



Guidelines For Interpreters

1. Introduction

- 1.1 Interpreters transfer concepts expressed in one language into a second language. The interpreter is responsible for the accuracy and facility of the communicative exchange between people who do not share a common language.
- 1.2 Interpreters transfer the spoken word. Translators transfer the written word. Some people can and do carry out both functions, but it has to be recognised that they are different tasks and require different skills.
- 1.3 Interpreters require an adequate knowledge of the two languages in question, objective understanding of cultures and conventions involved and reliable, appropriate transfer skills. When working in a specific area of a service, interpreters require a sound understanding of the context – the structures, processes and procedure, and of the formal and informal terminology which may be used. For instance interpreters, when in court must be familiar with court procedures and understand that there is a significant difference between 'robbery', 'burglary' and 'theft'. When working in the health service, the interpreters must be very precise about prescriptions and how medication is to be taken. In all areas the interpreters must be able to reproduce accurately the different sorts of communicative approaches and fragilities by which thoughts and feelings are expressed, because these are part of the information which needs to be exchanged.

2. A Guide to Good Practice

- 2.1 Consideration before an assignment is undertaken :
 - 2.1.1 When accepting work the interpreter must ensure that s/he has the necessary information to enable her/him to decide immediately whether s/he can accept the assignment and carry it out competently.
 - 2.1.2 The interpreter must be reasonably satisfied that:
 - (a) S/he will be available on the date and at the time and place required and that there are suitable travel arrangements in place.
 - (b) There is a correct match between the language which the non-English speaking client/patient speaks and understands best and the interpreter's own working language.
 - (c) S/he is competent to carry out the assignment and has time for necessary preparation to familiarise her/him self with specific terminology and procedure.

- (d) S/he is, and is seen to be, in a position of neutrality. Interpreters should not accept assignments involving relatives or people with whom they are closely involved at work or at home or in situations where the interpreter's impartiality might be challenged without prior consent of both the officer and non-English speaking clients.

3 Briefing Clients

3.1 Whenever possible the interpreter shall inform all officers and non-English speaking clients of the interpreting process, if necessary, including the following factors:

- (a) That all that is said will be interpreted. Whatever is not to be interpreted must not be said.
- (b) The interpreter may intervene for only four reasons:
 - (i) To ask for clarification if s/he does not fully understand the concept s/he is being asked to interpret;
 - (ii) To point out that a client may not have understood the message although the interpretation was correct ;
 - (iii) To alert the parties to a possible missed cultural inference, i.e. information which has not been stated but knowledge of which might have been assumed ;
 - (iv) To ask a client to modify his or her delivery to accommodate the interpreting process, e.g. if the client is speaking too quickly, too softly or for too long.

(N.B. The interpreter shall inform both the officer and non-English speaking clients of the reason for the intervention.

N.B. The interpreter shall interpret subsequent explanations and not give them her/him self.)

- (c) The officer and the client shall address each other directly using direct speech (if convenient).
- (d) The interpreter shall be impartial and respect confidentiality.
- (e) Arrangements will be made to have appropriate seating, environment and suitable surroundings for an interview to take place.
- (f) Enough time shall be allocated for each assignment to allow for interpretation.

4 The Interpreting Assignment

- 4.1 If for any reason the interpreter cannot carry out an assignment which s/he has accepted, Oldham Language Shop should be informed immediately to make alternative arrangements.
- 4.2 The interpreter shall arrive in good time for the assignment.
- 4.3 The interpreter must abide by the Code of Ethics or be liable to the disciplinary procedures of the authority.

- 4.4 The interpreter shall dress and behave in a professional manner.
- 4.5 If the interpreter's impartiality is irretrievably jeopardised during an assignment s/he should withdraw.

5 CHECKLIST

- ☐ Check the language/dialect match.
- ☐ Understand and be familiar with any specific terminology.
- ☐ Be available on the date and time at the place required.
- ☐ Do not delegate the assignment to someone else without consent.
- ☐ Dress and present in a professional manner.
- ☐ Find a suitable place for interview, if the one available is not.
- ☐ Introduce and make a request for suitable seating.
- ☐ Brief the clients on the procedures of an interview.
- ☐ Interpret truly, faithfully and completely.
- ☐ Remain impartial and respect confidentiality.
- ☐ Withdraw if impartiality questioned.
- ☐ Intervene only if you have to according to the rules.
- ☐ Inform the clients of the reason for the intervention.
- ☐ After the completion of the interview, make sure all parties involved are satisfied.
- ☐ Keep a brief record of the assignment, report back if difficulties have occurred.