



Engaging Interpreters in Adult Support and Protection

Developing a Learning and Development

Programme

2017

ABSTRACT

This paper reviews a small proportion of the vast body of literature on this subject in order to assist learning and development staff consider the elements that may be required in developing training sessions. It demonstrates the need for preparation and planning with regard to the use of an interpreter as well as the need to focus upon the difficulties that may arise around interpreting complex technical concepts under Adult Support and Protection and other related legislation.

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...it is the destiny of humanity to be confronted not by one language but by several.¹

Background

The issue of engaging effectively with spoken language interpreters was raised at the national Adult Support and Protection (ASP) Learning & Development (L&D) Network and on this basis the NAPC has reviewed several guides and a sample of the literature in order to offer an overview of what guidance offers, the specific prompts required and the context of these prompts. It is hoped this will provide L&D staff with an outline upon which to base the delivery of any training.

Professional codes of practice tend to make reference to the need for staff to be able to effectively use interpreting services as noted by the examples below.

The SSSC Code of Practice for employees notes that practitioners should, *'Work in a way that promotes diversity and respects different cultures and values'*², further stating that employers, *'must have the culture and systems in place to support social service workers to meet their Code of Practice.'*²

The NMC Code of Conduct ³ notes that nurses should, *'avoid making assumptions and recognise diversity and individual choice [and] use a range of verbal and non-verbal communication methods, and consider cultural sensitivities, to better understand and respond to people's personal and health needs'*³

The College of Occupational Therapists Code of Ethics⁴ notes that Occupational Therapists *'must offer equal access to services [and] be aware of and sensitive to how the above factors [age, gender, race, nationality, colour, faith, sexual orientation] affect service users' cultural and lifestyle choices, incorporating this into any service planning, individual assessment and/or intervention where possible'*⁴

With regard to how interpreters should be utilised, this paper notes that the guidance reviewed can be at odds on some issues e.g. whether the interpreter should be a cultural broker etc. Where this is the case these points are highlighted in order that the local position can be considered within the development of any training. These contradictory points may provide useful discussion points within training. It is also worth noting that some of the guidance reviewed has been prepared for different professional groups, hence language and concepts may vary from those preferred within your own context. However they provide an overall context and general agreement on the key points.

The NAPC has also located further reading and examples of policy, guidance and training slides which may be of interest to the national ASP L&D Network.

Finally this paper has been compiled to assist those in learning and development consider the elements they believe are appropriate and relevant within their context but does not offer a definitive approach and should not be treated as legal advice.

¹ Calvet, L.J. (1998) *Language wars and linguistic politics*, Oxford: Oxford University Press

² SSSC (2016) [Codes of Practice for Social Service Workers and Employers](#)

³ NMC (2015) [The Code for nurses and midwives](#)

⁴ College of Occupational Therapists (2015) [Code of Ethics and Professional Conduct](#)

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Research into the use of Interpreters

Research amongst social workers has largely focussed upon the issues encountered with availability and reliability of interpreters. However the problem may be more complex as this does not offer anything in the way of the social worker or service user's role within the process, especially as the social worker is often the lead professional. This perspective therefore focusses upon the process (interpretation) as opposed to the input (the social worker and service user dialogue)⁵

A recent study highlighted four key areas where social workers struggle to engage service users through an interpreter; '*reflective statements may not work effectively; Social workers struggle to probe; Open questions are difficult to use; and Social workers may avoid clarifying misunderstandings*'.⁵ This study identified good practice as revolving around; utilising the interpreter to engage in small talk with the service user, probing service user responses, ensuring their reflections were interpreted, clarifying misunderstandings and controlling the session.⁵

These factors are broadly reflected in the guidance for other professions cited below and appear to provide useful points for consideration in the development of multi-agency and inter-professional training where required.

Guidance

The guidance reviewed is taken from a diverse range of organisations but largely splits the task of engaging an interpreter into four distinct phases. The first being the factors required in selecting an interpreter and understanding their role. The second being the pre session briefing with the interpreter. Thirdly the factors a practitioner needs to be cognisant of during the session and finally what to do after the session. One guide also included an 'If things are not going well' section which is also noted.

This paper provides a brief outline of the issues raised and based upon the guidance reviewed, a check list of the detailed tasks and actions required when engaging an interpreter. There is also a chapter on Further Information to Assist in Developing Detailed Training which effectively provides references for further reading. This provides context to the various check lists that have been developed and referenced in this paper. Together these could assist in the development and delivery of any training.

Practitioners' Responsibilities in planning the use of an Interpreter

It is important to understand the difference between interpreting and translating and that though linked these are separate skills. The guidance referenced notes the need to be clear about what the practitioner and service user require and the qualifications of the interpreter. This emphasises the need to ascertain the individual's level of English language proficiency and likelihood of needing to use interpreting services. Furthermore it emphasises the need to articulate these factors to the interpreting services e.g. language, dialect, translation and/or interpretation.

Using family members or others that know or have a personal relationship with the service user is not advised and one of the guides highlights the need to know what to do in circumstances where the service user or family member insists that someone other than the identified interpreter fulfils this role. Another guide provides a useful list for training purposes on why it is important to use trained interpreters e.g. familiarity with the context and

⁵ Westlake, D. and Jones, R.K. (2017) Breaking Down Language Barriers: A Practice-Near Study of Social Work Using Interpreters, British Journal of Social Work, 0:1-21

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legislative requirements as well as making a clear statement that under no circumstances should protection issues be discussed by means of an informal interpreter.⁶

Practitioners need to carefully consider the need for an interpreter as although the service user may have a level of proficiency in English, speaking in English about sensitive, emotive and technical matters may be more difficult, causing the service user to reduce the level of detail they provide.⁷

Prior to interview practitioners should ensure they have an understanding of the person's culture and beliefs as these can be indirectly referenced in their engagement with professionals and may impact upon how they view the practitioner and the interpreter. Beliefs, practices and traditions are often alluded to indirectly or through terminology which may not be familiar to the practitioner. The person's principles and beliefs can therefore lead to an increase or decrease in the importance of certain conditions, circumstances or occurrences.¹⁸ Understanding these factors will assist practitioners to place the correct emphasis and interpretation upon the issues and points they raise, thereby avoiding creating unintentional tension during the interview around issues such as religion and politics.⁸ One study notes the impact that detailing the harm they have experienced could have upon the service users' command of English.²³ This highlights the importance of carefully assessing the impact of emotion and trauma upon the service user's need for an interpreter. Understanding these factors could prevent the need to cease an interview and re-commence at a later time with an interpreter.

