

Working with an interpreter

Toolkit

Improving communication for people who use mental health and learning disability services in Scotland

Introduction

What this document is about

We have produced 'Working with an interpreter' as a toolkit for people who need to use, or who provide, interpreting or translation services in a mental health setting, such as a meeting with a psychiatric nurse in hospital or in someone's home.

We've called it a toolkit because it gives practical advice and guidance for:

- People who use mental health and learning disability services;
- Mental health practitioners who provide mental health and learning disability services; and interviewers;
- Interpreters who are asked to work in a mental health setting.

How to use this toolkit

If you're a mental health practitioner or interviewer:

Please read Section 1 (yellow tab). It comprises:

- Detailed guidance and information for every stage of working with an interpreter;
- A checklist designed to help you achieve the most out of working with an interpreter, and to guide you if things go wrong.

If you use mental health and learning disability services:

Please read Section 2 (blue tab). It lets you know:

- How to use a professional interpreter;
- Your rights before, during and after an interview with an interpreter;
- What to do if you want to complain.

If you're an interpreter:

Please read Section 3 (green tab). It highlights:

- Ethical issues that you need to consider;
- Practical advice and guidance for interpreting during an interview.

Each section can be used separately.

You're welcome to photocopy checklists and to localise the toolkit, for example by adding examples of local policies and procedures for interpreting and translating.

We can provide Section 2 in other languages and formats, such as audio format. To find out more, just call us or visit our website: www.mwscot.org.uk.

Why we produced this toolkit

The toolkit follows our work on mental health issues affecting people from black and minority ethnic backgrounds. This work was reported in our 'Respect for Diversity' report in 2005. (Copies are available from our website: www.mwcscot.org.uk.)

It highlighted that there were significant communication difficulties between practitioners and people who use mental health services.

We originally planned it as a toolkit for our own practitioners, to help us communicate with people from black and minority ethnic backgrounds who use mental health services, and with others such as deaf patients who use sign language.

We also recognised that the toolkit filled a gap in knowledge: other organisations have produced guidelines on interpreting and translating, but these do not address the specific issues that people with mental health problems face. Furthermore, to the best of our knowledge, guidelines have not been produced for the service user.

As the toolkit developed, we thought it could be usefully shared with other people who provide mental health services, to:

- Promote mental health practices that are legal and ethical;
- Improve knowledge of mental health issues among interpreters and give them practical advice about working in mental health settings;
- Promote effective working relationships between interpreters and mental health professionals; and
- Increase awareness among practitioners of some of the broader cultural issues of translating and interpreting in mental health settings.

For the people who use mental health services we hope this leads to:

- Better access to appropriate care and treatment;
- A greater role for them in the care and treatment they receive;
- Better diagnosis and more effective care and treatment; and
- Greater protection of individual mental health and human rights.

When should an interpreter be used?

Service users have a legal right to be informed about:

- Why they have been detained;
- When their consent is needed; and
- Their rights.

The Mental Health (Care and Treatment) (Scotland) Act 2003 provides the legal background. In particular:

- The Act makes it clear that mental health practitioners must make sure that people who use mental health services can take part, as fully as possible, in how they are assessed, the care being planned for them and any review of their care;
- It states that service users should have the information they need to have their say in any decisions being made about them. The information should be in a form that they're most likely to understand. If a patient needs help to communicate, through translation services or signing for example, these need to be considered;
- It highlights the need to provide maximum benefit to the patient, and to respect diversity. The latter is about practitioners taking account of the service users abilities, backgrounds and characteristics such as their cultural and linguistic backgrounds;
- And it states that carers must be fully involved and kept fully informed when service users needs are assessed. This may mean services arranging interpreter and translation services for their work with carers.

It would be good practice for care plans to take into account how to improve communication for service users.

There are both legal and moral obligations to provide interpreting services to service users whose first language is not English in a mental health setting. Service users may be able to speak English fluently, but when in stress or distress they may prefer to speak in their first language. And the onset of dementia may diminish someone's ability to speak English as a second language. Giving someone the opportunity to speak in their first language may help their recovery.

Acknowledgements



This toolkit was developed in partnership with the Centre for Translation & Interpreting Studies in Scotland (CTISS), in the Department of Languages & Intercultural Studies (LINCS), based in the School of Management & Languages, Heriot-Watt University.

We would like to acknowledge **Isabelle A. Perez Maitrise, PG Cert (Geneva) Head of Department (LINCS)** and **Christine W.L. Wilson MA, MSc, Lecturer (LINCS)** for their contribution to the development and completion of this project.

Section 1

A guide to working with an interpreter

This section of the toolkit has 3 parts:

Part 1

- Is designed to help you get the best from an interview, with guidance on what to do:
 - a) When you prepare to book an interpreter
 - b) When you brief the interpreter
 - c) At the start of the interview
 - d) During the interview
 - e) After the interview

Part 2

- Is a checklist of the guidance in Part 1

Part 3

- Lists the types of training and qualifications available to interpreters in Scotland, and organisations that can give you advice about interpreting

Part 1

Getting the best from your interview

a) When you prepare to book an interpreter

Are you familiar with the roles of interpreters, translators and communication support workers?

Translators and interpreters: translating and interpreting are both about transferring meaning between languages. Translators often work with the written word and interpreters often work with the spoken word. They might also work between written or spoken languages and sign language.

The important point is that not all translators have the skills needed to work as interpreters, and not all interpreters have the skills needed for translation work.

Communication support workers: these are people with specialist skills, such as lip-speaking for deaf, hard of hearing or deafened people, and hands-on signing for deafblind people. Interpreters and translators may not have these skills so you may need a communication support worker as well.

Which service or services do you need?

If the interviewee knows or speaks more than one language:

People may have been bilingual, but due to their age or condition may now find it hard to express themselves in English if this is not their first language. So you should consider using an interpreter to help with the interview.

If the interviewee uses sign language:

Sign language is not a version of a spoken language. For example, British Sign Language (BSL) has a different grammar and syntax from that found in English.

For someone who relies on BSL to communicate, English is like a second language. So writing down information and giving it to them to read may be an ineffective way to communicate because their English reading skills may be very limited.

