

# Leicester City Council's Interpretation & Translation Policy

## Introduction

1. Leicester City Council is committed to making its services accessible to everyone who lives and works in the city of Leicester. Therefore information on those services has to be accessible as well. Our public sector equality duty requires us to ensure that there are no barriers to residents accessing services. This applies to the information on those services as well. The Council seeks to have a workforce which is reflective of the population it serves to help provide support where there may be language and cultural barriers.

This policy provides a clear statement of the council's approach to language services and when it is appropriate to provide interpretation and translation.

## Policy Aims

2. The aims of this policy are:
  - To inform residents and our customers about how we will ensure that our information is accessible to them.
  - To guide staff on what they should do to ensure that their service information is accessible.
  - To ensure consistency across the council on the provision of accessible information
3. By doing the above residents (service users etc.) will be supported to access and use council services, make informed decisions and take advantage of life opportunities in the city.
4. As with any council policy, the council has a responsibility to make the best possible use of available resources. Through this policy, the council will seek to ensure that information is accessible through translation and interpretation to those who most need it.

## Why do we need this policy?

5. There are more than 70 languages or dialects used across the city, including signed communication such as British Sign Language (BSL). The number of languages continues to increase as the city's population becomes more diverse.
6. The most requested languages for interpretation and translation in Leicester are:
  - Gujarati
  - Urdu
  - Punjabi
  - Bengali
  - Somali

- Arabic
- Farsi
- Polish
- Slovak
- Chinese

### **Scope of this policy**

7. This policy applies to all council services provided directly or indirectly through a third party.

### **Policy statement**

8. The council encourages the use of English as the city's main language<sup>1</sup>
9. The council will not translate or provide interpretation as a matter of course.
10. The appropriate steps to be taken, whether translation or interpretation, will be decided on a case by case basis, taking into consideration if it is absolutely necessary and practical to do so. It is particularly important that the council ensures that its information is accessible in specific situations including those involving formal contracts and needs assessments – key areas where the council's decision directly affects people's lives
11. The following factors should be taken into account in making this decision:
  - A detailed assessment of an individual's circumstances needs to be made in order to determine whether they are eligible to be in receipt of some form of financial funding
  - A detailed assessment of an individual's circumstances needs to be made in order to determine whether they are eligible to be in receipt of some form of service designed to meet their individual needs. For example in order to meet the social care needs of an elderly resident or to understand what housing adaptations are required to keep a disabled resident in their home.
  - Where an individual or individuals well-being, health or safety could be put at risk because information is not clearly understood by them or because we have not understood their needs. For example when a tenant signs their tenancy agreement with the council they need to be fully aware of and understand the conditions of the contract.
  - Additional costs may be incurred for example through repeat visits where accurate information is not collected in the first instance
  - Where the circumstances involve personal and / or confidential information

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<sup>1</sup> Guidance for Local Authorities on Translation of Publications, Department for Communities and Local Government, December 2007.

- Where the information may be required for formal statutory proceedings including for example criminal proceedings.

The above list is not exhaustive but is illustrative of factors that should typically be taken into account.

Reliance by services on 'limited English' or family members for interpretation in circumstances where there is one to one engagement with a service user about service provision is generally not acceptable.

### **Definitions – translation and interpretation**

12. For the purposes of this document the following distinctions are made between interpretation and translation.
13. **Interpretation** covers:
  - Face to face interpreting – this involves a minimum of 3 people (the officer(s), the client(s), and the interpreter), meeting at a prearranged place and time. This includes:
    - Interpreters who speak other languages
    - BSL and sign supported interpreters for deaf people.
  - Telephone interpreting – this involves three or more people (the officer(s), the client(s), and the interpreter) having a telephone conversation.
14. **Translation** is for written information where content is translated into another language or format.

### **When do we use translation and interpretation?**

15. In line with this policy the council will only translate and interpret information into other languages and formats when it is necessary and practical to do so (such as information that can impact on a person's quality of life and that of a legal nature).
16. The council cannot ensure that its information will be provided in the most accessible format for the diverse range of its service users and potential service users.
17. However, it can ensure that where the individual user will be put at significant disadvantage without a specific piece of information, that information will be provided in a suitable format for them – as long as the council is made aware of their particular needs. This includes decisions directly affecting people's lives, such as whether they would receive a service or not, or where there are

contractual obligations on the service users' part, such as payments to be made. When agreeing to make information available in another format, the council will take into account the financial costs of making this adjustment and the extent to which it is practicable to do so.

18. Where an individual may experience difficulties communicating and engaging with the council due to physical/sensory disabilities or learning disabilities the council will consider using an alternative and suitable format such as braille or BSL. Each situation will be assessed on a case by case basis.
19. Public consultation: Where consultation may impact on a specific community or group that may require interpretation or translation to understand information, the council will need to consider from the outset what access needs there may be (if any), and how best they can be addressed.

#### **What staff need to know about interpretation:**

20. Face to face interpreting is to be used:
  - When a person cannot communicate in English at all or has limited conversation skills in English
  - For most formal procedures, such as assessments and form filling
  - Longer interviews (20 minutes or more)
  - Interviews/situations involving more than one client
  - The subject matter is complex, highly detailed, seen as high risk, or of a sensitive nature
21. Telephone interpreting should be restricted to:
  - Unplanned and emergency situations
  - Instances where a face to face interpreter is not available
  - Resolving relatively simple issues. It is not good practice for complex and lengthy interviews
  - Contacting customers at home
22. Staff will need to consider using interpreting services in situations where there may be issues surrounding:
  - Potential breaches of a person's confidentiality
  - Possible misinterpretation (for example where technical information is being provided)
  - Conflict of interest between the person and their carer/friend/family member
  - The degree of objectivity of the person acting as interpreter
  - The subject matter being discussed is of a sensitive nature

#### **What staff need to know about translation:**

23. Translation is normally used for reports, leaflets, publicity, forms and letters, but also refers to translations into braille or other forms of communication required to meet the particular needs of the user.

24. Translation is considerably more costly than interpreting and therefore for every case you should consider if it is necessary and practical to do so, for example it is often the older population who do not speak English as a first language. Material aimed at certain groups such as children and young people are less likely to require translation. Council services therefore need to assess the situation and the target audience before any printed material is translated.
25. Staff will need to consider using translation services in situations where:
- Correct information is not being conveyed.
  - Misunderstandings and breakdown in communications are affecting delivery of service.
  - Services are being accessed less and there are increased costs due to repeat visits.
  - There is inappropriate use of children, friends, relatives or other members of the community in health related, personal, or confidential situations.
  - Specific issues arise related to child protection.
  - Criminal justice system – legal issues around providing information to a court via an unqualified interpreter.
  - You are not gaining accurate information to make a decision about service provision.

#### **How do staff arrange for interpretation and translation?**

26. The community language services (CLS) team is the council's in-house service for language and interpretation services.

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