The guides reviewed all reference the need to be clear that the interpreter has the correct skills and qualifications and this is hopefully something addressed via the agency contracted to provide these services. However given this is emphasised by most guides it seems advisable that the practitioner should double check the individuals' skill set, proficiency and qualifications prior to proceeding or perhaps seek this information from the agency providing the service. This should include double checking the interpreter is able to interpret in the service user's specific dialect and language. This then provides re-assurance to the practitioner and service user and should be considered as an issue of note in case recording. It is also important to consider the safety of the interpreter.⁶ This guide⁶ provides an example of exposing an interpreter who is pregnant to infection. When training practitioners it may therefore be useful to discuss the need to consider any environmental factors which may impact upon them and the interpreter, highlighting the need to include this in any planning with the interpreter prior to the session.

Other factors that will assist include knowing if there are issues or key phrases that will be raised which the interpreter will need to be aware of and/or understand the implications of prior to the session. These may include the type of harm or reasons the interpreter may not be suitable e.g. knowing or knowing of each other, gender, religion and class. The practitioner and interpreter will also require an understanding of any practical arrangements required around the time the interview will take, given interpreted interviews may require more time than anticipated.

⁶ NHS Health Scotland (2008), [Now we're talking - Interpreting guidelines for staff of NHS Scotland](#)

⁷ Ewens, S., Vrij, A., Leal, S., Mann, S., Jo, E. and Fisher, R. (2016), The effect of interpreters on eliciting information, cues to deceit and rapport, *Legal and Criminological Psychology*: 21, 286–304

⁸ [The British Psychological Society Professional Practice Board \(2008\) Working with Interpreters in Health Settings Guidelines for Psychologists](#)

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Use of the first person should also be promoted as use of the third person by the interpreter risks losing the service user's voice and excluding them from the process.⁹

Practitioners need to ensure that many of these factors are included in any request for an interpreter to ensure interpretation is supportive and effective. At the same time where interpreters are used over time, practitioners may wish to consider whether the service user's language proficiency has improved and how this could be formally assessed.

Checking whether the interpreter is registered with a professional registration body and accessing their code of practice may assist the training of practitioners in the use of interpreters as well as in evaluating the service where required. Where practitioners are expected to evaluate the interpreting service provided, local systems will need to be highlighted to practitioners. This should include how service user feedback is gained regarding not just the adult protection process but the interpretation process.

Briefing the interpreter

The pre-session is an opportunity to be clear about the nature of the upcoming encounter and any particular concerns that the provider would like to address regarding the patient's condition. This provides the interpreter with the information necessary to make any adjustments in his/her interpreting. For example, you may discuss whether or not the interpreting will be done in consecutive or simultaneous mode, whether there will be highly technical language that will be used, whether subsequent adjustments in register will need to be made, and whether or not the content of the session is going to be highly emotional or intense. It is also an opportunity to raise any cultural concerns that may be pertinent to the patient's presenting problem.¹⁰

Good practice would be to brief the interpreter somewhere other than the service user's home.¹¹ This provides the opportunity for introductions and discussions about technical issues regarding the type of interpretation required e.g. consecutive or simultaneous. It also provides the opportunity to discuss technical terms in relation to adult support and protection which may be used. This would allow consideration of the most appropriate interpretation of such terms and also any issues that the interpreter will need to be prepared for e.g. types of harm. However it is important to note that though there may be a temptation to focus on the business side of the interview due to the presence of an interpreter, practitioners should not dispense with the use of small talk as this could minimise the level of engagement, given this is a tool for establishing rapport and trust.⁵

Contradictory Advice

Some of the guides noted here offer different perspectives e.g. using the interpreter for language and cultural advice. The contradictions that occur between the various guidance documents have been retained in order to promote local consideration of these points within any training devised. As such they will provide a useful discussion based around local policy and professional judgement etc. One example may be the difference between offering cultural advice and advising when it is believed a cultural misunderstanding has occurred.

⁹ Centres for Disease Control and prevention (2006) National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey, Interpretation Guidelines

¹⁰ [Refugee Health Technical Assistance Area](#)

¹¹ Mental Welfare Commission for Scotland (2013) Working with an interpreter Toolkit for practitioners and interpreters

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As noted elsewhere in this report views vary as to whether consecutive (short or long) or simultaneous interpreting provides the best outcome. Issues noted include providing the interpreter with enough time to consider what has been said in order to effectively interpret it balanced with the need to translate issues as they arise in order that nothing is missed, rebalanced with the possibility that too many interruptions may reduce the flow and level of information gained.⁷ Much may depend upon how the service user views the interpreter and if viewed as being experienced and assisting the service user, this may mitigate any possible consequences of disjointed conversation.⁷ This emphasises the need to introduce the interpreter as a professional in their own right.

The use of an interpreter in itself is thought in some fields to impact upon creating rapport though one study of this issue did not find this to be the case, though acknowledged that it could be a factor in lengthy interviews.⁷ This maybe a useful discussion within training to highlight how effective introduction of the interpreter may avoid this issue.

Most guides note that only professional interpreters should be used, however urgent situations may arise where it is not possible to retain the services of an interpreter at short notice. This is an issue that may require some discussion in training and is commented upon later in this paper.

Background Theory to Introduce Training Sessions

The aim of the training session should be fourfold; attuning practitioners to their professional and legal responsibilities within a human rights context, understanding how communication supports their aims of achieving social justice¹², enhancing their confidence and competence in working with interpreters and how it can be a preventative measure¹² within the adult protection context.

Understanding the need we all have to communicate and be understood is part of our humanity¹² and may be a useful starting point. Although in the 2011 census¹³ 93% reported they only speak English at home 1.5 million people reported that they could speak Scots and 59,000 Gaelic speakers were recorded. In addition to this it has been stated that 150 languages other than English are spoken in Scotland.⁶ This example of language diversity may provide a useful discussion platform in understanding the need for interpreters and to introduce the theoretical perspective of language discrimination. This concept conveys a view that those not proficient in English can be viewed as problematic, lacking intelligence and inferior. In turn this can lead to stereotyping, discouraging practitioners from using interpreting services.¹² Obviously this is addressed by professional value base and practice approaches but may provide a useful group discussion on avoiding the perception of language discrimination through careful planning of the session.