If the interviewee has poor sign and written language skills:

You need to find someone the interviewee can communicate with and find a way of communicating with them. For example, you might need to work through a BSL interpreter who would interpret your words into BSL to the interviewee's acquaintance, who would communicate with the interviewee.

You might also need to consider getting specialist equipment such as induction loops.

If a family member, carer, friend or member of staff insists on interpreting:

You should try to persuade them that it's in the interviewee's best interest to use a professional interpreter. This is because:

- It may be hard for them to remain impartial because they are a relative or a fellow professional. An interpreter will have no such conflict;
- They may not have the same level of expertise in both languages, nor have all the skills that professional interpreters are trained in;
- Their presence may have an impact on the interviewee's right to privacy and confidentiality; this may also deter the interviewee from expressing him or herself fully and freely.

If the interviewee still insists their friend or relation should be present, you may take the view that they're an acceptable source of support. However, we recommend that you book a professional interpreter to ensure that you are able to fulfil your professional role.

Where can you find an interpreter?

Part 3 of this section of the toolkit has details of organisations that provide advice and information about interpreters.

How can you establish if an interpreter has the right qualifications?

When you book the interpreter, ask the following types of questions:

- Is the interpreter a member of a registered or professional organisation?
- Is the interpreter bound by a code of practice or code of ethics?
- Does the interpreter have formal training and qualifications?
- Does the interpreter have experience of working in the public sector, including mental health services?
- Has the interpreter been screened by a reputable agency?
- Has the interpreter been checked through Disclosure Scotland (this is especially important if children and young adolescents are involved)?

If you can't find an interpreter who satisfies all or many of the criteria listed in the questions above, you may – depending on the situation – be able to find someone who has experience and a common-sense approach, and with whom you can work.

But it's best to use an experienced and appropriately qualified interpreter wherever possible.

How can you establish if an interpreter has the skills and experience you need for the interview?

Give the Translation, Interpreting and Communication Support (TICS) agency enough information for them to help you choose an interpreter.

For example, an interviewee may have specific communication needs, but there may be no interpreters who can fully match these. An interpreter with strong language skills, but no experience of mental health work, may be the best interpreter. In other situations it may be more important for the interpreter to be familiar with mental health work.

Sometimes you may have to consider using one interpreter to relay information to another. For example:

- A deaf person uses a sign system other than BSL to communicate;
- Interpreter 1 interprets the deaf person's signs into BSL;
- Interpreter 2 interprets BSL into English to you.

But remember that the interviewee may feel intimidated by having extra people present.

How do you identify the language, dialect or type of communication support most appropriate to the interviewee?

The mental health service provider may already know this, or the family or carer may know. If not, ask the TICS provider or agency. They may be able to check the appropriate language and dialect.

Be aware of the many pitfalls:

- Many organisations use a printed list that has a brief instruction written in as many as 100 languages. But this isn't always a satisfactory way of identifying a language;
- Don't assume the person's nationality or country of origin means they speak the language of that country. Remember too that a native of mainland France may not fully understand French spoken by someone from an African country, especially cultural references;
- Don't assume that someone who speaks a language also writes it;
- Some spoken languages may have more than one written version or script;
- There may be no written version of a spoken language, just as there is no written equivalent of BSL;

- People with hearing difficulties (deafened, hard of hearing), or Deaf people who received a mainly oral education, may be able to express themselves in English (or another language), but may need the language to be made visible, for example:
 - Lip-speaking (which may or not be accompanied by some signing); or
 - Speech-to-text (typing what is said so it appears on a computer screen).
- Some older people may prefer to communicate through finger spelling English. Not all interpreters can cope with their speed of finger spelling;
- Some deaf people may use specialised communication systems such as Sign Supported English (SSE), Makaton (particularly if they have learning difficulties) or Paget-Gorman (particularly if from Aberdeen);
- Some deafblind people may use BSL, but need it to be produced in a restricted visual frame. Others may use manual alphabet (a tactile version of finger spelling) or hands-on-signing to receive and give information in BSL.

What can you do to avoid clashes caused by cultural, religious, political, gender or age differences?

Take advice from the TICS provider or agency. You need to consider factors such as ethnic background, membership of a political group, religion, caste, age and gender.

Misjudging these could harm the success of the interview. For example:

- Some people prefer to talk through an interpreter of the same sex, but sometimes men prefer to talk through a female interpreter;
- Some people may refuse to talk through someone who's much younger, or whom they think belongs to a lower caste than they do;
- An interpreter might miss or misunderstand cultural references;
- The interpreter may be torn between their own beliefs or politics and the interviewee's; consequently the interpreter may be concentrating more on trying to remain impartial than on processing information;
- The interviewee may not co-operate fully or respond openly if they feel uncomfortable, embarrassed or intimidated by expressing themselves through the interpreter;
- The interviewee may feel very antagonistic towards an interpreter and just refuse to communicate.

But remember that your choice of interpreter may be limited because there's a shortage of interpreters.

Is there any chance that the interpreter and interviewee might know each other?

It's important to have the option to change interpreters before the date of the interview.

- Check for conflicts of interest such as family links and social or business relationships.
- Check for any personal involvement the interpreter and interviewee might have had.
Did they know each other in the past?

Carrying out these checks might be hard if you can't disclose the interviewee's name in advance to the agency or service provider. One strategy may be to wait until an interpreter has been assigned to the job before releasing the name or relevant information.

And if you have the chance to speak to the interpreter at this stage, ask if they have any connection with the interviewee.

Are any issues likely to arise in the interview that could be a problem for an interpreter?

Let the TICS provider or agency know of any sensitive issues – such as terminating a pregnancy, rape and child abuse – that might arise in the interview.

This could help the TICS avoid sending someone who would not be able to work impartially, for example because they have experienced similar situations.

Is there any other reason the interpreter may not be suitable for this interview?

For example, find out if the interpreter could have any connection with the matter to be discussed in the interview.

Has the person being interviewed had previous interviews through an interpreter?

If so – and everyone was happy with the interpreter – booking the same interpreter again will help to provide continuity as the interpreter will already be familiar with some of the background.

But you also need to consider that the interviewee might prefer an interpreter who is not from his or her local community. Or there may be issues the interviewee would rather talk about in front of a different interpreter, such as the interpreting service he or she had before.

