



Hounslow

NHS Hounslow translation and interpretation strategy

NHS Hounslow recognises that in order to achieve its aims and objectives it requires good communication with every individual, group and organisation it works with, or provides services for.

NHS Hounslow is committed to ensuring that wherever possible the information provided to service users is fully accessible, relevant and timely. A key principle of the Corporate Communications Strategy is that information and communication channels should be equally accessible and relevant to all groups of the community, irrespective of personal background.

The legal framework

The Disability Discrimination Act 1995 requires any organisation that provides goods and services to the public to make reasonable adjustments to the way services are provided in order to give disabled people equal rights of access. This includes the way that information about those services is provided. Therefore the Council has a duty to provide information in alternative formats such as Braille, audiotape, or via a sign language interpreter upon request.

The Race Relations Act states that it is unlawful for a provider of services to racially discriminate against persons using their services. There is nothing in the act that states that failure to provide information in the language of the recipient of the information is discrimination. However, under the act, councils have a specific duty to promote equality of opportunity and good relations between persons of different racial groups. Provision of information in languages other than English is therefore more a matter of good practice rather than a legal obligation.

When should NHS Hounslow translate information?

- **Translation:** the written transmission of meaning from one language to another, which is easily understood by the reader. This covers the conversion of written texts from one language or *format* to another. This also includes conversion to Easy Read.
- **Interpretation:** the oral transmission of meaning from one language to another, which is easily understood by the listener. This covers the conversion of speech from one language (including British Sign Language [BSL], other sign languages) to another and includes palantype which is the conversion of spoken to written speech
- **Communication support:** a variety of ways of supporting communication

with those who do not use the conventional forms of spoken or written English, including Braille, Easy Read and other tactile forms of writing, lip-reading and lip-speaking, and various communication technologies

- **Advocacy** is intended to further the interests of the service user. Any intervention (by an interpreter) that does not specifically relate to the interpretation process.

This strategy covers three types of information:

General Information – this includes publications that provide information to the public about NHS Hounslow Services. Examples would include leaflets on how to make a complaint to NHS Hounslow or a summary of how access services. This information should be provided in alternative formats and community languages upon request.

Background Information – this includes larger documents that back up the information provided in general information such as the Annual Performance Plan and strategy documents. Managers will need to use their discretion about when to translate these documents, which are often quite lengthy. Undertaking an Equality Impact Assessment will help to identify impact and risk and as a rule should be carried out when a policy or strategy changes.

Statutory Customer Documents – Correspondence with an individual should always be translated where that customer (or someone acting on their behalf) has identified that there is a need. This may be obvious if the customer has already had a face-to-face interview with a member of staff and an interpreter was required. A member of staff may also decide to get documents translated if they feel that the customer is unable to fully understand the implications of the document. In this case the member of staff should be sensitive to the feelings of the correspondent and make it clear why they have made that decision.

Correspondence with large groups will probably need to be carried out in English but should include the standard page listing the alternative formats and main community languages that service users might want the document translated into. It would not usually be possible to translate the document in advance unless the council officer knows that there will be demand for a particular format or language or the document is directed at a particular community.

When should NHS Hounslow employ an interpreter?

Interpretation is the conversion of speech/verbal communication from one language to another immediately.

When NHS Hounslow provider writes to a customer to invite them to attend an interview or meeting at the clinic/surgery the interpretation service should always be offered and the letter should ask the customer to identify any other special requirements they have.

An interpreter should always be employed:

- When a customer telephones or visits NHS Hounslow provision; or
- When NHS Hounslow service provider telephones, visits or invites a customer to visit the resource; *and*
- The customer or someone acting on their behalf has identified a language need; or
- The designated officer feels that the customer is unable to fully understand the implications of the discussion. In this case the officer should be sensitive to the feelings of the customer and make it clear why they have made that decision.

Interpretation via the telephone should be used carefully. If the interview or discussion involves complex issues it may be better to suspend the meeting and book a time for an interpreter to attend in person with the customer so that a face-to-face discussion can take place.

Cost

NHS Hounslow will pay for translation and interpretation only when the designated officer has made the booking for the service. Customers have the right to use their own translator or interpreter who can be a friend or family member, but the PCT will not pay for this service.

Only officers of NHS Hounslow may make bookings or use the service. The service number and cost code must not be given out to third parties such as advocates.

Contact us

Hounslow Translation & Interpreting Services

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