The importance of considering language in a sociological and political context is important for workers to understand that interpreting is not simply an, '*exchange of a message between speakers*' (p 93 2016).¹² This indicates the need to understand the meaning and inferences being made, again raising the issue of the need for a cultural interpretation of what is being said. This raises practice dilemmas as the worker will need to know exactly what has been said but training could explore how and when it is most appropriate to undertake cultural interpretation. This may involve consideration of whether the interpreter

¹² Lucas, S (2016) Interpreting: One Size fits all? English Language as an essential component of social work. In: Williams C, Graham M.J. (eds.). *Social Work in a diverse Society: transformative practice with black and minority ethnic individuals and communities*. Bristol: Policy Press, pp. 91-108.

¹³ [Scotland's Census Ethnicity, Identity, Language and Religion](#)

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should raise potential issues around cultural meaning as they arise, allowing the worker to explore them directly with the service user. This alludes to another debate about what has been termed the invisible or active presence of the interpreter¹². Again this is an issue that may be useful to explore in training staff in the use of interpreters. That is, should the interpreter's role be interactive and pro-active on pre agreed issues such as cultural interpretation, interrupting sessions where they believe there has been a misunderstanding etc. or should they provide interpretation of language only?

Professional and statutory duties in providing access to interpreting may also be useful to cover. For example the national care standards state that service users should, '*receive and understand information and advice in a format or language that is right for me.*'¹⁴ Obviously within the adult protection process practitioners will be motivated to deploy the use of interpreters in order that they can ascertain the views of the adult at risk and in the exercise of their professional values. However there is a duty beyond this relating to human rights legislation in that not providing an interpreter could affect the person's right to privacy as it would leave them no choice but to ask a family member.¹⁵

Other factors may revolve around language proficiency in that the service user may be able to engage regarding day to day issues but require support to express more complex¹² and perhaps emotional issues. Therefore there is a need to understand the impact that distress may have upon someone attempting to express themselves in a language other than their preferred language and how this may impact upon their abilities in this context. This could also relate to the need to express themselves in more than one language, where culturally some concepts are better expressed in other languages causing the service user to switch between languages, one of which may or may not be English.¹²

The need to understand cultural references will hold specific importance within adult protection around assessing risk, risk perception and conception and mental capacity. Furthermore care will be required in balancing the need to understand cultural meaning whilst differentiating between facts and feelings but still highlighting relevant issues such as harm and the person's ability to make informed decisions. Discussing issues that can arise in assessing people experiencing dementia, the limitations of standard assessment tools has been noted. This is due to tools relying on factors that have no cultural or linguistic equivalent.¹⁶ This would suggest the need to share any assessment tools with the interpreter beforehand to ensure the concepts used can be effectively interpreted or translated.

These points emphasise the need to proactively offer interpreting services rather than provide them based upon service user request, as this approach may create additional stress for the service user. It also highlights the need for the service to be targeted at the service user as opposed to other family members¹² who may be more proficient in English.

Checklist for Developing Detailed Training

This section pulls together practitioner guides into similar sections highlighting the detailed aspects of engaging an interpreter. It could be reviewed locally for use as both a tool for

¹⁴ Scottish Government (2017) Health and Social Care Standards My support, my life

¹⁵ Citizens Advice Scotland, Discrimination in health and care services - why are you being treated unfairly? Protection against discrimination under human rights law [online] Available from:

<https://www.citizensadvice.org.uk/scotland/health/discrimination-in-health-and-care-services/identifying-discrimination/discrimination-in-health-and-care-services-why-are-you-being-treated-unfairly/> [Accessed 30th August 2017]

¹⁶ Grypma, R., Mahajani, S. and Tam, E. (2007) Screening and Diagnostic Assessment Of Non-English Speaking People With Dementia, Australian Government/Alzheimer's Australia

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developing training on specific aspects as well as providing a post training practitioner refresher tool in the field.

Initial Contact

In the event that a practitioner makes contact with a service user prior to any formal planning there are key things they will need to establish. These include ascertaining the person's language needs and advising them of their right to an interpreter. An example of this is briefly covered in NHS Scotland's guidelines.⁶

Urgent Situations

Any training will need to recognise that practitioners may find themselves in a situation, perhaps through duty work or urgent referral where an interpreter may not have been planned for. On this basis they should be equipped with contacts for interpreter services, rules of engagement if no interpreter is available and how to access other resources. One example of this is the emergency multilingual phrasebook¹⁷ developed by the British Red Cross. This will be of limited use within an adult protection context but raises an issue as to whether a social care version is available or should be developed.

This may also relate to telephone contact and some brief guidance on this and video conferencing is provided in the NHS Scotland guidelines.⁶

Practitioners should be made aware of any tele-interpreting services available in their area and how these are accessed. However this does not negate the issues noted above regarding the practitioners responsibility to ensure the interpreter is an appropriate match and able to meet the service user's needs.

Session Planning

Ensure the service user has consented to the interpreter being present⁶

Book the interpreter and a suitable venue as far in advance as possible⁶

Arrange to meet the interpreter before the session, prevent them from waiting with or escorting the service user and answering any questions whilst the professional care worker is not present⁶

Build in extra time for the interpreting session^{19,6}

Avoid using family members as interpreters¹⁸

Be familiar with the terminology, beliefs, practices and traditions of the service user¹⁸

Determine the interpreter's educational background and experience, level of proficiency in English and in the language used by the service user¹⁹

Be aware of the interpreter's communication style¹⁹

Try to use the same interpreter for multiple assignments so that you may establish a familiar working relationship¹⁹

*Be clear about*¹¹

¹⁷ British Red Cross (add year) [Emergency multilingual phrasebook](#)

¹⁸ Gonzalez, J. L. (2005) How to use an interpreter effectively, *Occupational Therapy Now* Vol. 7:2 March / April 2005

¹⁹ [American Speech-Language-Hearing Association \(ASHA\)](#)

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The roles of interpreters, translators and communication support workers

Which service or services you need

What to do if someone other than an interpreter insists on interpreting

The interpreter's qualifications

The interpreter's skills and experience

The language or communication support you need

How to avoid clashes (cultural, religious, political, gender, age etc.)

*Have you identified?*¹¹

Any possibility that the interpreter and service user might know each other? [or of each other]

How to gain informed consent to interventions – ensuring the person will be advised why the interview is taking place and that issues of consent will be addressed⁶

Any issues likely to arise in the interview that could be a problem for an interpreter?