Have you allowed enough time for the interpreter to prepare?

Give the interpreter background information and enough time to prepare.

If you need the interpreter to translate written material during the interview you should also allow preparation time for this, too. But if it's not appropriate to give the interpreter the written information in advance, allow them some time just before the interview starts.

Have you allowed enough time to brief the interpreter?

You must leave time for this: briefing the interpreter can make the difference between a successful and unsuccessful interview.

You may quickly get through a briefing with trained and experienced interpreters. But less experienced interpreters, such as those who know more rare languages, may not be familiar with the appropriate procedures and may not be able to anticipate potential problems.

Have you allowed enough time for the interview?

You need to allow twice as long for an interview that involves an interpreter. You also need to set aside extra time to brief and debrief the interpreter.

Have you let the agency know how much time you'll need?

Agree how long the booking is likely to be for and if it's likely to be extended.

Have you told the agency, or interpreter, the practical arrangements?

They'll need to know:

- When and where to meet you;
- How to get there;
- Where to park if they're coming by car;
- Who to report to when they arrive;
- Details of someone they can contact if there's a problem.

If the interview is in the interviewee's home, have you made it clear you must meet the interpreter somewhere else to brief them?

This will avoid the interpreter being left alone with the interviewee, which is not advisable because the interviewee may:

- Start establishing a relationship with the interpreter rather than you;
- Disclose information to the interpreter, which they later fail to tell you about.

b) When you brief the interpreter

Establish the interpreter's skills for this type of interview

- What's the interpreter's general level of experience?
- Is the interpreter bound by a code of ethics or code of conduct?
- Does the interpreter have experience of working in mental health situations and settings?

Establish the rules that the interpreter must follow

This is particularly important if the interpreter is unskilled and unregistered. Remind the interpreter that, in line with codes of ethics for interpreting, they must:

- Respect confidentiality;
- Be impartial;
- Interpret everything that's said;
- Interpret accurately and completely, without omitting or adding anything and without affecting the interviewee's tone and style;
- Pay attention to the interviewee's manner of speaking, for example, gestures, speed of delivery, unusual pauses or changes in volume or incoherence.

And remind the interpreter that they must tell you if they cannot do any of these.

Warn the interpreter if the interview is likely to include language or content that are biologically or sexually specific, offensive or disturbing

This may help to ensure the interpreter remains impartial. It also allows you to emphasise that the interpreter's translation needs to retain the tone and mood of what is said. And it will give the interpreter an opportunity to tell you if they'll have any difficulties doing this.

Ask about any relationships or cultural issues that the interpreter must disclose

- Have the interpreter and interviewee ever met?
- Do they have family links or social or business relationships?
- Does the interpreter know of any language issues that might affect the interview?
- Do they know of any cultural issues that might affect the interview?
- Are there any subject areas they don't feel competent to translate?

If any issues emerge it doesn't necessarily mean you have to shorten the interview or call it off. You have to make an informed decision. If you decide to continue, you may need to adapt the interview according to what the interpreter has told you.

Brief the interpreter about the interview

- Explain your role and that of anyone else who will be present.
- Explain the purpose and goals of the interview.
- If it's anything other than a straightforward interview (for example, a test or visit), talk the interpreter through the procedure to try to identify anything that might cause a problem.

Establish whether you need the interpreter to provide a consecutive or simultaneous interpretation

Trained spoken language interpreters may work consecutively or simultaneously, or switch between both during an interview. Be clear whether:

- The interpreter may move into simultaneous mode;
- It might be disturbing for the interviewee to hear the two voices at once; or
- There may be advantages to simultaneous interpreting, such as quicker access to what is being said.

BSL-to-English interpreters are likely to work simultaneously. This will mean almost constant eye contact between interpreter and interviewee, as the interviewee must watch for meaning, and rarely between the interviewee and you.

Decide with the interpreter what to do if language or cultural problems arise during the interview. For example, what will they do if:

- They don't understand words or concepts used by you or the interviewee?
- There is no equivalent of an expression that one person uses in the other's language?
- You say or ask something that would be insensitive or unacceptable in the interviewee's culture?
- The interpreter feels the interviewee doesn't fully understand the situation?
- The interpreter feels that cultural issues are impeding communication?

Let the interpreter know you don't mind them interrupting during the interview if it enables them to do their job. For example, if:

- They can't hear well, or see clearly if sign language is being used;
- They need a speaker to repeat something they missed;
- A speaker is speaking too quickly or quietly or speaking for too long without pausing to allow interpretation.

It might be appropriate to discuss different strategies to be used in the interview for interrupting you and interrupting the interviewee. But you must discuss whether an interruption by the interpreter could cause a problem at any point.

Discuss whether it's acceptable for the interpreter to take notes during the interview

Trained interpreters working consecutively will often take notes as a short-term memory-aid. This may not be well accepted by all interviewees, especially someone suffering from paranoia. Discuss whether:

- They should take notes;
- The notes should be destroyed in front of all participants, to show that confidentiality is being observed;
- Destroying notes could have a negative impact.

Discuss practical issues. Be clear about:

- What to do if the interview room is too noisy or has too many things going on; this includes anything that might hinder sign language translation;
- Seating arrangements and lighting, especially if sign language is involved;
- Whether a personal alarm may need to be used, and how to use it;
- How the initial stages of the interview and introductions will be handled;
- How long the interview is expected to last and when the interpreter will need a break – and how he or she should indicate this.

Brief the interpreter about the interviewee

- Does the interpreter have the relevant background to the interview and the interviewee?
- Is there anything unusual about the interviewee's speech or language, perhaps as a result of their illness or medication that you need to warn the interpreter about?
- Is there any possibility that the interviewee may become violent? If so, make sure the interpreter knows what to do.

Ask the interpreter about the interviewee, for example:

- How to pronounce the interviewee's name?
- Could any cultural factors have an impact on the interview, such as eye contact, or the attitude of certain ethnic groups towards mental illness?

But remember that interpreters aren't cultural experts, so you should consider the information they give you as their views according to their experience. For example, they may speak Urdu but have lived in the UK for many years or been brought up in the UK. Or the interpreter may be from France, but the interviewee is from Belgium or an African country.

