

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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Interpreting Service System: <http://interpreting.hscni.net/NIIR.Website/>

Contents	Page
Introduction	3
Central Register of Interpreters	4
Interpreter Registration	4
Professional Standards	5
Why Provide Interpreters?	5
Deciding when an Interpreter is needed	7
The Role of the Interpreter	7
Untrained Interpreters (Family Members/Friends)	8
Deciding when to use Telephone or Face-to-face Interpreters	9
Good Practice Pointers when Working with an Interpreter	10
How to book a HSC Interpreter	11
Cancellation of appointments	12
Interpreter Attendance	12
Out of Hours Requests	12
Interpreter Booking Form	13

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.

Deciding When an Interpreter is needed

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 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.

Deciding when to use Telephone or Face-to-face Interpreters

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 to book a HSC Interpreter

Interpreter Bookings should be made in advance where possible. This ensures that the Interpreting Service has adequate time to confirm interpreter availability.

The Service endeavours to respond to last minute or emergency face-to-face interpreting requests. In emergency situations where no face-to-face interpreter is available staff should contact the Big Word Telephone Interpreting Service

To book an Interpreter during office hours please fully complete and email an **Interpreting Booking form** (see page 13) with details of the appointment. The Interpreter Booking Form should be emailed to interpreting@belfasttrust.hscni.net

Practices will receive a *confirmation of receipt* email when a request is received. A separate *confirmation of booking* email will be sent when the Interpreter confirms their attendance. Both emails will include a unique “Job Number” specifically relating to the appointment. Please quote the appointment Job Number if you have any queries in relation to a booking.

Non-availability

Practices will receive a “non-provision” email if the Service is unable to allocate an Interpreter. It is only if the NIHSCIS is unable to provide an interpreter that contact can be made with the alternative HSC contracted subsidiary provider (STEP – 028 8775 0213). **Please note that this company charges for their Services. Invoices are paid directly from individual Practice budgets and cannot be reclaimed.**

Cancellation of appointments

NIHSCIS should be notified of all appointment cancellations. Interpreters are entitled to payment if the Patient does not attend or in the event of short notice cancellations.

Interpreter Attendance

The Interpreter will contact the Interpreting Service at the end of each session to confirm their attendance. The Interpreting Service will request to speak to the Practitioner to confirm the end time of the appointment in order for the Interpreter to be paid.

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

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

Interpreter Booking Form

Requester Details

Date Requested	
Requested By (Name and Position)	
Email Address	
Telephone Number	
Trust Area e.g Southern/Belfast	
Practice Type	Optometry
Name of Practice	

Patient Details

Patient Name	
Health and Care Number	
Date of Birth	
Telephone Number	
Home Address	
Language	
Gender	

Appointment Details

Date of Appointment	
Time of Appointment	
Expected Duration	
Appointment Location	
Practitioner Name	
Practitioner Title	
Brief details of the appointment ie: nature if known	
Specific Interpreter Requested (complex appointments)	

Please complete and email to interpreting@hscni.net