Any other reason the interpreter may not be suitable for the interview?

Whether the service user has had previous interviews with the presence of an interpreter?

*Have you allowed enough time?*¹¹

For the interpreter to prepare

To brief the interpreter

For the interview^{11,6}

*Have you told the agency (or interpreter, or both?)?*¹¹:

How much time you will need

The practical arrangements

That you need to brief the interpreter somewhere other than the service user's home

That there are issues around gender which need to be considered in the allocation of an interpreter.⁶

Briefing the Interpreter

Introduce yourself to the interpreter.¹⁰

Check the interpreters ID⁶

Review the goals and purpose of the session and any relevant policies and procedures e.g. confidentiality^{19,6}

Consider any non-verbal cues which may arise and how these will be managed e.g. pausing the session to allow interpretation.¹⁹

Ensure that the interpreter understands the need to avoid unnecessary rewording¹⁹, reminding them how to use "I" and "you" in the interview?¹¹ (First person interpretation) to avoid "he said, she said".¹⁰

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Establish a rapport with the interpreter¹⁹

Agree who will record the session.^{19,11}

Learn greetings and the appropriate pronunciation of names in the family's primary language or signs¹⁹

Determine their level of English proficiency and professional training¹⁰

Establish the interpreter's skills for this type of interview¹¹

Establish the rules the interpreter must follow¹¹ including exact interpretation⁶

Warn the interpreter of any explicit language or content that they might find offensive or disturbing¹¹

Ask about any relationships or cultural issues that the interpreter must disclose¹¹

Brief the interpreter about the interview (roles, goals and procedures)^{11,6}

Establish whether you need consecutive or simultaneous interpreting¹¹

Agree what the interpreter should do about any language or cultural problems that arise in the interview¹¹

Explain when it is acceptable for the interpreter to interrupt you¹¹

Agree how the interpreter should interrupt the session if required e.g. raised hand⁶

Discuss practical issues (noise, seating arrangements, personal alarm, length of the interview, breaks)¹¹

Brief the interpreter about the service user's:¹¹

- Background
- Speech or language characteristics (if relevant)
- Likely behaviour (if relevant)

Ask the interpreter about:¹¹

- How to pronounce the service user's name
- Any cultural issues and differences that could lead to misunderstandings e.g. different cultural expectations and needs, values, beliefs and perceptions [noting the practitioner should be aware of their own cultural viewpoint and how this may impact on their perceptions]

Agree how the interpreter will check the service user's language, dialect or signs^{11,6}

Establish what to do if the interpreter has problems with the service user's language or attitude during the interview¹¹

Give the interpreter an opportunity to read and ask questions about written material¹¹

Plan your response if the service user refuses use of the interpreter or the dynamics of the interview become confused.¹¹

Prepare a written outline of the key points and any technical terms you are going to use that will require interpreting and use it in the session⁶

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Emotionally prepare the interpreter and check they are able to proceed⁶

Expectations of the interpreter⁶

In addition to some of the above points the NHS guidance states that workers should not expect the interpreter to analyse the information, decide what is interpreted, be a cultural expert, provide counsel or support or attempt to address the service user's emotional state. However, this guidance expects the interpreter to confirm a match between the person's language and their interpreting language, advice of any difficulties due to dialect or technical phrases, disclose if they are known to the person's family in any way and to be impartial.

During the Session

Remember it is your interview: you are responsible for it, not the interpreter¹¹

Check seating arrangements and that the person is ready to proceed^{6'11}

Introduce yourself and the interpreter in the service users' preferred language if possible.¹⁹

If someone is going to take notes, be clear that this is going to happen, who will be carrying out the role, why they are doing it and what will happen to the notes^{11'19}

Describe your roles and clarify expectations.¹⁹

Establish the ground rules¹¹ and how the mechanics of interpretation will work (as per the next point)

Speak, through the interpreter, to the service user to make sure everyone understands how interpreting works¹¹

Reassure the service user about impartiality and confidentiality¹¹

Don't leave the interpreter alone and unaccompanied with the service user¹¹

Confirm consent for the presence of the interpreter⁶

Acknowledge the interpreter as a professional in communication. Define⁶ and respect their role.¹⁰ Check that the service user can understand the interpreter¹¹

Speak directly to the service user not to the interpreter.^{10'18'19'6} If you need to speak directly to the interpreter explain why to the service user.⁶

Speak slowly rather than loudly, clearly, naturally, in everyday English and with an appropriate tone^{11'18'10'6}

Pause frequently to allow the interpreter to translate information and avoid jargon^{19'6}

Mentally organize what you will say to avoid confusing the interpreter with contradictions, conditional ideas or stumbling over words.¹⁸

Avoid complicated sentence structure, fragments, oversimplification, changing your idea in the middle of a sentence, asking multiple questions at one time, ambiguous questions or statements, abstractions, idiomatic expressions, similes and metaphors.^{10'19}

Speak at an even pace in relatively short segments. Pause so the interpreter can interpret.¹⁰ Use short sentences and substitute technical terms and professional jargon with plain speech (noting some terms may not have a direct interpretation⁶). When long explanations are needed, divide them up to make sure that the entire message is translated.^{18'19'6}

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Allow enough time for the interpreter to organize the information for effective interpretation.¹⁹ Giving the interpreter time to restructure information in order that they can present it in a culturally and linguistically appropriate manner.¹⁰ Remember the more clearly the interpreter captures the message, the more accurately they can then transmit it.¹⁸

Be aware of non-verbal body language and gestures that may be offensive to the service user.¹⁹

Periodically check with the interpreter to see if you are speaking too fast or too slowly, too softly, or unclearly¹⁹

Explain that the interpreter will interpret everything that is said, without adding or omitting anything¹¹

Explain that the interpreter cannot provide advice or explain things¹¹

Say “I” and “you”¹¹ and explain how the interpreter will use “I” and “you”¹¹

Explain that the interpreter might ask the service user to speak more slowly, loudly or to pause – and ask if this is OK¹¹

Do not assume understanding based upon positive phrases or gestures alone and ask open questions to check understanding.⁶

Go over a section more than once if you sense a problem but receive a negative reply. Make sure that the interpreter knows exactly what you want. Use related questions, rephrase the sentences and get to the problem indirectly if necessary.¹⁸