Establish how the interpreter will check the interviewee's language, dialect or signs

If the interpreter needs to speak to the interviewee before the interview, explain that it's preferable for you to be present.

Interpreters may need to establish the style of language the interviewee uses, or familiarise themselves with certain aspects. For example, deaf people use initials to refer to proper nouns such as family names and it can be useful to find out this information before the interview formally begins to avoid frequent interruptions during the interview.

Establish what to do if the interpreter runs into problems during the interview, for example if:

- The interpreter finds he or she can't fully understand the interviewee's language or cultural issues;
- The interviewee treats the interpreter as other than an interpreter, for example as an ally, a therapist or an enemy.

Remind the interpreter how to use "I" and "you" in the interview

For example, if you or the interviewee say "I think that..." the interpreter should translate this as "I think that...", not as "He thinks that..." or "She thinks that..."

Give the interpreter an opportunity to read, and ask questions about, written material

This includes written information the interpreter will have to translate during the interview.

Documents may be pertinent to the interview but it may not have been appropriate to send them to the interpreter in advance. If so, allow the interpreter some time with the documents before the meeting starts.

c) At the start of the interview

Make sure everyone feels comfortable

- Introduce everyone and explain the role of each person present.
- Stress that the interpreter is impartial and will treat everything said as confidential.
- Arrange seating so that it suits you and the interviewee, while making sure the interpreter can hear and be heard, or see and be seen.

Speaking through the interpreter, check that the interviewee can understand the interpreter

If they don't, you will need to know what to do, for example, postpone the meeting until an appropriate interpreter can be found.

If they do, but with difficulty – for example, their dialects don't match – everyone may still be willing to carry on, making the necessary adjustments. If this happens you must be very patient and encouraging if the interpreter or interviewee need to ask for clarification or repeat questions and answers.

Establish the ground rules

Speak through the interpreter to the interviewee to make sure everyone understands how interpreting works.

Reassure the interviewee that the interpreter is impartial and will simply interpret everything said, without adding or omitting anything.

Explain that “everything” means not just what you and the interviewee says, but everything the interpreter hears. This could be a remark by someone else that is present, or an overheard telephone conversation, or someone putting his or her head round the door to pass on some information.

Explain that “everything” also means any asides the interviewee makes. So the interviewee shouldn't say anything they don't want the interpreter to translate.

Make sure the interviewee understands that the interpreter cannot provide advice or explain things

Explain that if they don't understand something they should ask you, through the interpreter, to explain it.

Explain how the interpreter will use “I” and “you” in the interview

For example, if the interviewee says “I think that...” the interpreter will translate this as “I think that...”, not as “He thinks that...” or “She thinks that...”

Explain that the interpreter might ask the interviewee to speak more slowly, loudly or to pause

Explain that this is to enable the interpreter to translate effectively. Ask the interviewee if this is all right.

If you've agreed that the interpreter can take notes, explain this to the interviewee.

d) During the interview

What if the interviewee refuses to have this interpreter, or any interpreter, present?

If the interviewee doesn't want an interpreter at all, you may still want to use one to ensure that you're providing the service required.

You could also suggest that you require an interpreter so that you can fully understand what the interviewee has to say.

Try to find out why the interviewee doesn't want the interpreter: is it due to a cultural, ethnic, gender, age, religious or other mis-match between the interpreter and interviewee?

What if the dynamics of the interview become confused?

If the confusion is because of the way people are working through the interpreter – or the way the interpreter is working – stop the interview and re-state the ground rules.

Do's and don'ts:

Do remember that it's your interview: you're responsible for it, not the interpreter

But a trained interpreter may interrupt to let you know if the correct procedures for working with an interpreter aren't being followed.

Do be respectful

This applies to the relationship you have with the interviewee and the interpreter. Be careful to treat the interpreter as a fellow professional: don't ask them to do anything other than interpret, for example to get something from another room.

Do say "I" and "you"

For example, say "What's your name?" not "Ask her what her name is."

Do maintain eye contact with the interviewee, if culturally appropriate

Do remember that certain expressions may not translate easily or may have no meaning outside a western or European context

Phrases difficult to translate include:

- Idiomatic expressions such as "every cloud has a silver lining";
- Expressions that relate to the sound of a language such as "if wishes were fishes";
- Phrases that are part of your culture, such as "dinner time", "Little Jack Horner" or "grey power";
- Titles of organisations or institutions specific to Scotland;

- Some abstract ideas, which may not work in other languages; for example, concepts such as “bullying” or “creative thinking or “old age”” may not exist or may mean something different in the target language.

Do speak slowly, clearly and naturally and use everyday English:

- Avoid jargon, ambiguous and obscure words and phrases;
- Explain specialist terms and procedures that may not exist in the interviewee’s culture; for example Short Term Detention Order;
- Avoid very local expressions, for example “tattie” for “potato”;
- Make clear who or what pronouns (such as “he”, “she”, “it” and “they”) refer to.

Do adjust your language to take account of any learning difficulties or communication needs that the interviewee has

Do listen and speak sensitively across cultures

Certain topics are still considered completely taboo within other cultures, for example “divorce”, “suicide” or discussion of “the existence of god”.

Do listen carefully to the interpreter and interviewee

Do summarise the discussion periodically throughout the interview to ensure that you and the interviewee share the same understanding of what is being said

Do use short sentences and express information in meaningful chunks

This is important in consecutive interpreting, especially if the interpreter is unable to take notes.

Do pause frequently to allow the interpreter to catch up when he or she is interpreting simultaneously

Do be aware of cross-cultural, non-verbal communication

Remember that different cultures have different rules about eye contact. In western culture, avoiding eye contact can imply shiftiness or lack of honesty, whereas in other cultures avoiding eye contact indicates respect.

Do heed visual information such as body language, facial expression and gestures

But be careful not to misinterpret these. Allow for the time lapse due to the translation process. And remember that visual signals may have a different meaning in the other culture. For example, head-nodding may mean “no” or that the interviewee is only indicating “I’m paying attention and listening”, rather than “I agree”.

Do respond appropriately if the interpreter intervenes, for example, to ask you to repeat something

But make sure the interpreter translates what's happening, to keep the interviewee informed.

