

## Guidance for Practitioners Working with Interpreters

Please read this guidance alongside [Working with Interpreters, Signers or Others with Communication Skills to Safeguard Children](#)

### Before the meeting

- Prior to booking the interpreter ensure that you check the language needed, and consider the dialect, country of origin etc.
- It is important to consider the social context and family history/background when selecting an interpreter. Are there sensitivities around using interpreters, for example, from a small community who could know each other.
- Try and book interpreters in advance to ensure availability. Only use services telephone services (like Big Word or Language Line) in emergency situations. For planned meetings and where possible use a reputable interpreting service (such as Vandu or Sussex Interpreters) who understand the work you are doing.
- When making the booking ensure the agency know the purpose of the meeting (for example a Me and My World Review or legal meeting). If you are completing an assessment, try and book the same interpreter for all the sessions. Alert the agency if there will be a large number of professionals in the meeting.
- Do not assume that interpreters will be able to interpret written documents or support with filling in forms - get confirmation/agreement from the agency prior to the meeting.
- Ask the family if they have any preferences in relation to interpreters. For example, female clients may prefer to use female interpreters, or some families may be worried about using interpreters who are based locally or in their community as they may know them or be worried that they may know people who know them.
- When booking a meeting consider the extra time you will need to allow for the interpretation.
- Consider the type of meeting when deciding if you need an in-person interpreter or if they can join on-line or via telephone. For more complex meetings an in-person interpreter is preferable. Whilst it is preferable to use interpreters face to face there may be emergency situations where phone interpreters must be used. In these situations, professionals must be mindful of limitations of this kind of service.

### At the meeting

- Try and meet with the interpreter for a few minutes before the meeting to run through the content of the meeting. Discuss any cultural considerations you may need to make, agree how the interpreter prefers to work, and ensure that they are comfortable with the situation.
- Ensure that the interpreter is not left alone with the client

- Allow the interpreter to introduce themselves to the client, explain their role and discuss confidentiality. Check with both the interpreter and client that they can understand each other.
- During meetings try to use language without jargon, speak using small phrases/sentences at a time. Ensure that you allow time for the interpreter to ask any questions or explain things and for the client to respond. Do not use colloquialisms.
- With more complex subject matters you may want the interpreters to clarify that clients have understood the content of the meeting.
- If clients are struggling to understand the content of the meeting, the interpreters may be able to support you by explaining things in a different way, this should be clarified with them.
- During the meeting and when you are speaking/asking questions look at the client, not at the interpreter.
- If this is a multidisciplinary meeting, please ensure that the chair keeps the pace slow, does not allow people to talk over each other, and only one person to speak at any time. Remind professionals to keep information concise and clear.

### **After the meeting**

- If possible, check in with the interpreter after the meeting and make sure they are ok. Interpreters will not get the same level of supervision as staff and if subjects discussed are highly emotive it is important to check in that the interpreter is ok.
- It is ok to ask the interpreter if they felt the client understood the content of the meeting.

### **Issues that may arise during the meeting**

- If you feel the interpreter is not interpreting correctly, or if clients say they do not understand what the interpreter is saying, please end the meeting and then refer back to the interpreting agency for advice.