Do not hold the interpreter responsible for what the service user says or doesn’t say. If you feel that you are not getting the type of response you were expecting, restate the question or consult with the interpreter to better understand if there is a cultural barrier that is interfering with communication.¹⁰ As before, ensure any such discussions are interpreted

Provide opportunity for questions from the service user⁶

Assume, and insist, that everything you say, everything the service user says, and everything that family members say is interpreted.^{10,6}

Patience is required.¹⁸ Be aware that concepts you express may have no linguistic or conceptual equivalent in other languages and/or may take the interpreter some time to achieve effective interpretation.¹⁰

Remember that the service user and perhaps the interpreter may have experienced trauma related to the subject you are asking about. If you need to ask questions of a very personal or sensitive nature, explain that doing so is part of your assessment and reiterate your agency’s confidentiality policy.¹⁰

Avoid making assumptions or generalizations about your service users experiences as common practices or beliefs in a community may not apply to everyone in that community.¹⁰

Encourage the interpreter to ask you questions and alert you to potential cultural misunderstandings.¹⁰

Respect an interpreter’s judgment that a particular question is culturally inappropriate and either rephrase the question or ask the interpreter’s help in eliciting the information in a more appropriate way.¹⁰

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Avoid patronizing or infantilizing the service user.¹⁰

Ask the service user what they believe the issue is, its causes and how it would be addressed within their culture.¹⁰

Ask the service user to repeat back important information that you want to make sure is understood.¹⁰

Be respectful (of the service user and the interpreter)¹¹

Maintain eye contact with the service user, if culturally appropriate¹¹

Understand that words of feeling, attitude, and qualities may not have the same meaning when directly translated.¹⁹

Listen carefully to the interpreter and service user and speak sensitively across cultures¹¹ (taking into account the above factors)

If necessary, adjust your language to take account of learning difficulties or communication needs¹¹

Stop every now and again to summarise the discussion¹¹

In consecutive interpreting, use short sentences and express information in chunks¹¹

In simultaneous interpreting pause frequently to allow the interpreter to catch up¹¹

Be aware of cross-cultural, non-verbal communication, such as eye contact^{11,6} and heed visual information (body language, facial expression and gestures)¹¹

Respond appropriately if the interpreter intervenes¹¹

Ask the service user, not the interpreter, to explain something you do not understand¹¹

Be aware of the pressure on the interpreter¹¹

Allow the interpreter breaks if appropriate¹¹

Don't make asides¹¹

Don't interrupt¹¹

Don't allow everyone to speak at the same time if there are several interviewers¹¹ [or family members]

Don't ask the interpreter for advice about anything other than language issues¹¹

At the end of the interview remember to:

Allow the interpreter time to sight-translate (oral explanation of written materials²⁰) any written material¹¹ [this may include assessment tools as noted above]

Formally end the interview¹¹

Ask the service user if they've understood everything or have any questions¹¹

Ask the service user how they'd like any feedback sent to them¹¹

Make sure whoever takes notes properly disposes of papers and notes¹¹

²⁰ NCIHC (2009) [Sight Translation and Written Translation Guidelines for Healthcare Interpreters](#)

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Provide written materials in the family's first language whenever possible.¹⁹

If the Interview is Not Going Well ¹¹

The Mental Welfare Commission advise the use of these questions to identify the cause of any issues:

Is the interpreter fluent or competent enough in English?

Is the interpreter familiar with the service user's language, dialect or style of language use?

Is the service user's language incoherent or does it have other complications?

Is the interpreter acceptable to the service user (cultural, religious, political, gender, age, background etc.)?

Is there a communication barrier between the service user and the interpreter e.g. cold or patronising language)?

Is your relationship with the interpreter appropriate; e.g. does the interpreter feel able to interrupt you to indicate problems, seek clarification or repetition?

Is the interpreter putting forward their own views or opinions?

Does the interpreter understand their role and boundaries?

Does the interpreter understand the purpose of the interview?

Are you using everyday English?

Are you communicating in a style adapted to the service user's needs?

Is the interpreter ashamed of or embarrassed by the service user or what is being discussed?

Are you asking too much of the interpreter?

Are you allowing the interpreter enough time?

Are several people speaking at the same time?

Are you talking to the interpreter rather than to the service user?

Have you managed to establish a rapport with the service user through the interpreter?

Does the interpreter need a break or the opportunity to flag up something?

After the Interview

Set aside a short time to talk over the interview with the interpreter¹¹

Allow the interpreter to express their feelings¹¹

Debrief the interpreter¹¹

Learn any lessons¹¹

Make arrangements for any follow-up work¹¹

Avoid use of professional jargon¹⁹

Discuss any difficulties in the interpretation process¹⁹

Record the intervention including issues of content, refusal of interpreting services, insistence upon family or others interpreting, issues with interpreter availability etc.⁶

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Prevent the interpreter from leaving the session with the service user⁶

Interpreting within an Adult Support and Protection Context

The guidance reviewed would indicate that understanding how to engage an interpreter appropriately is applicable across any area of practice. One issue that has arisen in drafting this paper is that when considering an ASP investigation this could lead to there being at least three professionals in the room with the service user (the Council Officer, the second interviewer or Police Officer and the interpreter). This would require serious consideration beforehand as to how this is managed and explained to the service user.

Clearly this could be a very intimidating scenario and emphasises the need to focus upon the pre-planning and interpreter briefing sections in order that room set up, introductions and explanations are carefully considered to ensure the session is as supportive as possible. The distress of being harmed and the stress of a formal process could impact negatively upon both the service users' wellbeing and upon the quality of information they are able to provide. Having reflected upon the material gathered here it is suggested that these factors would require a focus within any training. Reference here could be made to the Guidance on Joint Investigative Interviewing of Child Witnesses in Scotland.²¹

It is also important to note that the concept of adult protection may not have a direct equivalent in the culture of the person being interviewed. Time will be required to consider this and work with the interpreter to ensure that the interviewer is happy with the explanation being given as to how the process will be described.