Do ask the interviewee, not the interpreter, to explain a cultural reference that you don't understand

Do be aware of the pressure on the interpreter; be patient and understanding in what can be very demanding situations

Do allow the interpreter breaks if appropriate

If the pace of the interview is fast and the interview is complex and demanding, the interpreter may need a few minutes' break after just 20 minutes, especially in a simultaneous interpreting.

If the pace is slower, straightforward, and there are pauses to allow the interviewer to take notes, allow the interpreter around 10-15 minutes' break every 45-50 minutes.

Note: that interpreters working in sign language need regular breaks under health and safety procedures aimed at preventing repetitive strain injury.

Don't EVER leave the interpreter alone and unaccompanied with the interviewee

Don't make asides: remember the interpreter has to translate everything

Don't interrupt

Allow everyone to finish what he or she is saying. And, in consecutive interpreting, don't put pressure on the interpreter to start interpreting before the interviewee has finished speaking.

Don't, if there are several interviewers, allow everyone to speak at the same time

Don't ask the interpreter for advice about anything other than language issues

At the end of the interview:

Do allow the interpreter time to sight-translate any written material, especially anything the interviewee has to sign

Do formally end the interview

Don't just stop, leaving the interviewee wondering what's going on. This also applies if you have to change interpreters because the one assigned isn't suitable.

Do ask the interviewee if he or she has understood everything or has any questions

Do ask the interviewee how he or she would like any feedback sent to them

If information is to be fed back to the interviewee later, it could be appropriate to check whether they'd prefer information in writing, recorded on an audio cassette or CD, or on video (for example, a signed version).

Do make sure the interpreter properly disposes of papers and notes

If the interpreter has been given any papers to help them prepare for the interview, make sure he or she leaves these with the organisation that provided them.

If the interpreter has taken notes during the interview, ask him or her either to destroy them in front of the interviewee or, at very least, hand them over to you in front of the interviewee.

e) After the interview

A short discussion with the interpreter after the interview can be very valuable, especially if there was not a very good language match between the interpreter and interviewee, if the interviewee had specific communication needs or was presenting particular problems.

Allow the interpreter to express their feelings

Because they must remain impartial, interpreters may have been unable, during the interview, to express any feelings, even by facial expression. And fear of breaching confidentiality may prevent them from expressing their feelings after the job.

So, it's important to give them the opportunity to express any reactions to or feelings about the interview: it may be his or her only chance to do so.

Debrief the interpreter

Allow the interpreter the opportunity to indicate any point he or she may not have been happy with in his or her own interpreting, but which didn't seem worth stopping the interview for. This could be a minor error, an omission, something that just doesn't translate into the other language, or a point that the interpreter didn't fully understand.

The interpreter may have noticed other features typical of the interviewee's culture – such as facial expressions and body language – that aren't easy to replicate in English. He or she may also have noticed what seemed an unusual use of language.

But remember that the interpreter's code of ethics does not allow interpreters to express their own opinion or comment on the interviewee as a person. They can only comment on their own interpreting work and to pass on information about language use and paralinguistic features – that is, features characteristic of how an individual speaks.

Learn lessons and improve quality

Ask the interpreter to comment on:

- Anything that would have helped them work more successfully, such as advance information about the interviewee;
- Any problems or dilemmas that arose during the interview;
- Ways that you could work more effectively through an interpreter.

Is follow-up work needed?

If a report or other feedback is to be shared with the interviewee in writing or in another format, you may wish to ask the interpreter's advice about getting it translated. Alternatively, this might be referred to their agency or another agency.

But if the interpreter is also a trained translator, it could be appropriate for them to do the work because they're already familiar with the context.

Part 2

Interviewer's checklists

We've produced these checklists to summarise the guidance in Part 1 of this section. It follows the same steps, from preparing to book an interpreter to debriefing the interpreter after the interview. At the end of this, you will find a list of questions to help you quickly identify some of the reasons why working with an interpreter may not have been successful.

When you're getting ready to book an interpreter

Are you clear about (p 6-9):

- The roles of interpreters, translators and communication support workers?
- Which service or services you need?
- What to do if someone other than an interpreter insists on interpreting?
- Where to find an interpreter?
- The interpreter's qualifications?
- The interpreter's skills and experience?
- The language or communication support you need?
- How to avoid clashes (cultural, religious, political, gender, age and so on)?

Have you identified (p 10):

- Any possibility that the interpreter and interviewee might know each other?
- Any issues likely to arise in the interview that could be a problem for an interpreter?
- Any other reason the interpreter may not be suitable for this interview?
- Whether the interviewee has had previous interviews through an interpreter?

Have you allowed enough time (p 10-11):

- For the interpreter to prepare?
- To brief the interpreter?
- For the interview?

Have you told the agency (or interpreter, or both) (p 11-12):

- How much time you'll need?
- The practical arrangements?
- That you need to brief the interpreter somewhere other than the interviewee's home?

When you brief the interpreter

Have you (p 12-15):

- Established the interpreter's skills for this type of interview?
- Established the rules the interpreter must follow?
- Warned the interpreter of any explicit language or content that they might find offensive or disturbing?
- Asked about any relationships or cultural issues that the interpreter must disclose?
- Briefed the interpreter about the interview (roles, goals and procedures)?
- Established whether you need consecutive or simultaneous interpreting?
- Agreed what the interpreter should do about any language or cultural problems that arise in the interview?
- Explained when it's all right for the interpreter to interrupt you?
- Agreed whether it's all right for the interpreter to take notes during the interview?
- Discussed practical issues (noise, seating arrangements, personal alarm, length of the interview, breaks)?
- Briefed the interpreter about the interviewee's:
 - Background?
 - Speech or language characteristics (if relevant)?
 - Likely behaviour (if relevant)?
- Asked the interpreter about:
 - How to pronounce the interviewee's name?
 - Any cultural pitfalls you should know about?
- Agreed how the interpreter will check the interviewee's language, dialect or signs?
- Established what to do if the interpreter has problems with the interviewee's language or attitude during the interview?
- Reminded the interpreter how to use "I" and "you" in the interview?
- Given the interpreter an opportunity to read and ask questions about written material?

