

What you should know when you need an interpreter

GUIDANCE FOR INDIVIDUALS
WHO USE MENTAL HEALTH AND
LEARNING DISABILITY SERVICES

Translation of 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.

This document may 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

Who we are

The Mental Welfare Commission is an independent organisation set up by Parliament with a range of duties under mental health and incapacity law. We draw on our experience as health and social care staff, service users and carers.

We believe individuals with mental illness, learning disability and related conditions should be treated with the same respect for their equality and human rights as all other citizens.

1. Why you should consider using an interpreter

You have been invited to take part in an interview with a representative of a particular 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 the organisation that has organised the meeting.

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, and the interpreter should also have good language skills in your language or dialect;
- be able to translate an explanation of 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 interpreting can help you understand any specialised terms or procedures that the interviewer uses;
- be able to express yourself fully, freely and with privacy.

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, if you want.

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;
- introduce the interpreter;
- 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.

Please see the **Working with an Interpreter toolkit** 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 regularly 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 do not 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 translate for you what it means, so that you can fill it in using your language. What you say will be translated into English later.

If you want to complain about the interpreting

- You can complain to the interviewer by speaking through 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.

How to contact us

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Service user and carer free phone – 0800 389 6809

Office 0131 313 8777

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Your views

We want to know what you think about our service. If we've done something wrong we'd like to have the chance to put it right. Of course we'd also like to hear when we've managed to help. So if you have a complaint, a comment or a compliment, please ring us on 0800 389 6809. We will listen to what you have to say and use it to help us improve our service in future.

If you would like to receive email updates or information by post, please join our mailing list.

Name _____

Address _____

E-mail _____

I am mostly interested in information for:

Learning disability service users or carers

Mental health service users or carers

Mental health professionals

job title _____

Learning disability professionals

job title _____

Other

please specify _____

I would like my information in another format

(for example, easy-read, tape, another language)

please specify _____

I agree to join the Mental Welfare Commission mailing list.

Please sign _____

Details of the full range of MWC publications are available from our website

www.mwscot.org.uk





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