



SEMINAR 23 NOVEMBER 2004

THE GOOD PRACTICE GUIDELINES – TWO YEARS ON



INTRODUCTION

The aim of the seminar was to re-launch the Good Practice Guidelines and provide information to delegates on the work of the Forum thus far. Providers of community interpreting services and British Sign Language were invited to share their experiences of providing such services. Following the main speakers' speeches, delegates were split into workshops to discuss the provision of services, how these could be developed and to consider the impact of the Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000 and the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 on their services.

A total of 80 delegates attended from across Scotland representing 14 councils, 6 police forces, 4 health boards, 5 universities/colleges, 4 Procurator Fiscals' Offices, 11 interpretation and translation services and other agencies. The delegates comprised policy makers, service providers and users and interpreters/translators.

The following is a summary of the discussions during the day including speaker notes.

Shamime Mansoori, Chair, STICS Forum

Shamime welcomed the delegates, outlined the aims of the seminar and gave a brief overview on the work of the Forum. Shamime explained that the Forum had been established in recognition of the need to have a consistent approach to interpreting and translating services in Scotland.

'The Right to Understand' is an essential human right and the Forum (comprising of local authorities), with its Guidelines, has sought to support the implementation of that right by establishing standards of provision of language communication support.



Opening speech by Shamime Mansoori, Chair of STICS

The Good Practice Guidelines were launched in May 2003 by Iain Gray, MSP, the then Minister for Social Justice. The Guidelines raised awareness of issues of access to information and services, and set out standards based on those drawn up by the Institute of Linguists. The feedback on the use of the Scottish Translation, Interpreting and Communication Forum

of the Guidelines so far has been positive with agencies who have adopted them being able to better meet their legal obligations under the Disability Discrimination Act.

Shamime also appreciated the fact that the Scottish Executive and many services had supported the work of the Forum since its inception. The Forum is currently acting on research recommendations for future developments in its fields including the research '*Translating Interpreting and Communication Support: a Review of Provision in Public Services in Scotland*'. This is being undertaken by Heriot-Watt University and is expected to finish in early 2005.

Many interpreters (PSI) have been trained in the past two years and there are figures to suggest that more people have recognised the importance of professional communication support. The Forum is proud to re-launch the Guidelines. Shamime thanked all delegates for supporting the Forum in taking forward solutions to ensure that 'the right to understand' continues to be met.

Bob Scott, Lord Provost, Perth and Kinross Council

The Lord Provost welcomed everyone to the seminar and to the city of Perth. In Perth and Kinross, the Good Practice Guidelines are being used to ensure that access to information and services is available to all groups in the Council area. For example, the Council has installed facilities or adapted properties to ensure adequate provision of access to everyone and this approach will continue. The Council also has a textphone number in the main Council building which enables Deaf people to communicate using the abbreviated text language. Contact information for translation and interpretation services is available through its Equalities Planning Officers. Changes and adaptations happen regularly to meet the needs of communities in relation to communication, culture and access. Lord Provost wished the Forum a successful seminar.



Welcome by Lord Provost Bob Scott of Perth & Kinross Council (From Left: Shamime Mansoori, Dr Kelly, Lord Provost, Signer)

Dr Elinor Kelly, University of Glasgow

Dr. Kelly was Chairing the seminar and briefly outlined her role at the University. Dr Kelly explained that the right to understand was not built into everyday good practice in terms of ensuring language and communication support is provided. For example, she highlighted the Lockerbie trial, the most lavishly funded trial in Scottish history, came to a halt over interpreting difficulties. She recognised the rapid changes in the criminal justice system and was involved in partnership work between the Scottish Court Service, the Police and the Law Society of Scotland, and the Scottish Executive Translating, Interpreting and Communication Support group (STICS). She paid tribute to those involved in taking forward the issues of communication within the legal services. Dr. Kelly believed that the Guidelines provide support and raise awareness of the communication needs and the proper role of an interpreter.

Community interpreting is a huge responsibility and community interpreters (or public service interpreters - PSI) normally have to work under pressure with limited resources compared to conference interpreters. Not only are they having to develop interpreting techniques but also have to deal with major ethical issues; issues of impartiality, confidentiality and taking no personal advantage. Their role is, however, often misunderstood by service providers and service users. Reference was made to an EU document in respect of the fact that public service interpreting is an enormously demanding and problematic area, in which the resources available for professional development are worse than they are in conference and international business interpreting.

