

Report to Scrutiny Commission

Neighbourhood Services & Community Involvement

Date of Commission meeting: 25 October 2017

Community Languages

Report of the Director of Delivery, Communications and
Political Governance



Useful information

- Ward(s) affected: All Wards
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1. Purpose of report

To provide an overview of the Council's approach to provision of community languages specifically the role of the Community Language Service and the services it provides including: information about when translation and interpretation services are used; details of the demand for translation and interpretation services in particular languages and the council service areas which request language services most frequently. It also includes specific information for Customer Services and Revenues and Benefits, and Housing Options which are services where there is a very high volume of customer contact.

2. Recommendations to Scrutiny

The Neighbourhood Services and Community Involvement Scrutiny Commission are asked to review and comment on the report.

3. Summary

3.1 Overview of the Community Language Services

Leicester City Council's Community Language Services provide translation and interpretation services for non-English speakers and people with visual impairment or hearing difficulties.

Braille translations, audio recordings, telephone interpretation and sign language services are also available.

The language services can be commissioned by internal city council services and also external organisations and are chargeable.

3.2 When are translation and interpretation services used?

The number of languages continues to increase as the city's population becomes more diverse. However, in line with central government policy, the council encourages the use of English as the city's main language. A copy of the city council's Interpretation and Translation Policy is appended.

The policy position reflects the importance of having good English skills in terms of participating in society including in finding work and in enabling people to communicate with one another as an important factor in supporting integration and cohesive communities. The policy does also recognise that there will always be circumstances where translation or interpretation is needed particularly on a one-to-one basis where someone does not have sufficient English Language skills and needs to be able to

understand their legal rights, medical or care advice or their financial and other responsibilities. An example where this policy practically applies is within the Customer Service Centre where a resident seeks assistance with their Housing Benefit entitlement appeal or a family require an explanation of the council duty under the Homelessness Act.

In line with the policy therefore, Council staff will not translate material into other languages or provide interpretation as a matter of course. However, our Public Sector Equality Duty requires us to ensure that there are no barriers to residents accessing services they need. This applies to information on those services as well. This has recently been applied where the Social Welfare Advice consultation was translated. The recent Transforming Neighbourhood Services programme also ensured that consultation information was provided in non-English languages where appropriate on an area by area basis to ensure all members of the community were able to understand and comment on the proposals.

The council seeks to have a workforce which reflects the population we serve to help provide support where there may be language and cultural barriers. Residents and service users will be supported to access and use council services, make informed decisions and take advantage of life opportunities in the city.

The council seeks to ensure that information is accessible to those who most need it, and will use interpretation and translation where this is required.

Where the individual user will be put at significant disadvantage without a specific piece of information, that information will be provided in a suitable format for them - as long as the council is made aware of their particular needs. For a few Council Tax Charge payers we produce their bills and correspondence in large text or transpose the information on an audio disc.

This includes decisions directly affecting people's lives, such as whether they would receive a service or not, or where there are contractual obligations on the service users' part, such as payments to be made.

The service officer will need to consider how best to meet the council's and person's information and access needs, whether through interpretation or by translating written information. The council's Community Language Services is able to advise officers on how best to meet language needs within these given situations. Plain English is used in public facing settings such as libraries and community centres to remove barriers to access. Library self-service kiosks are image driven to overcome potential translation problems. Procedures such as borrower registration have been simplified and do not involve written forms which may be off-putting for potential joiners. The network of public access library computers support Microsoft access tools and access to online translation tools such as those provided by Google. A range translation tools are available online and web browsers can display alternative scripts. A range of foreign language books and magazines dependent on local community profiles are provided as part of the library stock strategy. Under the TNS programme a number of larger buildings have been transformed to accommodate multiple services such as Adult Learning, Libraries, customer and housing self-service and reception facilities and community spaces. The project has aimed to deliver joined up services in the heart of local communities where residents feel comfortable and well supported to access a

range of services in a familiar environment.

The council's Interpretation and Translation Policy sets out when council staff should and should not translate or interpret service information into any of the numerous languages or dialects used across the city. It is up to staff to consistently apply the policy on a case by case basis in order to determine whether translation or interpretation is necessary and practicable.