When the interview begins

Remember to (p 15-16):

- Make sure everyone feels comfortable:
 - Make introductions and explain roles
 - Reassure the interviewee about impartiality and confidentiality
 - Arrange the seating to suit everyone's tasks
- Check that the interviewee can understand the interpreter
- Establish the ground rules
- Speak, through the interpreter, to the interviewee to make sure everyone understands how interpreting works

Explain to the interviewee (p 17-18):

- That the interpreter will interpret everything that's said, without adding or omitting anything
- That the interpreter cannot provide advice or explain things
- How the interpreter will use "I" and "you"
- That the interpreter might ask the interviewee to speak more slowly, loudly or to pause – and ask if this is OK
- (If the interpreter is going to take notes) why they're doing it and what will happen to the notes

During the interview

Do you know what to do if (p 15 and 17):

- The interviewee refuses to have this interpreter, or any interpreter, present?
- The dynamics of the interview become confused?

Do's and don'ts – remember:

- It's your interview: you're responsible for it, not the interpreter
- Be respectful (of the interviewee and the interpreter)
- Say "I" and "you"
- Maintain eye contact with the interviewee, if culturally appropriate
- Some phrases and expressions may not translate easily or at all
- Speak slowly, clearly and naturally and in everyday English

- (If necessary) adjust your language to take account of learning difficulties or communication needs
- Listen and speak sensitively across cultures
- Listen carefully to the interpreter and interviewee
- Stop every now and again to summarise the discussion
- (In consecutive interpreting) use short sentences and express information in chunks
- (In simultaneous interpreting) pause frequently to allow the interpreter to catch up when they're interpreting simultaneously
- Be aware of cross-cultural, non-verbal communication, such as eye contact
- Heed visual information (body language, facial expression and gestures)
- Respond appropriately if the interpreter intervenes
- Ask the interviewee, not the interpreter, to explain something you don't understand
- Be aware of the pressure on the interpreter
- Allow the interpreter breaks if appropriate
- **Don't** leave the interpreter alone and unaccompanied with the interviewee
- **Don't** make asides
- **Don't** interrupt
- (If there are several interviewers) **don't** allow everyone to speak at the same time
- **Don't** ask the interpreter for advice about anything other than language issues

At the end of the interview remember to:

- Allow the interpreter time to sight-translate written material
- Formally end the interview
- Ask the interviewee if they've understood everything or have any questions
- Ask the interviewee how they'd like any feedback sent to them
- Make sure the interpreter properly disposes of papers and notes

After the interview

You need to:

- Set aside a short time to talk over the interview with the interpreter
- Allow the interpreter to express their feelings

- Debrief the interpreter
- Learn any lessons
- Make arrangements for any follow-up work

If the interview isn't going well

Use these questions as pointers to the cause of poor communication

- Is the interpreter fluent or competent enough in English?
- Is the interpreter familiar with the interviewee's language, dialect or style of language use?
- Is the interviewee's language not coherent or does it have other complications?
- Is the interpreter acceptable to the interviewee (cultural, religious, political, gender, age, background and so on)?
- Is there a communication barrier between the interviewee and the interpreter (for example is the language cold or patronising)?
- Is your relationship with the interpreter appropriate; for example, does the interpreter feel able to interrupt you to indicate problems, ask for clarification or ask you to repeat something?
- Is the interpreter putting forward his or her own views and opinions?
- Does the interpreter understand his or her role and boundaries?
- Does the interpreter understand the purpose of the interview?
- Are you using everyday English?
- Are you communicating in a style adapted to the interviewee's needs?
- Is the interpreter ashamed of or embarrassed by the interviewee or what's being discussed?
- Are you asking too much of the interpreter?
- Are you allowing the interpreter enough time?
- Are several people speaking at the same time?
- Are you talking to the interpreter rather than the interviewee?
- Have you managed to establish a rapport with the interviewee through the interpreter?
- Does the interpreter need a break or the opportunity to flag something up?

Part 3

Training, qualifications and where to get advice

Training and qualifications (in Scotland)

These are the types of qualifications or training an interpreter may have:

BSL/English interpreters

- Certificate in Interpreting Studies & Skills (BSL/English): Heriot-Watt University

Spoken language: public service interpreting

- Diploma in Public Service Interpreting: Institute of Linguists
- Certificate in Public Service Interpreting: Heriot-Watt University
- Diploma/MSc in Translation & Public Service Interpreting: Heriot-Watt University

Spoken language: translation/interpreting (general)

- Diploma in Translation: Institute of Linguists
- MA in Applied Languages & Translation: Heriot-Watt University
- MA in Languages, Interpreting & Translation: Heriot-Watt University
- Diploma/MSc in Translation & Technology: Heriot-Watt University
- Diploma/MSc in Translation & Conference Interpreting: Heriot-Watt University

National Vocational Qualifications are available in translating (level 5) and interpreting (levels 4 & 5). These are currently being reviewed and there are, to date, no examination centres in Scotland.

Organisations in Scotland that can provide advice

- **Scottish Association of Sign Language Interpreters (SASLI)**: the professional body that holds the Scottish register of BSL/English interpreters and registers approved agencies

SASLI

Donaldson's College

West Coates

Edinburgh EH12 5JJ

Tel/Text: 0131 347 5601

Fax: 0131 347 5628

Email: mail@sasli.org.uk

Website: www.sasli.org.uk

- **Scottish Council on Deafness (SCOD):** co-ordinates all organisations catering for people with hearing disabilities, their families, carers and professionals who work with them

SCoD Offices
Central Chambers Suite 62
93 Hope Street
Glasgow G2 6LD
Tel: 0141 248 2474
Text: 0141 248 2477
Fax: 0141 248 2479
Email: www.scod.org.uk/contact_us.htm
Website: www.scod.org.uk

- **Deafblind Scotland:** provides advice and services for deafblind people

Deafblind Scotland
21 Alexandra Avenue
Lenzie
Glasgow G66 5BG
Tel/Text: 0141 777 6111
Fax: 0141 775 3311
Email: info@deafblindscotland.org.uk
Website: www.deafblindscotland.org.uk

- **Institute of Translating & Interpreting (ITI)** has a directory of translators and interpreters, including those located in Scotland

Fortuna House
South Fifth Street
Milton Keynes MK9 2EU
Tel: 01908 325250
Fax: 01908 325259
Email: info@iti.org.uk
Website: www.iti.org.uk

- **Centre for Translation & Interpreting in Scotland (CTISS)** is a source of information on all aspects of translation and interpreting

CTISS
Henry Prais Building
Heriot-Watt University
Riccarton, Edinburgh EH14 4AS
Tel: 0131 451 4201
Fax: 0131 451 3079

Email: office@sml.hw.ac.uk

Website: www.sml.hw.ac.uk/ctiss/

Council interpreting services:

Some local councils have their own interpreting services, including Aberdeen, Dundee, Glasgow, Edinburgh, Falkirk and Fife; or are considering establishing their own service. Contact your local council.

