



# **Children's MARS Good Practice for the use of Interpreters**

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## Good Practice for Services, Schools and Settings on the Use of Interpreters

North Lincolnshire Council takes very seriously the need to communicate with clients and customers clearly and in an understandable way, so that those clients and customers can engage with the services they receive, make informed choices and share their views and wishes. For most of the time the most appropriate language for these communications will be English, whether written or spoken, but occasionally for some individuals, other formats may be needed, for example Braille or translation into another language.

Further information can be found on the Gov.uk website: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/inclusive-communication/accessible-communication-formats>

Whilst there is obviously a cost involved in providing information in other formats, there needs to be a decision made about whether it is appropriate to use a translator or interpreter. That decision making process should balance the importance and urgency of the information, the ability of the recipient to engage with and understand the complexities of the information, and the relevance of that information to the individual. So for example, where a conversation or a report directly affects the client's life or choices, without which information or conversation they will be seriously disadvantaged then there is a need to use alternative formats. A flow chart is attached to help services, schools and settings decide whether translation or interpretation is necessary, and if so what level of qualification/type of interpreter may be used.

Sometimes services, schools or settings need to use interpreters to communicate important information. When that is the case it is important that the level of qualification is considered as part of the process of selecting an appropriate interpreter:

- **Community Interpreters** are individuals, largely self-employed or working through local community organisations. They often do not have a formal qualification in Interpretation and Translation and may have variable levels of English and their other language(s). These interpreters are usually most appropriate for non-contentious meetings and those where it is unlikely that there would be legal ramifications caused by any potential communication difficulties. Additionally, in small communities, Community Interpreters may well be known to the client which can mean that the client is unwilling to proceed, and/or there is a conflict of interest which can potentially undermine the credibility of the communication.
- **Diploma in Public Service Interpretation Interpreters** are state registered interpreters who have passed a Diploma in Public Service Interpretation (DPSI) exam. They are tested on their English and first/other language on a range of health, legal, social and education terminologies. DPSI interpreters are also trained to communicate the nuance of the issue in the same way as you have expressed it in English, choosing vocabulary carefully to make the content and the tone the same. The Police and Health authorities are required to use DPSI interpreters for their interface with clients, and in cases where issues are complex and sensitive, for example if there are any safeguarding or child protection issues, it is recommended that services, schools and settings do the same. These interpreters are usually only available through Interpretation/Translation Agencies.
- It is not good practice to use children as interpreters for their parents

## **Confidentiality**

If an interpreter has been booked through an Interpretation/Translation agency then they should have a clear understanding of their duties around confidentiality and data protection. A community based interpreter may or may not have had training on this so it is very important to explain that the content of the discussion with them and the client is confidential and should not be discussed with anyone other than yourself and the client. If the meeting is about anything that could be considered as sensitive, for example legal or health issues, it is extremely important to use a registered or accredited interpreter.

This applies also to cases where there may be issues around child protection, forced marriage, honour-based abuse, female genital mutilation, or domestic abuse. It is also important to consider whether it is necessary for the interpreter to be from outside the local area. Registered interpreters will have had Data Protection and Confidentiality training and be aware of their legal responsibilities with regard to the content of the discussion. If the interpreter is not personally known to the client/parent/carer then their fears about gossip and rumour are likely to be reduced. Additionally, if the interpreter is known to the family it could potentially undermine any credibility where there may be legal consequences, for example a care order proceeding. At the start of the meeting it is important to explain to the client, through the interpreter, that what is discussed during the meeting is confidential

## **Practical Issues for the Meeting Before the meeting**

It is important to allow a longer time for any appointment where you are using an interpreter as the meeting is likely to take twice as long; allow for issues to be explained in English, interpreted in the client's language, and questions or responses to be interpreted back into English. There may be a need to consider cultural sensitivities, for example the gender of the interpreter; it is worth discussing the subject of the meeting with the interpreter if there is an opportunity to do so before the meeting starts. This will give a chance to clarify any potential misunderstandings and also to seek their advice. If there is jargon or specialist vocabulary or phrases which could present difficulties for either the parent or the interpreter, take the opportunity to discuss these with the interpreter before you start.

## **A Quiet Space**

It is important to hold the meeting which takes account of the need for privacy. If the subject matter of the meeting is not sensitive, it is not necessary to have a private room, but it is important to have a quiet space where there will not be interruptions and background noise as these make clear communication difficult and can be distracting for all concerned.

## **Client courtesy**

Before embarking on an interpreted meeting with a parent /carer it is important to remember that you are having the conversation with the client, not the interpreter, the interpreter's role is only to interpret. You should arrange the room either in a triangular seating arrangement, or facing the client and not the interpreter.

- Always address the client directly e.g. "Have you..." "Do You..." etc, and never in the third person e.g. "Has s/he..." "Does s/he..."
- Look at the client as you speak to them, not at the interpreter.
- Speak clearly, use simple language and avoid jargon and ambiguity. Speak only one or two sentences at a time and give the interpreter chance to translate the information in between.

- Make sure the client has chance to ask for clarification or to put their point of view, and check before the end of the meeting that they have understood what was being communicated and have had chance to express their opinions or questions, as any English speaking client/parent/carer would.

