

Business Services Organisation

# **Guidelines on Working with Interpreters for HSC Staff and Practitioners**

**Northern Ireland Health and Social Care Interpreting Service  
(NIHSCIS)**

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## **Introduction**

The primary aim of the Northern Ireland Health & Social Care Interpreting Service (NIHSCIS) is to significantly improve access to Health and Social Care Services for Patients\* who do not speak English as a first or competent second language.

NIHSCIS is commissioned by the HSC Board who fully reimburse HSC Providers for interpreting costs provided through the Service. NIHSCIS is managed and administered as a Regional Shared Service by the HSC Business Services Organisation.

NIHSCIS provides face to face Interpreters for the 5 Health and Social Care Trusts, Primary Care Services and other approved Health and Social Care providers.

- NIHSC Interpreters are professionally trained and adhere to a BSO Terms of Engagement for Interpreters
- NIHSC Interpreters are bound by confidentiality
- NIHSCIS provides Interpreters 24/7
- NIHSCIS currently provides interpreters in 36 different languages
- NIHSCIS Interpreters are provided free-of-charge to patients and Practitioners

***\*NHS Patients only***

## **Central Register of Interpreters**

The Interpreting Service has a Register of 300 Self-Employed Community Interpreters in a variety of different languages.

All the Interpreters within the NIHSCIS Register are qualified, quality controlled and ACCESS NI checked.

## **Interpreter Registration**

In order to be part of the NIHSC Interpreting Service Register the interpreter must:

- Be eligible to work within Northern Ireland
- Have UK based a qualification in interpreting (OCN Level 4 or equivalent or above)

**And**

- Be willing to complete the NI HSC Interpreting Service conversion course

**OR**

- Be willing to complete an OCN Level 4 certificate in Community Interpreting with the NI HSC Interpreting Service (this must be completed before undertaking any work with NI HSC Interpreting Service)

Once registered the interpreter will be required to:

- Adhere to the NIHSC Interpreting Service Interpreter Terms of Engagement
- Maintain confidentiality and protect service user information in line with information governance requirements and legislation
- Interpret fully and faithfully without anything being added or omitted
- Behave in a professional manner in relation to all aspects of the role

## **Professional Standards**

All Interpreters on the approved Register are bound by the Interpreter Terms of Engagement. The Terms include commitments to confidentiality and other areas of professional practice.

Registered Interpreters must comply with all registration procedures. Any breach of the requirements may lead to a reduction in the volume of assignments offered or removal from the approved Interpreter Register.

Interpreters report to the Interpreting Service Manager in matters relating to agreed sessional work undertaken.

## **Why Provide Interpreters?**

### **Providing an Interpreter:**

- eliminates language and cultural barriers
- improves access to services
- reduces the risk of misdiagnosis, misunderstanding and non-consent
- Raises awareness in relation to religious/cultural needs and different health belief systems
- enables patients to make choices
- increases patient satisfaction and reduces repeat visit

### **The Legal Case:**

The Northern Ireland Act 1998 – Good Friday Agreement

- Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act (1998) places a statutory duty on designated public bodies to ensure that, consistent with their responsibilities, all functions are carried out with regard to the need to promote equality of opportunity. This is between persons of different racial groups and eight other categories.

## Race Relations (NI) Order 1997

- The Race Relations (NI) Order 1997 places a legal duty on the way in which establishments provide their services. The legal duty to provide services without discrimination includes the duty to ensure that services accessible to the majority community are also accessible to members of a black and minority ethnic group. The need to communicate in languages other than English is often implicit rather than explicit. Nevertheless failing to provide interpreting facilities in relation to service provision, when it is known that there is a language barrier, could be construed as unlawful racial discrimination.

### **The Ethical Case:**

- Not providing Interpreters means a significant proportion of minority ethnic groups do not have access to the same services in the same way as the rest of the population.
- The ethical case can also be illustrated by the potential consequences of not providing an interpreter. In the worst-case scenario misdiagnosis or misunderstanding could seriously aggravate an illness, or cause the death of a patient.

### **The Business Case:**

- Communication barriers prolong appointments, takes more staff time, with a strong potential for misdiagnosis, misunderstandings and non-consent to examination, treatment or care.
- There are cases of persons who were not provided with interpreters returning to see Practitioners on numerous occasions and going through various treatments until their condition was addressed.
- The costs of numerous repeat appointments, prolonging appointments, or unnecessary admission to hospital outweigh the costs of obtaining an interpreter in the first instance.

- Providing trained interpreters protects against the costs of litigation that otherwise may occur.

### **When do I use an Interpreter?**

Interpreters are needed for all new patients/clients who do not have sufficient proficiency in English language. This will range from those with no English to those with intermediate level English that may well be satisfactory in social situations but not enough for health and social care situations.

A way of establishing level of understanding or comprehension is by asking the client to repeat back instructions and demonstrate an understanding of them. If there is a perceived lack of understanding an interpreter must be arranged.

### **The Role of the Community Interpreter**

*“To facilitate communication with appropriate cultural sensitivity”*

- To be bilingual and to know how to interpret
- To interpret accurately
- To be impartial
- To maintain confidentiality
- To resist the temptation to speak for the patient
- To clarify cultural nuances
- To be aware of cultural or circumstantial issues
- To signpost clients or patients

Interpreters should not, under any circumstances, undertake any additional duties outside of their role and the assignment context, such as client’s advocacy work, minding client’s children or transport of clients.

Interpreters are not permitted to provide written translation of information - the only exception to this is request of **sight** translation of a brief letter or leaflet.