Other interpreting services:

There are a number of commercial agencies offering their services throughout Scotland, and which can be located through the telephone directory or on-line.

Telephone interpreting organisations:

The following organisations provide telephone interpreting. They are all based outside Scotland, although some Scottish agencies may provide some telephone interpreting support. NB: these contact details are for information; this does not mean the authors are specifically recommending these organisations.

- **Language Line**

Website: www.languageline.co.uk

Tel: 0800 169 2879 / 020 7520 1430

Email: enquiries@languageline.co.uk

- **National Interpreting Service**

Website: www.nisuk.co.uk

Tel: 0800 169 5996

Email: enquiries@nisuk.co.uk

- **EITI**

Website: www.eiti.com

Tel: 01430 435301 / 0800 731 7878

Email: eiti@eiti.com

- **Prestige Network**

Website: www.prestigenetwork.com

Scottish Office: Tel: 0131 272 2723 / 0870 770 6901

Email: Scotland@prestigenetwork.com

Section 2

What you should know when you need an interpreter

Translating this document:

This guidance is for people who use mental health and learning disability services, but whose first language is not English. It is also for people who prefer to use a language other than English.

It can be used when you need to communicate with mental health professionals through an interpreter.

It should be available to you – in writing or as a recording – translated into the appropriate language.

Alternatively, the guidance it contains could be translated:

- By telephone by an interpreter in advance of the interview; or
- Just before the interview by the appointed interpreter in the presence of the interviewer.

How to get the most from this document:

The document gives you advice about how best to use the services of an interpreter. It has the following sections:

1. Why you should consider using an interpreter
2. What an interpreter will do for you
3. Why using an interpreter may be better than asking a friend or family member to help
4. What your rights are when you use an interpreter
5. How to use an interpreter before, during and after an interview
6. What to do if you want to complain

1. Why you should consider using an interpreter

You have been invited to take part in an interview with a representative of (insert name of organisation).

If English is not your first or preferred language you have the right to use a professional interpreter during the interview. The service is **free**.

Even if you can understand and speak a little English you may feel that you can express yourself more easily and naturally in another language. If so, please ask for an interpreter.

The interpreter is not an employee of (insert name of organisation).

The interpreter will not take anyone's side.

The interpreter will translate only what you say and what the person who interviews you says.

2. What an interpreter will do

A trained **interpreter** will:

- Interpret fully and accurately everything you and the interviewer say;
- Have good English skills; the interpreter should also have good language skills in your language or dialect;
- Be able to explain any specialised language the interviewer uses;
- Tell you if he or she does not understand something;
- Know what to do if:
 - The interviewer is speaking too fast;
 - The interviewer interrupts you;
 - There are other distractions in the room.

The interpreter will not take anyone's side in the interview.

3. Why using an interpreter may be better than asking a friend or family member to help

If you work with a trained interpreter you will:

- Have an exact translation of everything said in the room rather than someone else's views of what they think is relevant to you;
- Be able to make your own decisions because you should be able to understand everything said in the room;
- Have the reassurance that the interpreter can help you understand any specialised terms or procedures that the interviewer uses;
- Using a trained interpreter will help to make sure the interviewer is able to do their job properly.

4. What your rights are when you work with an interpreter

You have the right to a trained interpreter even if you speak some English.

A trained interpreter is the best person to interpret for you and the interviewer. However, the interviewer may be happy for a family member or friend to be present to give you support as well.

5. How to work with an interpreter:

Before the interview:

You should say if you would prefer a male or female interpreter, someone from a particular age group or if there are other issues you feel strongly about.

At the beginning of the interview:

The interviewer should:

- Introduce you to the interpreter;
- Give you the interpreter's first or full name;
- Briefly describe what the interpreter will do;
- Check that you understand the interpreter's language or dialect.

You should tell the interviewer, through the interpreter, if:

- You have any problems understanding the interpreter;
- There are any other reasons why you feel uncomfortable working through this interpreter;
- You are not happy about anything else, such as seating arrangements.

See Section 3 of this guide for more information about the role and responsibilities of interpreters.

During the interview:

You should:

- Speak naturally and directly to the interviewer, not to the interpreter; for example, say "My name is..." rather than "Tell him/her my name is...";
- Pause to allow the interpreter to follow what you are saying and to accurately interpret what you are saying;
- Allow the interpreter to interrupt to ask you to repeat or explain something;
- Speak for yourself – the interpreter cannot answer a question for you or explain a cultural point on your behalf;
- Ask the interviewer if you don't understand something – the interviewer will explain this through the interpreter;
- Say if you feel uncomfortable about anything at any time;
- Expect the interpreter to translate any forms or documents referred to during the interview.

At the end of the interview:

- The interviewer should tell you what will happen next;
- You should receive a translated version of any report that follows the interview;
- The interviewer should explain how you can complain.

6. What to do if you want to complain**If you want to complain about the interview:**

- Ask for a complaint form. There may be one written in your language that you can fill in using your language. What you write will be translated into English later;
- If the complaint form is in English or you need help filling in the form, the interpreter will tell you what it means so that you can fill it in using your language. It will be translated into English later.

If you want to complain about the interpreting:

- You can complain to the interviewer by using the interpreter. Remember that interpreters are trained to be impartial and must interpret everything said in the room;
- But if this makes you feel uncomfortable you can ask to make a complaint. You can ask for another interpreter so that you can make your complaint. If it is difficult to arrange for another interpreter to come quickly to the meeting, you can use a telephone interpreting service. Ask the interviewer for further information.

