

The role of the interpreter

- The role of the interpreter is to facilitate communication between two or more individuals, where typically, one is a service provider such as a health professional and the other is a Non-English speaking patient.
- The interpreter will only interpret what is being said and will not “ad-lib”. Interpreters are not trained as advocates or counsellors, please do not ask the interpreter to ask questions of their own or give an opinion on a situation.
- Don’t assume that your interpreter will be able to provide you with written translation or that they will be able to help your patient fill in forms.

Considerations when using an Interpreter

- Whenever possible, meet with the interpreter a few minutes in advance to run through the content of the meeting.
- Allow a longer meeting time, as all questions and answers have to be repeated by the interpreter.
- Never put the interpreter in a vulnerable position and never leave them alone with the patient.
- Allow the interpreter to introduce themselves to the patient.
- Check that the interpreter and patient speak the same language/dialect.
- Arrange the seating so that you are facing your patient and your patient is facing you. The interpreter can be close but not between the line of sight of you and the patient.
- Use language without jargon and speak using small and slow phrases at a time, allowing the interpreter to interpret accurately without forgetting what has been said.
- Interpreters can intervene in the conversation in the following circumstances:
 - * To ask for clarification
 - * To point out that a party may not have understood something
 - * To alert the parties to a possible missed cultural inference
 - * To ask either party to slow down or pause to enable accurate interpreting
- Always address your questions directly to the patient rather than to the interpreter, eg. “Do you...?” rather than “Does she...?”
- Once the meeting is complete, please sign, date and time the interpreters timesheet.
- If you have any feedback you would like to give regarding the interpreter, please contact your Booking Coordinator and they will be happy to look into it for you and report back.

In partnership with

Birmingham and Solihull 
Mental Health NHS Foundation Trust