Dr Kelly remained optimistic that what we had achieved was really taking us forward. We now had these Guidelines but few detailed guidelines about what to do for good interpreting inside the process, as opposed to ensuring you follow the principles of good practice. Training everyone in how to work well with an interpreter is no less important.

She was confident that the seminar would contribute positively to solving these critical issues outlined above.

Dr Serjinder Singh, Manager of Glasgow Interpreting Service (GIS)

Dr. Singh explained that the GTIS is the largest and oldest public service interpretation provider in the UK. Every 2 minutes an interpreter leaves for a session, every week GTIS handles 1100 requests. GIS is managed by a Joint Partnership Management Group including Glasgow City Council, NHS Glasgow, Strathclyde Police and the Scottish Refugee Council.

In terms of the level of services provided, the demand has risen considerably from 1000 requests per year in 1998 to 27,000 in 2001 and is likely to be up to 60,000 in 2005. To cope with this level of demand, handling the data is a huge problem and a database system was developed to deal with all aspects of the service - from taking a request, calculating payments to interpreters, invoicing clients, to producing various monitoring and customer feedback reports.



Dr Singh of Glasgow Interpreting Service in his workshop

GTIS has 3 full-time in-house interpreters and 250 sessional interpreters covering 45 languages. 60% of the interpreters hold a Diploma in Public Service Interpreting and 10% are approved for immigration court work by the Institute of Linguists. GTIS also has an ongoing training programme for all qualified and unqualified staff with 75 people attending training in 2004 and every 8 weeks 12 trainees go to Cardonald College for training with qualified staff also being able to refresh their skills. Cardonald also assesses interpreters, giving grading on their performance level which lets GTIS keep tabs on who needs more training. This is paid for by the Council.

To deal with emergency situations, there is a round-the-clock service, which is run by the Social Work Department after office hours until 8.45am at which point GTIS takes over, thereby providing a seamless service.

To monitor customer satisfaction, GTIS performs a scientifically organised customer satisfaction survey. The customer satisfaction index in 2001/2 was 67.8%, in 2004 it was up to 80.6.

In terms of the cost of services provided, Dr Singh compared GTIS costs to the national average - it is £89 per job cf. £32.9 for Glasgow. The highest charges were by Leicester, the lowest was Bradford. It is clear therefore that GIS is providing value for money. In terms of staff efficiency GTIS handled 4000 requests [per Staff member per year] with 13 staff. Dr. Singh ended his presentation by highlighting that GTIS won an excellence award based on their performance in June 2004.

Liz Scott-Gibson, Deaf Action

Liz talked about the services provided by Deaf Action, focusing on the use of British Sign Language (BSL) Interpreters. It is estimated that there are 6000 to 7000 people using BSL and last year the UK government officially recognised BSL as a language. There is a serious shortage of BSL interpreters in Scotland only 44 registered interpreters with Scottish Association of Sign Language Interpreters (SASLI), and 30 of those work full time as interpreters. This shortage of interpreters against very high demand has made it difficult for Deaf Action to co-ordinate services and to meet 500 requests. Liz spoke of the need for interpreters to have sufficient information about a job to be able to provide a good service. It is equally important for users to know how to work with BSL interpreters to get the best results out of an interpreting job.



Liz Scott-Gibson, DEAF ACTION

Deaf Action provides training to its staff and has procedures in place for staff supervision, team meetings, personal development plans, annual service review. It is also looking to improve its use of technology and the use of video phones remotely.

Rina Ghosh, Fife Community Interpreting Service

Fife Community Interpreting Service (FCIS) was established in 1993 by Fife Council. FCIS is now an independent voluntary organisation and works in partnership with Fife Council, the Police, NHS Fife, and other voluntary organisations. FCIS was successful in being awarded lottery funding (which has been extended to 2007) thereby enabling it to employ a full time Punjabi/Urdu and a Chinese interpreter.

FCIS provides a free service to voluntary organisations and the public, and provides interpreting and translation services to other agencies for a fee. FCIS also undertakes interpreting and development work as well as additional services such as , proof reading,

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typesetting and audio recording. FCIS is also represented on the Forum and works with other agencies where there is a gap in language provision.

The main objectives are to remove communication barriers, increase equality of opportunity, support and liaison between service providers and non English-speaking clients.

FCIS is run by a management committee comprising 12 members representing ethnic minority people from Fife, Fife Council and Fife Police. FCIS meets every 6 weeks. There are 2 fulltime staff and 126+ sessional interpreters/translators covering 47 languages. There are two telephone lines for Chinese and Urdu/Punjabi clients and a 24-hour answering machine.