Some of the points raised above are noted in a review of issues arising within police interviews assisted by interpreters.²² This highlighted points that may be relevant to consider within training staff to use interpreters for an ASP interview. These included:

- Interviewer awareness and expectations of the interpreter's role
- Inappropriate delegation of the interviewers duties to the interpreter i.e. interpreter taking the lead
- Interviewer's ability to communicate with the interpreter
- Interpreters leading the interview and asking their own questions etc.
- Role confusion between the interviewer and interpreter
- The interviewer expecting the interpreter to provide guidance
- Effective communication between the interviewer and the interpreter within the interview to ensure questions and answers are of a manageable length, at the right pace and when to switch between consecutive and simultaneous modes.
- Recognising the time factor in carrying out an interpreted interview
- Lack of full and accurate interpretation, most likely due to the use of unqualified interpreters
- Interpreters lack of knowledge of the interviewers role

It may be useful to develop practitioners understanding of how these issues can arise and be avoided where appropriate.

²¹ [Guidance on Joint Investigative Interviewing of Child Witnesses in Scotland](#)

²² Mayfield, K. (2016), [The issues and challenges surrounding interpreter-assisted investigative interviews of victims and witnesses](#)

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A further study regarding the challenges within child sexual abuse interviews again reflected the issues noted above.²³ It also found the following which may require consideration in any training delivered to those practicing under ASP:

- The need to scrutinise interpreters skill levels and competencies in relation to both interpretation and their understanding of the issues of harm being explored
- Interpreters changing the formality of the language used
- Interpreters changing the meaning and form of words
- Interpreters changing the questions asked e.g. to closed questions
- Interpreters misuse of the first person
- The interpreters presentation to the service user within the interview
- The above factors later being apparent due to misinterpretation and inconsistencies in the evidence gathered
- Obtaining effective interpretation in remote and rural areas especially for smaller language groups
- Interpreters lack of preparedness to deal with traumatic and sensitive issues and a low level of understanding regarding the interview process (e.g. non leading questions) impacting upon their ability to effectively fulfil their role
- Interpreter's distress impacting upon the service users' engagement.
- A lack of effective strategies on the part of the interviewer to manage the emotional impact upon the interpreter when issues arise.
- The use of an interpreter, though essential, may add to service user fatigue due to the impact of a new person being present and the interpretation process itself
- The need for a pre -session to introduce the interpreter and brief the interpreter on the issues likely to arise. Also to build rapport and place both the service user and interpreter at greater ease in the actual session through increased understanding of the format and purpose of the session.

Baseline Skill Set

One study on child protection joint investigative interviewing in Scotland ²⁴ highlights an issue with baseline skills in relation to promoting free narrative within such interviews. This may be an area that requires consideration with ASP interview training and accordingly within any training in the use of interpreters as this may be more complex when using an interpreter. Essentially there is a need to ensure those being trained already have the requisite skills in investigative interviewing.

Being clear about the role of the interpreter

In reviewing the literature it is apparent that role definition is paramount for the reasons noted throughout this paper. These reasons are not re-iterated here but the issue is noted in order to give it prominence as any training session will need to emphasise this point and what local expectations of the role are.

Consecutive and Simultaneous Interpretation

Perspectives differ as to which form of interpretation is most accurate. Using the consecutive mode offers the interpreter the opportunity to listen and consider the phrases used as a whole before interpreting them. Simultaneous interpretation limits the time available to

²³ Powell, M.B., Jacinthe, M., Sharman, D. & Sharman, S. J. (2017) [Professionals' Perspectives about the Challenges of Using Interpreters in Child Sexual Abuse Interviews](#), Psychiatry, Psychology and Law, 24:1, 90-101

²⁴ Goetzold, S. (2017), An Open and Shut Case of Closed Questions: An Exploration of Joint Investigative Interview Training in Scotland, *Child Abuse Review*, 26: 116–129 Wiley Online Library

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consider the information and therefore may not offer such a rounded and precise meaning. However by providing simultaneous interpretation there may be less chance of missing individual issues.²⁵

Consecutive interpreting has two parts, firstly listening and taking notes and secondly structuring the dialogue for transmission to the practitioner.²⁵ It can be broken down into short or longer segments. Whereas simultaneous provides as close to an immediate interpretation as possible. Issues can arise in both modes where the interpreter is under pressure to note many issues or concepts or to immediately interpret complex issues. In both instances they may miss aspects.²⁵

The above factors emphasise the need to give the interpreter the time they need to provide an effective interpretation and to give them the opportunity to consider their interpretation, especially where interpreting complex and/or numerous issues. This also highlights the need for the practitioner to think carefully about the interpretation to ensure each of the points raised has been addressed.

Discussing the mode to be used with the interpreter and gaining their view of the most appropriate method would seem sensible.

Further Information to Assist in Developing Detailed Training

This section provides a sample of useful background literature for those considering running any training around the use of interpreters. They are provided as an illustration of the breadth of literature on the subject and the need to develop a broad knowledge of the subject when developing a training session. Some of the literature notes issues around ineffective interpretation leading to misdiagnosis and treatment. Within the ASP context this could relate to risk assessment being based upon inaccurate or skewed information leading to inaction or actions under ASPA which do not meet the person's needs.

Working with Interpreters in Health Settings Guidelines for Psychologists⁸

These guidelines for psychologists working in the English statutory context offer a similar approach to those noted above. The document provides a useful introduction which may assist those designing courses and is academically referenced throughout. This guide also provides notable detail on working with service users requiring sign language interpretation. Finally sections 3 through 8, 10 and 11 would be useful reading for anyone attending training in the use of interpreters.

How to Communicate Effectively Through Interpreters - A Guide for Leaders²⁶

This offers a bullet point list aimed at military personnel and covers expectations of the interpreter, the practitioner using the interpreter and some pitfalls to be aware of. With correct referencing this could be the basis of a handout for post training prompts

²⁵ Gile, D (2001) [Consecutive vs. Simultaneous: which is more accurate?](#) Tsuuyakukenkyuu - Interpretation Studies. 1: 1. 8-20

²⁶ Center for Army Lessons Learned (2003) How to Communicate Effectively Through Interpreters A Guide for Leaders, News from the Front, Nov-Dec 03

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Therapeutic Use of Interpreters²⁷

This book chapter offers an overview of interpretation models, interpreter competences, stages of interpretation and common problems. It emphasises the importance of cultural meaning and emotional content. It also provides excellent examples of technical difficulties which could be useful as role plays or discussion points. The chapter also discusses clinical assessment and some of the issues which can arise and which may therefore be useful to cover in how practitioners' should prepare with an interpreter for a session. It concludes with a check list similar to those noted above and may be useful for practitioners to consider and critique prior to, within or post training.

