code of ethics". Always challenge the interpreter if you think they are not following the "code of ethics". Do not involve the interpreter in the role of decision making unless it is to explain a cultural problem or influence of a language difference.

Preparing for the Interview

1. Check out (if you can) if the interviewee would like an interpreter to make things run more smoothly.
2. Think about the sort of interpreter that is needed:
 - a) What *language/dialect* does the interviewee need? (If not sure check which country or region does the interviewee originate from.)
 - b) Does the *age* matter?
 - c) Is a different *gender* going to create problems? (check it with the interviewee)
 - d) How important is *knowledge* and previous *experience* in your particular field of work.
3. Once you have established the sort of interpreter you require and you have managed to arrange for the interview to take place. It is advisable to:
 - a) Think carefully about the venue having got advice from the interviewee and later on the interpreter. Things to consider may include:
 - i) Size of the room, accessibility, i.e. for disabled people to get in and around the building and have accessible toilet.
 - ii) Whether background noises can be shut out partly for people with a hearing disability and also so that everyone can concentrate.
 - iii) Lighting so that people with hearing disability can lip-read and/or see BSL interpreter.
 - iv) Furniture should be moveable to help people with a disability and also allow the interpreter to set up the room for best results.
 - b) Make sure of any information needed for use in the interview or as a background reading is given out in plenty of time in the appropriate language format, for example in Urdu or Braille. This is particularly important for people using BSL interpreter as they need to watch and concentrate on them throughout the meeting and not keep looking down at lots of pieces of paper.
 - c) If food is being provided then ensure that it is appropriate, for example halal, kosher or/and diabetics, vegetarian.

During the Interview

1. It is important for you to see that the interview runs smoothly. You should check that:
 - a) The layout of the room is comfortable and does not hinder the interpretation; for example, if someone is using oral language that there is no background noise, or if someone is using BSL that the interpreter is sitting opposite them. Always check with the interpreter and the interviewee what is best for them.
 - b) The interpreter has explained everybody's role including their own.
 - c) You have explained the structure and the procedure of the interview.
 - d) The interviewee knows that the interpreter is only there to interpret and that s/he knows how decisions are made.
 - e) You have allowed time for the interpreter to convey information.
2. Ask questions to check the interviewee has understood, for example if the interpreter seems to say a lot less than you or vice versa.
3. Make notes of the performance of the interpreter to build feedback.
4. Ask for feedback, complaints, good points from the interviewee and the interpreter.
5. Do not interrupt unless necessary. Do not let more than one person speak at one time so that the interpreter can keep up.
6. At the end of the interview give the client the opportunity to ask for clarification of anything s/he has not understood and to say how s/he feels about the interview. Summarise what has been decided. Ask if there is anything else s/he wants to know or ask. Plan another interview if necessary.

After the Interview

1. Discuss the interview with the interpreter. You may find that:
 - S/he wants to tell you things that s/he couldn't say during the interview;
 - You want to know more about the impressions of the client, or to clarify certain points;
 - There are cultural questions to be considered;
 - You need to discuss any problems or misunderstandings between you;
 - You wish to discuss how the interview went. Did you feel excluded? Did anything go wrong? Does the interpreter have any suggestions about how best to conduct an interview with an interpreter?
2. Such discussions will enable you to work more effectively together and raise the standard of your work. You can evolve strategies to overcome blocks in communication and better understand your different roles in this complex situation.
4. If the interview went well, arrange for the same interpreter to be present at the next interview with that client. Working with the same interpreter allows a close working relationship to develop.