## **Untrained Interpreters (Family Members/Friends)**

Interpreting is a specific skill and profession. Using an untrained person as an 'interpreter' is bad practice and can be dangerous

Risks of using untrained Interpreters include:

- Lack of fluency
- Inaccurate Interpreting or lack of Interpreting Skills
- No obligation to maintain confidentiality, honesty and impartiality
- Lack of knowledge in the subject matter and terminology
- Possible misuse of trust, power and information
- Conflict of Interests

Friends, relatives or other persons should not be used as interpreters unless in an emergency (until Staff get access to the telephone interpreting service or a face to face Interpreter) for very routine administration tasks such as setting up an appointment.

It is generally not good practice to use a member of the hospital or health centre staff as an Interpreter (except in emergency situations). These members of staff were employed to do a particular job, not to act as Interpreters.

## When should I use a Telephone Interpreter or a face-to-face Interpreter?

### NIHSC Interpreting Service Access Guidance and Criteria

#### When to use telephone interpreting

- Primary Care appointments
- When the content to be discussed is relatively simple
- When it is preferable not to have another person in the room i.e. when anonymity or modesty might be a consideration
- When there are health issues such as highly infectious diseases
- When the appointment is 30 minutes or less, especially a primary care appointment
- For quick inpatient sessions i.e. doctors rounds
- For follow up appointments when a face to face interpreter is not essential
- In an emergency situation where time is limited
- To aid the booking of an appointment and establish patient's needs
- When a face to face interpreter cannot be made available
- **NB:** cost is £0.57 per minute\*.

#### When to use face to face interpreting

- For a new patient's/client's initial visit
- When the appointment is over 30 minutes
- When the appointment is sensitive in nature i.e. delivering test results which may be distressing
- Consultations involving two or more participants i.e. family conferences
- When the patient/client has specific communication needs and/or where non-verbal cues are needed
- When the patient/client indicates that they are not comfortable with telephone interpreting
- For any sight translation where a document needs to be read to the patient/client
- **NB:** cost is £20 +£5 prep for 1-60 minutes and £0.33 per minute thereafter (plus mileage)\*
- **Out of Hours:** cost is £30 for 1-60 minutes and £0.50 per minute thereafter (plus mileage)\*

\*Telephone Interpreting is provided by the Big Word Telephone Interpreting Service 0800 757 3053 (for further information or to obtain your access/pin/language codes please contact your local Equality

Department or Practice Support Manager). The Health and Social Care Board covers the cost of all HSC Telephone Interpreting.

## **Exceptions\*\***

It is recommended that the below service areas use a face to face interpreter due to the nature of the services, however the requester may determine, based on the guidance, that a telephone interpreter may be sufficient in particular situations.

- Mental Health i.e. Psychiatry, Learning Disability, psychology
- Social Services i.e. Child Case Conferences, Child Protection
- Domestic Abuse
- Maternity/Fertility Appointments
- Speech and Language Therapy
- Cancer Services
- Family Trauma Centre
- Northern Ireland New Entrant Screening (NINES)

**\*\*Please note that this list is not exhaustive and clinical decision should be followed**

## **Good Practice Pointers when Working with an Interpreter**

- allow time for introductions
- interpreting is not always word for word - no direct equivalents; different concepts, grammatical structure and word order
- be mindful of your tone of voice and stress
- speak clearly, slowly and be specific with questions
- use short, concise sentences and avoid complex grammar
- use direct speech – The professional talks directly to the client e.g. using the first person in speech
- ask the Patient if they have any questions to avoid misunderstandings

- avoid relying on body language
- the interpreter may take notes
- Flag up the need for an interpreter if you are making a referral

## How do I book a HSC Interpreter?

Interpreter Bookings are now submitted via the online HSC Interpreting Service System. Click here <http://interpreting.hscni.net/NIIR.Website/> and follow the on screen instructions (?)

If you do not have an Interpreting System Account you will need to register your details in order to book an Interpreter. To register click here <http://interpreting.hscni.net/NIIR.Website/> and select **New Registration** in the top right hand corner of the screen.

System User guides are available on all HSC Trust and Primary Care Intranet Sites\*.

Guides available include:

- How to Self-Register
- How to log into the system (including forgotten passwords and locked accounts)
- How to generate your barcode/s
- How to book an interpreter
- How to cancel a booking
- How to create an appointment venue

- How to create a practitioner

*\*Dental Practices should continue to email Booking Forms until they get HSC Network access*

### **How do I Confirm an Interpreters Attendance?**

Interpreters are required to scan a unique Practice/Departmental barcode at the END of the appointment using an Interpreting Service App on their mobile phone.

The Practice/Departmental barcode can be found within your User account under User Management – Get Barcodes (see user guide on how to generate your barcode/s). Interpreters will request the barcode at the end of the session.

Please ensure the barcode is available for the Interpreter to scan and that this information is communicated widely within your Department/Practice.

It is the responsibility of the Department/Practice as to how they manage their barcode. Suggestions include printing the barcode and keeping it on the back of private consultation room doors, holding it behind reception areas, keeping it in Staff ID passes or logging into the system and scanning from the computer screen.

### **Out of Hours Requests**

Please **call** 028 90565656 to book a face to face Interpreter outside of normal social working hours

For further information or clarification in relation to the areas set out in this document please contact the Interpreting Service on:

[interpreting@hscni.net](mailto:interpreting@hscni.net)

Tel: 028 9536 3777 (9am to 5pm) Monday to Friday