Suggestions for Effective Use of Interpreters or Translators²⁸

This information is provided by the Massachusetts Commission for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing and may therefore be useful for instances when interpretation is by means of sign language. However comparison to local guidance is recommended alongside the need to contact relevant agencies for advice e.g. Scottish Association of Sign Language Interpreters (SASLI). This are of interpretation may require separate training and guidance for practitioners.

Effective Use of Interpreters Guidelines²⁹

These guidelines are produced by the Washington State Coalition for Language Access. They state that, *'It is fundamental to ensure that whatever vehicle is used to empower the client, it is sufficiently flexible to accommodate the "personal" and cultural individuality of all clients involved in the process'* (p1) These guidelines may be another tool for use in developing post training prompts.

Working with interpreters³⁰

This descriptive commentary aims to improve communication when an interpreter is used within healthcare settings by providing practical advice to staff.

This paper discusses the appropriateness of using family as interpreters. This may be a useful discussion in any training raising the inherent difficulties from an ASP perspective, especially where the harmer could be the person providing interpretation. It briefly explores the informal role of an interpreter as an assistant in navigating health care systems, contrary to most guidance. This raises an issue which may be useful to cover in training as consideration should be given to when and how this support can be made available if not through informal use of the interpreter e.g. advocacy . This paper also usefully covers the importance of knowing the service user's background in comparison to the interpreters. It discusses the importance of not assuming that a shared language equates to a shared culture and the need to be aware of tensions which can arise when certain factors are not recognised when selecting an interpreter. These can include the interpreter being a member of the same community as the service user, being from a different social class from the service user or a different ethnicity or religion. This paper also provides a check list which reflects the points above and also poses useful questions which could be the basis of follow up learning and development questionnaires or assessments. Finally this paper notes the

²⁷ [Lee, E. \(1997\) Therapeutic Use of Interpreters In: Working with Asian Americans: A Guide for Clinicians \(1997\). Reprinted with the permission of Guilford Press.](#)

²⁸ [Commonwealth of Massachusetts Executive Office of Health and Human Services, Massachusetts Commission for the Deaf & Hard of Hearing: Suggestions for Effective Use of Interpreters or Translators](#)

²⁹ [Washington State Coalition for Language Access](#)

³⁰ [Hadziabdic, E and Hjelm, K \(2013\) Working with interpreters: practical advice for use of an interpreter in healthcare, International Journal of Evidence Based Healthcare 11: 69–76](#)

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importance of understanding when it is appropriate to use telephone interpretation as opposed to face to face.

Working with Interpreters Guidelines³¹

Although written in a different legal and practice context this is an example of a straightforward accessible guide. In relation to their own policies this provides an example of guidelines which covers; when interpreters should be engaged, risks of communicating through unaccredited interpreters, how to work with an interpreter onsite, by telephone and video conference and assessing the quality of a professional interpreting session.

Interpreter Use Training an Introduction to Culturally Effective Healthcare³²

This provides an example of a PowerPoint presentation from a training session on using interpreters in the American health service context and is based upon the call, *'for greater focus on cultural competency and awareness... [and the need for staff] to be given the opportunity to develop an awareness of the role of culture in health care delivery... to learn and practice basic skills that can aid them in delivering culturally relevant care to diverse populations'* (slide 3).

Interpreting and Translation in NHS Lothian Policy for Meeting the Needs of People with Limited English Proficiency³³

This offers a policy example and vision regarding the use of interpreters and is useful in considering the need to develop any training in accordance with local policy.

Preparing for a remote interpreter via phone or video³⁴

This website covers remote interpreting via telephone or video and provides a script for introducing such a session.

Enhanced Communication via an Interpreter³⁵

This may be a useful online training tool. The website states that this tool, *'... highlights the importance of using a trained, professional interpreter who is qualified, experienced, security-vetted and registered with their professional body. It explains the importance of briefing both the client and the interpreter correctly and provides guidance on how to do this properly.'*

Now we're talking – interpreting guidelines for staff of NHS Scotland⁶

Referenced throughout this paper this guide also offers some examples of non-verbal communications and how they can be misinterpreted through the application of different cultural meaning.

Guide to Interpreter Positioning in Health Care Settings³⁶

This offers some advice on positioning of the interpreter within the context of an interview which may be useful to consider in the delivery of any training. It also briefly covers the issue of consent.

National Occupation Standards

These may be of use in designing any training course for those working under the auspices of adult support and protection. Those relating to the use of interpreters (SFJAB3)³⁷ offer a

³¹ [Queensland Health \(2007\) Working with Interpreters Guidelines](#)

³² [Cunningham, H \(2002\) Interpreter Use Training an Introduction to Culturally Effective Healthcare](#)

³³ [Interpreting and Translation in NHS Lothian Policy for Meeting the Needs of People with Limited English Proficiency](#)

³⁴ [Refugee Health Technical Assistance Area, Preparing for a Remote Interpreted Session](#)

³⁵ [Cambridgeshire Constabulary \(2017\) Enhanced communication via an interpreter](#)

³⁶ [NCIHC Care Working Papers Series \(2003\) Guide to Interpreter Positioning in Health Care Settings](#)

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useful list of components that reflect those discussed in this paper. In addition there are also standards for those providing interpreting services (CFAINTA1)³⁸ which may be useful where you require your staff to comment upon the quality of services provided and/or to raise their awareness of the type of service they should expect. These may be useful reference points but their status has not been confirmed during this work.

Summary

There is a vast amount written on the use of interpreters and this paper provides only a sample of what is available. However based upon the material reviewed below are some considerations for learning and development staff considering the delivery of training for those working under the auspices of the Adult Support and Protection (Scotland) Act 2007.

Training

Having considered this paper in moving forward it may be advisable to seek the views of interpreting services as to what they feel is required and indeed whether they are able to offer any support in the provision of local training.

Planning and Scheduling

The Cambridgeshire Constabulary video provides a definition of interpreting which it may be useful to articulate to both the interpreter and the service user as to the practitioners' expectations of the role. It states that:

The role of an interpreter is to convey the meaning of the spoken message from one language to another so that people who don't share the same language can communicate. It is essential you use a professional interpreter for accurate and impartial interpreting. Interpreters transfer ideas and concepts across languages and cultures without changing the message in any way: without summarising, adding or omitting anything.³⁵

The interpreter is likely to be subject to a code of practice either via their profession or their employer and it may be useful for the practitioner to see this prior to engaging with the interpreter to provide re-assurance and greater understanding of the role.