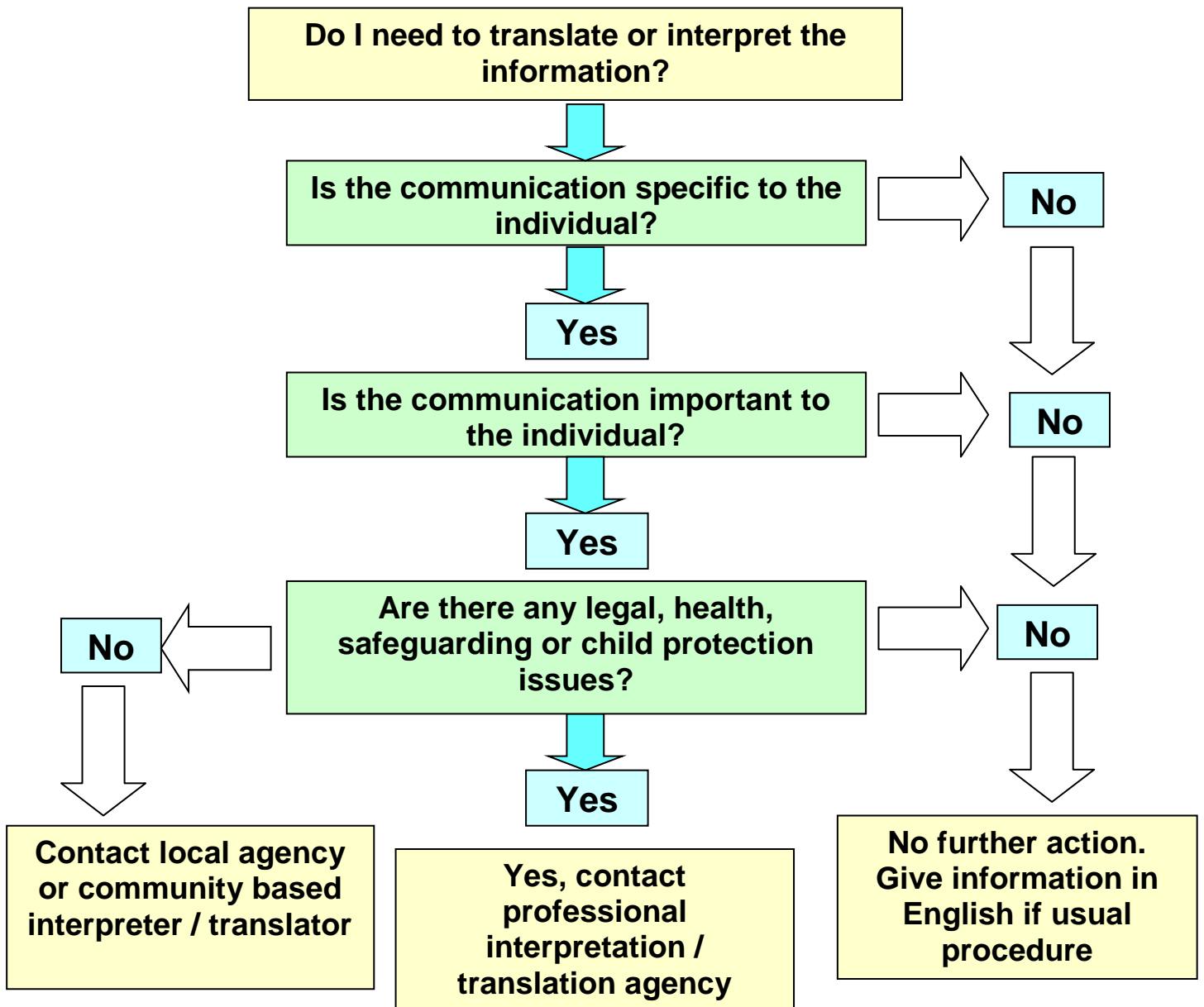
## **Quality of Interpretation**

When using an interpreter it is important to allow time for the interpreter to explain the content to the client a sentence or two at a time. This gives the interpreter and the client a chance to clarify if they need to. If the client is clearly entering into a debate with the interpreter, it is worth halting proceedings to check that the message is not becoming dilute or distorted; or that the interpreter is not putting their own opinion or misrepresenting the tone of what is being communicated.

## **Concerns**

If you have any concerns regarding the quality of the interpretation, or feel that the message you wish to communicate is in any way becoming confused, you should report your concerns to the Agency through which you booked the interpreter. It may also be necessary to re-run the meeting with a different interpreter.

## Decision-making flow chart



### Local and National Translation/Interpretation Contacts

**Ongo Recruitment (Community Interpreters)**

1-3 Laneham Street, Scunthorpe, DN15 6LJ Tel: 01724 844848

<https://www.ongo.co.uk/ongo-recruitment/for-employers/translation-services/>

**HE Words (request a DPSI Qualified Interpreter when contacting)**

Office Studio 1, Alexandra Dock Business Centre, Grimsby, DN31 1UL

Tel: 01472 268633 <http://www.hewords.com/>

**Language is Everything (DPSI Qualified Interpreters)**

World Trade Centre, 48 Queen Street, Hull, HU1 1UU

Tel: 0800 731 7878 <http://www.languageiseverything.com>