FCIS is a small organisation compared to GIS but the service has been growing. It started with 110 hours/units of interpreting work; in 2002 and 2003 it went up to 2000 hours/unit. This year there were 11,000 hours/units of interpreting and translating work. Chinese is the most frequently requested ethnic minority language in Fife followed by Punjabi/Urdu.

As far as training is concerned, last year 13 interpreters completed their DPSI and FCIS also has an in-house training programme with 58 interpreters being trained in 2004. FCIS also provides training to service-users.

FCIS provides quarterly reports to its clients and 6 weekly reports to its management committee. FCIS also carries out 3 way monitoring - interpreters take 3 forms to a job, one for themselves and also for the service user so any issues can be highlighted and enabling the client to provide feedback on the quality of the service provided. The management committee deals with any issues raised. Currently, the management committee is looking into developing an IT system to organise the work more efficiently

FCIS website is www.fcis.org.uk



Rina Ghosh, Fife Community Interpreting Service

Inspector Gary Lawrie, Central Scotland Police

Inspector Lawrie is a member of the community safety policy unit with responsibility for social policies including race relations. He was previously Diversity Strategy Officer which included a remit for looking at interpreting policies.

The Guidelines have been used to fit in with current good practice and to improve the quality of the service provided to ethnic minority communities, particularly in relation to language support.

Before the Guidelines were introduced, the force did not manage interpreters well and the provision of service to ethnic minority people was poor. CSP had a community interpreting agreement but that lapsed with the result that towards the end of the 1990s people could just telephone Central Scotland Police, say they were an interpreter and they would be included onto their database. No single unit in the force was responsible for quality control and seeing if the service was getting used correctly and there was no monitoring system in place. As there was no guidance in place on the use of interpreters, they were rarely used by officers.

The Guidelines came in at just the right time to help CSP shape the delivery of interpreting services. In consultation with the community, clear instructions were provided to officers on when to use telephone or face-to-face interpreting and two companies were employed to provide these facilities. The reason being that the police are constrained by the length of time they can detain anyone for example, waiting 2 or 3 hours to process a drunk driver can make the difference between someone being convicted or not. Hence, two or three different interpreting sources were required and a quality check was put in place to make it easier for officers to access the system.



The system is being continually evaluated, using the Guidelines as a benchmark for shaping the policy with the result that there has been a four-fold increase in the use of interpreting/translation in the force. There has been excellent feedback from staff on how they found the system and that positive feedback will be used to make the system

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even easier to use. The only negative comment has been on the length of time take to get an interpreter to the police station.

The current situation at CSP is that a two year review of the policy is being carried out and to find out whether there are other areas which can be improved upon. For example, CSP could work more closely with other colleagues in the area whereas at the moment the police force works on its own. All forces in Scotland are moving towards centralised call handling which presents a challenge. However, information has been provided to call takers on how to deal with incoming calls but there are other areas which need to be looked at. New station help points have been displayed and CSP has started to use the symbol from the Guidelines on telephones. Marketing the symbol so that it is well recognised will be important so that people will know instantly that where the symbol is displayed, an interpreter will be available to speak to them in their own language.

CSP has a long way to go but has made significant strides and with the help of the Guidelines, the force hopes to improve their service even more.

Feedback From Workshops

The workshops gave delegates an opportunity to discuss a number of issues including the various ways of providing interpreting and translating services, service providers' experience in meeting their legal responsibilities to provide communication in a number of ways and how the benefits of networking could be used to maximise scarce resources.

Workshop 1

It is common practice that most organisations buy services from interpretation and translation services because they do not have the funding to run their own in-house service and demand does not justify it. These services use the National Registers, their own register of interpreters and translators and SASLI Directory for BSL.



The main issues in relation to training and recruitment of interpreters and translators were to do with the lack of funding. Interpreters believe that they are not paid according to their qualifications, skills and experience, therefore, there is little incentive to take part in formal professional training, which is costly. They feel that there are very few development opportunities for qualified interpreters to encourage more bi-lingual people to join.

Some services found it difficult to deal with translations due to the lack of IT facilities both from service users and providers, in particular, language software.

The workshop recommended the creation of a 'translation house' which may be equivalent to a Scottish Register of Translators. This would seek to achieve the standards required by agencies, consistency, quality assurance and economies of scale. It is also important to identify resources already available nationally, e.g. national Registers of (Public Service) Interpreters and Translators, nation-wide NHS written translations, etc.