It has become clear in carrying out this review of some of the materials available that the pre-session planning and briefing with the interpreter are as important as the session itself. However, although professionals may be aware that the work will take a little longer than a non-interpreted session, they may not realise that it could take considerably longer. This should be emphasised in the context of providing the required amount of time to facilitate an accurate and supportive interpretation.

Investigative Interviews

One study noted in this paper with regard to joint interviewing of children raises the issue of base line knowledge around how to carry out investigative interviews, especially in relation to what is described as the free narrative section. This suggests that any session on how to use an interpreter effectively should firstly be clear what the baseline skill set is amongst the proposed trainees. This will assist in addressing any knowledge or skill gaps around carrying out investigative interviews etc. allowing trainees to more easily assimilate the interpreter training.

³⁷ National Occupational Standards (2013) [SFJAB3 Facilitate communication using interpreters](#)

³⁸ National Occupational Standards (2006) [CFAINTA1 Prepare for interpreting assignments](#)

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Check lists

The check list provided may be of use to those that have been trained in the use of interpreters but given the complexity of the issues it may not be advisable to issue this as a standalone guide and should perhaps only be deployed amongst those that have received training.

Cultural Competence and Sensitivity

One theme is that of cultural competence and the need for the practitioner to achieve this and whether or not it is appropriate for the interpreter to fulfil the role of cultural broker. This point is addressed in several of the above papers and is an issue which training would need to consider in light of local policy and service user need. These are factors that require consideration to ensure that the Council Officer is culturally and linguistically appropriate with an understanding of how humour and other concepts may be received in a different context than they were delivered. This could be supported by running exercises that demonstrate such points when there is *not* a notable language or cultural difference to highlight how through a different culture or linguistic lens misunderstandings can be amplified. As noted above, understanding terminology, beliefs, practices and traditions of the service user ¹⁸ is important. Consideration may therefore be required as to whether this forms part of the training on using interpreters or a separate but related set of training.

Interpreters Understanding of Adult Support and Protection

Ensuring effective interpretation will require careful consideration with the interpreter as to what adult support and protection means and importantly how some of the terms that may arise should be interpreted. This should include conceptual meanings in context e.g. inquiry, investigation, adult at risk of harm, protection order etc. Where an agency has a standing contract with an interpreting agency these may be in place but if they are not or the interpreter is new to this kind of work it may be worth considering this to save practitioner time when an interpreted interview is required.

Consecutive and Simultaneous Interpretation

It is useful for practitioners to understand these two modes of interpretation and to understand the potential pitfalls of each. This may assist them in their pre-session planning with the interpreter who will also have a perspective on what has worked well for them in the past. These are complex issues and it may be that after consideration with the interpreter a mixed method is suggested e.g. consecutive for explanations about the process and background information and simultaneous for interview questions.

Planning Training in the use of Interpreters

It is hoped that this paper will assist in planning any training session on the use of interpreters. The overall learning objective would be to develop the Council Officer's ability to effectively use an interpreter within an adult protection context.

The literature referenced here suggests that it would be useful to match the concepts covered in any training around using an interpreter with the trainees existing skill set e.g. investigative interviewing. This will serve to place the trainee at ease but also remind them not to get lost in the interpretation side of the interview and to ensure that they continue to deploy their existing value base and interview skills around respect, empathy and active listening etc.

Based upon this paper it may be useful to break any training down into five sections; pre-session planning, interpreter briefing, the interview, what to do when things aren't going well and session debriefing.

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It would seem that it is important that practitioners have an understanding of how they may be perceived and any training provided may benefit from videoing or role playing with trainees in order that they can develop an understanding about their own presentation and delivery. This could be achieved by viewing a video of themselves in self-learning time or working in small groups to allow others to provide feedback in this regard.

Stock Phrase Interpretation, Pre-prepared Explanations and Urgent Situations

There may be a need to ascertain whether any social care equivalent to the emergency multilingual phrasebook is available or requires development.

It would be useful for practitioners to prepare or have access to pre-prepared jargon free explanations of the ASPA process which can then be interpreted with relative ease. This may exist to some extent in public information leaflets but other information may require development e.g. in depth explanations of Section 3, the advocacy role or protection orders.

It may be worthwhile considering developing a local resource that provides written translation of ASPA explanations for use in urgent situations similar to that developed by the British Red Cross for medical purposes. This may be particularly useful to out of hours/emergency duty team staff.

Consent

The issue of consent to the use and presence of an interpreter should be covered in any training alongside consent for other interventions, taking note of any changes introduced by GDPR.³⁹ This mainly relates to ensuring sufficient explanation is provided in order that the service user understands what they are consenting to and what actions the agency/practitioner intends to take.

Specific Issues to highlight in training

Of particular interest may be the issues highlighted on pages 15 and 16 above by Mayfield (2016)²² and Powell et al (2017)²³ given they are issues that have arisen in the use of interpreters in other fields.

Conclusions

This paper provides an insight into the academic writing and professional guides around the use of interpreters. The generic factors identified appear to be applicable in the adult support and protection context.

The factors and issues noted here could be considered in designing a learning and development course on the use of interpreters in adult support and protection. The key stages identified may provide a basic structure for such a course and the issues identified could provide useful discussion, especially those relating to whether an interpreter should be deployed as language interpreter only or whether there is a need for them to also offer cultural interpretation. This reflects the points made around how a cultural perspective can place different meaning or at least emphasis on certain points.

In using an interpreter staff will need to understand the importance of using the first person and why this is important in avoiding confusion and complicating or lengthening interpretation due to the addition of 'he said', 'she said' statements. The key reason though is that using the third person risks losing the voice of the service user and excluding them from the process.

³⁹ [Overview of the General Data Protection Regulation \(GDPR\)](#), ICO website, last accessed 17.11.17.

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Another important point raised here is the baseline skill of those being trained to use interpreters. Given that the use of an interpreter could form part of an adult protection investigation it seems important to ascertain that those being trained are proficient in carrying out investigations which may require some pre-course evaluation.

The need for pre-interpreted adult protection terms and explanations is raised in this paper and where developed these could be included in training to ensure their appropriate use.

Finally the guide points noted though useful are probably best deployed post training as practitioners will require time to explore and discuss some of the themes and issues raised, both in terms of their own practice and how decisions made reflect local policy and procedure.