

Ten top tips for Local Government Officers, working with Interpreters

- 1 Make sure the interpreter has **enough information** about the proposed conversation prior to the appointment to allow time to check on terminology. This is best done when the interpreter is first requested. A **short briefing** with the interpreter would be useful, so that you can provide any relevant circumstantial details.
- 2 There are many accents and speech styles. Everybody thinks that they speak clearly, but not everybody does. It's a case of "**tuning in**". **Clear question** forming and care with ambiguity make for successful transfer of meaning.
- 3 Make sure you look at and address your client directly, **using "I" and "you"**. The interpreter will maintain these forms of address and will only use the third person to signal a need to clarify something: e.g. "the interpreter needs to stop, because....."
- 4 Make sure the **interpreter can see everybody's face** (where this is practicable) **and** that he/she can **hear**. Excessive background noise makes the job especially difficult.
- 5 Interpreters take **notes** while listening, to ensure total recall when relaying messages. These are **confidential and should be destroyed upon completion of the assignment**.

- 6 If the interpreter is delivering simultaneous whispered interpreting¹, try **to leave a short catch-up pause** every couple of sentences.
- 7 If the interpreter is delivering consecutive interpreting², **finish the thought** before you stop to allow the relay.
- 8 Please make a point of **allowing the interpreter to complete the interpretation** of each speech by the client. The vital information or a key phrase may be at the end.
- 9 Please remember that **the interpreter's role** is specialist and specific to relaying meaning across language and culture. He/she is not there to undertake other roles e.g. befriender, counsellor, taxi driver. **Under no circumstances should the interpreter be left alone with**, or exposed to contact from **a client** or their supporters. Remember if you need **protection** so does the interpreter.

- 10 Please be aware that however professional your interpreter is, there may have been elements of the interaction that he/she found upsetting. Since both of you have a duty to confidentiality, **a short debrief with you** would, in some circumstances, be very helpful.

- 1 Simultaneous interpreting is when the interpreter is listening, changing the language and speaking (whispering) all at once.
- 2 Consecutive interpreting is when the interpreter listens and takes notes while one party speaks and then passes the message on in the other language, before the other party replies.

Where to go next

National Register of Public Service Interpreters
www.iol.org.uk/nrpsi

The Chartered Institute of Linguists.
The Institute serves the interests of professional linguists throughout the world and acts as a respected language assessment and accredited awarding body.
www.iol.org.uk

Institute of Translation and Interpreting.
Independent professional association of practising translators and interpreters in the UK.
www.iti.org.uk

BLIS Professionals. Database of international communication experts.
www.blis.org.uk/professionals

Code of Practice for interpreters
Please read the Code of Practice for interpreters at www.nrpsi.org.uk for further information.

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This tent card has been designed to give tips/guidance to local government officers when communicating with clients through an interpreter.

It is not a definitive guide and is meant as a quick reference only. For more detailed help and advice contact the Regional Language Networks North West or Yorkshire and Humber.

The RLN websites are a gateway to many useful resources relating to language and culture.

BLIS Services serves as a single reference point for anyone looking to use or provide services in language and cultural expertise and includes:

BLIS Professionals

Database of international communications experts

BLIS Jobs

Job site for people with languages

BLIS Facilities

Directory of business language support services

BLIS Courses

Language courses across the country

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