Video-conferencing interpretation was mentioned and it was recognised that this works well in some cases especially in ensuring a prompt service. It is, however, lacking in the face-to-face nature of interpretation which some clients prefer.

Workshop 2

There should be more training for users of interpreting services. It was important to know how to work with interpreters since this knowledge and experience will increase the confidence in using the services and improve the service to clients. It was also suggested that there should be staff manuals in every service area.

It was suggested that clients should be made aware of the language and communication support that they are entitled to use and this could be possible through community planning, targeting the right communities the right way. It was suggested that public service providers' phones should be staffed by language speakers and that users' choice should also be respected when providing interpretation service. The workshop also raised issues in terms of developing potential professional linguists and how to fund training and organise quality assurance systems.

Workshop 3

It was recognised that some organisations do not know who their audience is hence it is difficult to provide the appropriate service to meet their needs.

There should be more innovative and flexible ways of providing the services to meet the needs of

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clients, i.e. to go beyond providing a translation of a leaflet. Users should be encouraged to write to service providers in their own languages or formats. With the introduction of the Freedom of Information Act, public bodies will have a legal obligation to provide information in alternative formats when requested. It was recognised however that funding to provide information in alternative formats may create difficulties.

The workshop also raised concerns about staff at different levels in the organisation not having the same approach to access to information hence services could be patchy and inconsistent and subsequently unsatisfactory for users. The users therefore needed to be assured that they were getting a quality service.

The workshop also recognised that there was a need to appreciate and put into use the skills that staff acquired as part of their training, e.g. in BSL.

Workshop 4

Public service providers should recognise the need to provide language support in the format acceptable to users, considering issues such as illiteracy, education background, etc. Other examples were English subtitles on visual document might be insufficient for some Deaf users and telephone interpreting may not be the right means of communication in some specific cases.



Faizar Nacef of Aberdeen Interpreting Service in her workshop

Interpretation services should be given the right information about the job, for example, the right language/dialect, nature/topic of the discussion/meeting.

The workshop also considered that there should be a guide or checklist of how to organise a meeting where an interpreter is involved – this should be a practical step-by-step checklist of activities that staff should follow. It was also pointed out that service providers should have a clear policy regarding the use of professional interpreters/agencies and avoid providing services on an ad hoc basis. It was also noted that service users can still find it difficult to access services and they are concerned about the issues of confidentiality and advocacy.

Conclusion

The seminar brought together a range of delegates and speakers to re-launch the Good Practice Guidelines and to discuss and suggest improvements to the provision of interpreting and translation services. The main issues coming out of the four workshops were as follows:

- Lack of funding – This is the main issue which affects all other matters relating to service provision, quality assurance, training and retaining staff. Lack of funding prevented organisations, in some cases, from running an in-house service.
- Training and Recruitment of Interpreters– Public service providers should provide more training to their in-house interpreters/translators to ensure continuous professional development for all qualified and non-qualified staff. The issue of retaining interpreters/translators is not less important.
- Training Service Providers – Particular emphasis was placed on the need to train public service providers so that their staff were aware of how to work with an interpreter effectively. This would overcome many concerns for both service users and service providers, for example, over the issues of confidentiality, sharing of information, advocacy and impartiality.
- Quality assurance – There was not always consistency in the level of interpreting and translation provided. It would therefore be helpful to identify existing resources which could be used, for example, NHS written material available nationally. It was also suggested that a National Register of (Public Service) Interpreters and Translators be created in Scotland.
- Innovative and flexible ways of service delivery – Since there is a legal obligation to provide information in a format of a person's choice, it was suggested that service providers need to look at innovative and flexible ways of providing information to meet the different needs of service users, considering literacy levels, educational background, etc. There are cost implications and a need for more funding.
- Recruitment of Bilingual staff – Given that the public sector is huge and, in some cases, a contact centre approach is being adopted, bilingual staff should be employed in a variety of community languages and British Sign Language.

- Partnership Working – Service providers need to work more closely together and with their service users to identify their needs and ensure that the services meet those needs.



Lord Provost Bob Scott with the STICS members at the Seminar

Action Points for the Forum

The Forum will:

- Provide a copy of this report to the Scottish Executive.
- Circulate to delegates a Good Practice Checklist on how to work more effectively with interpreters .
- Identify the languages provided by all members to be circulated to delegates.
- Exploring the idea of the creating the National Register of (Public Service) Interpreters and Translators in Scotland.