Section 3

A guide for interpreters

This is a guide to what you need to do if you're asked to interpret for a mental health practitioner and someone who uses mental health or learning disability services. We have produced it in consultation with professional interpreters who have experience of this kind of work. It has the following sections:

- a) Your ethical duties
- b) When your services are booked
- c) The briefing session
- d) At the start of the interview
- e) During the interview
- f) After the interview

a) Your ethical duties as an interpreter are:

- **Confidentiality**

From the moment your services are booked you must treat everything as confidential.

- **Impartiality**

You should tell the person who contracts you that you will be impartial throughout your work with him or her.

- **Disclosure**

You must disclose, before or during the interview, any limits to your professional competence or any connection you have with anyone or any subject you're asked to interpret.

- **Professionalism**

You must aim to interpret accurately and completely and to maintain professional interpreting standards.

b) When your services are booked

Gather facts

Find out as much as you can about the meeting, the setting, the number of participants and the type and purpose of the interview.

Assess your suitability for this job

If the organisation that has contacted you hasn't already checked, make sure that the language (or dialect or other style of communication) that they need is within your area of competence.

You should also make known anything that might cause a conflict with the person you're going to interpret for; for example, gender, race or religion.

Leave time for briefing and debriefing

When you receive instructions about the date, time and place for the assignment, make sure the appointment includes enough time before and afterwards for you to be briefed and debriefed by the interviewer.

You should avoid being put into a situation where you meet the interviewee on your own before meeting the interviewer.

Make sure you have details of someone you can contact if you need to find out more information, or in an emergency.

c) The briefing session

This is normally with the interviewer and should last around 10 minutes.

You need to find out:

- Anything about the assignment that you didn't already find out when you were booked;
- If the interviewer or – to his or her knowledge – the interviewee has worked with an interpreter before;
- The purpose of the interview, its structure and procedures, where it's to be held and anyone else who's taking part;
- About the interviewee, especially:
 - Any condition or medication that may affect their speech or behaviour;
 - (If using sign language) any variant of BSL or initialisation;
 - If the interviewee has any other communication needs, such as induction loops.

You need to tell the interviewer about:

- Any previous interpreting work you've done for this organisation or a public service organisation or in mental health settings;
- The nature of sign language, for example to explain that communicating meaning involves the whole upper body and facial expressions; it's important to note that some types of medication may affect how the deaf person signs and alter their meaning;
- Whether you'll be doing simultaneous or consecutive interpretation, and the length of segments that you can comfortably interpret; even if the interviewer has worked with interpreters before, it's useful to remind him or her to adjust the length of segments according to what's being communicated;
- The interviewee's general cultural background (but bearing in mind that you're not a cultural expert); for example, in the interviewee's culture:
 - What is regarded as polite or rude;
 - If mental illness is viewed as a stigma.

You need to discuss with the interviewer:

- What seating or other arrangements – depending on the number of people taking part – are needed for the interviewer to communicate directly with the interviewee;
- (If you're a spoken language interpreter) whether it's appropriate for you to take notes during the interview; for example, the interviewer may advise against taking notes if the interviewee is affected by paranoia;
- (If you're a sign language interpreter) whether it's appropriate for you to interpret simultaneously or consecutively; although simultaneous interpretation is usual in sign language, in mental health settings it may be appropriate to wait for the interviewee to provide more input (if disjointed, for example) before interpreting consecutively;
- How the interviewer should introduce you to the interviewee, that is, they must:
 - Explain your role;
 - Stress your confidentiality and impartiality;
 - Explain that you will interpret fully and faithfully absolutely everything that's said in the room.
- The language the interviewer should use during the interview: they should avoid jargon and always address the interviewee in the first person;
- How you should intervene to ask for something to be repeated or explained; or to flag up anything you think has been misunderstood.

d) At the start of the interview

The box below suggests an appropriate form of words to begin the interview:

“Hello, my name is ... and I’ll be interpreting between English and ... for you and Mr/Ms/Dr ... , who is a representative of ...

I’m not an employee of (the organisation’s name). They have asked me to act as Interpreter. You do not have to pay for my services.

I will interpret as accurately and completely as I can everything that you or Mr/Ms/Dr ... says.

I’m an independent interpreter. I will remain impartial, so I won’t side with you or Mr/Ms/Dr ...

I will also treat everything that everybody says as totally confidential.

Please tell me if you don’t understand my role. During the interview, please ask if you don’t understand what someone is saying.

Is this ok with you?”

You need to remind everyone in the interview that you must interpret everything that’s said in the interview, including any asides that anyone makes.

But if someone (e.g. interviewee) still insists on disclosing relevant information only as an aside you’ll:

- Encourage the interviewee to disclose the information to the participant(s); or
- Ask the other participant(s) to remind the interviewee not to tell you anything he or she doesn’t wish to have interpreted.

e) During the interview

You must:

- Reflect the interviewee’s exact tone, degree of coherence, hesitations, odd speech patterns or role-shifts, as these are significant elements of information for the interviewer;
- Make sure you’re never left alone with interviewee;
- Interrupt the interview to flag up any misunderstanding, to explain something or to enable something to be explained;
- Make sure the interviewer does not – on purpose or by accident – pass on to you any part of their professional role.

f) After the interview

You should allow at least 10 minutes for a debriefing with the interviewer. This session is crucial but often neglected. It helps to ensure the success of interviews carried out through interpreters.

It will give you an opportunity to:

- Further explain interruptions you made during the interview to flag up any strange expressions or anything you thought was being misunderstood;
- Give your opinion, if asked, about any cultural references made by the interviewee; for example, the interviewer may have misinterpreted unusual imagery used by the interviewee, but you're able to explain it in terms of the interviewee's cultural background;
- Share your feelings about anything you may have found harrowing, but which you may not be able to discuss with anyone else because you're bound by confidentiality;
- Arrange any future consultation or visit that involves the same participants; continuity is crucial in mental health settings where gathering background information is important;
- Tell the interviewer about any professional translation service you provide and, if appropriate, whether this would be suited to any follow-up translation work the interviewer needs;
- Provide feedback to the organisation who has required your services, or any other relevant body, that would improve this kind of interview in future; for example:
 - Anything that would make your job more effective, such as more time to prepare, ways of signalling information or anything that you found was a particular problem;
 - The interviewer's working style, such as their talking speed or their failure to address the interviewee directly.