3.3 Language services and work requested

Typically the Community Language Services team receives around 40 requests per day for language services.

i) Translation

Between April 2016 to March 2017, the Community Language Services received requests to translate various documents such as: assessments, care plans, annual reports, letters, emails, feedback sheets, leaflets, booklets, court/legal documents, certificates, written agreements, fostering reports, questionnaires, survey reports, statements, WhatsApp and text messages, minutes of meetings, review reports, various forms, posters and signs.

ii) Interpretation

During the same period, the team received requests for situations and settings (from both internal and external organisations including: home visits, contact sessions, Occupational Therapy assessments, Physiotherapy (NHS), education welfare issues, schools (including academies) and colleges (parent evenings, school appeals, welfare rights related matters), homelessness and housing issues, case conferences, court cases, birth and death registrations, marriage ceremonies, coroner courts, benefit issues, licencing, pace interviews, solicitors, Department of Work and Pensions work, unannounced visits, police stations, prisons, medical visits, fly tipping and nuisance issues, domestic violence, local authorities (including London boroughs) and housing associations.

iii) Languages requested

During 2016/17, the Community Language Services handled requests for language services in around 60 different languages. The most frequently requested languages were:

1. Gujarati	11. Pushto
2. Urdu	12. Kurdish
3. Punjabi	13. Romanian
4. Bengali	14. British Sign Language
5. Somali	15. Tamil
6. Arabic	16. Portuguese
7. Farsi	17. Tigrinya
8. Polish	18. French
9. Slovak	19. Hindi
10. Chinese	20. Russian

3.4 Number of requests for different language services from internal council

services and external organisations during 2015 to 2016 (financial year) and 2016 to 2017 (financial year)

i) Requests from internal council services

Service requested	Year ending 5 April 2016	Year ending 5 April 2017
Telephone interpretation	2637	3129
Face to face interpretation	5698	6123
Translation	115	177
Braille	8	0
Audio	0	1
British Sign Language	108	77

ii) Requests from external organisations

Service requested	Year ending 5 April 2016	Year ending 5 April 2017
Telephone interpretation	69	84
Face to face interpretation	730	473
Translation	44	64
Braille	1	0
Audio	0	1
British Sign Language	16	1

The decrease in requests for face-to-face interpretation from external organisations between year ending 5 April 2016 and year ending 5 April 2017 can be attributed to two main reasons. In previous years, the Community Languages Service provided face to face translations for University Hospitals Leicester. The NHS subsequently made the decision to create a contract for the whole of the East Midlands region and the Community Languages Service was unable to bid for a contract on this scale. Leicester hospitals are obliged to use the company that provides language services under the contract.

Secondly, several years ago the Community Languages Service provided face to face interpretation to Job Centre Plus when immigration from eastern European countries was at a peak. The demand for these services has slowly declined and in recent years,

interpretation has been delivered in these settings via video link rather than face to face.

3.5 Volume of language service requests by service area during 2016 to 2017 (financial year)

The information below reflects very much the policy position of interpretation/translation where there are more specific needs. The lists below are typically those services dealing with more complex and sensitive matters where it is important individuals understand their situation, their rights and the nature of the service intervention, with Children's and Adult Social Care generating the largest volumes.

i) Requests for telephone interpretation (starting with highest)

1. Children In Need Team
2. Looked After Children Team
3. Contact & Response
4. Housing Options
5. Care Navigators
6. Occupational Therapy
7. Revenue & Benefits
8. Persons From Abroad Team
9. Duty & Advice
10. Adult Mental Health
11. Hostels
12. Enablement Team
13. Adult Learning Disabilities
14. Early Help and Family Support
15. Children Learning Disabilities
16. Outreach Team
17. Single Assessment
18. Kinship/Fostering
19. Youth Offending Service
20. Education Welfare & Psychology

ii) Requests for translation (starting with highest)

1. Children In Need Team
2. Single Assessment Team
3. Youth Offending Service
4. Learning Disability Team
5. Neighbourhood Services

iii) Requests for interpretation (starting with highest)

1. Children In Need Team
2. Looked After Children Team
3. Occupational Therapy
4. School Appeals
5. Care Navigators
6. Early Help & Family Support
7. Single Assessment

8. Housing Options
9. Adult Mental Health
10. Learning Disabilities (Adult & Children)
11. Contact & Response
12. Hostels
13. Welfare Rights
14. Youth Offending Service
15. Enablement Team
16. Education Welfare & Psychology
17. Hospital discharge team
18. Persons From Abroad Team
19. Street Enforcement
20. Kinship/Fostering

iv) Requests for Sign Language (starting with highest)

1. Care Management
2. Special Education Needs & Disability
3. Neighbourhood Housing
4. Occupational Therapy
5. Intermediate Care
6. Enablement Team
7. Contact & Response
8. Revenue & Benefits
9. Coroner's Service
10. Tourism, Culture & Investment

3.6 Experience in high volume customer contact areas

Appendix B provides data on translation and interpretation within Customer Services including Revenues and Benefits, and also in Housing Options for 2016/17. These are areas with high volumes of phone and face to face contact. Annually approximately 750,000 calls are taken by the customer service line and 90,000 visits are made to the main customer service centre. This puts into context the comparatively small volumes of translation and interpretation provided through consistent application of the Interpretation and Translation Policy. In 2016/17 for example 304 telephone interpretations were provided, 6 face to face interpretations and 2 British Sign Language.

4. Financial, legal and other implications

4.1 Financial implications

The 2017-18 Gross budget for the translation unit is £372k, with budgeted income of £425k, leaving a net credit budget of £53k for the service.

Paresh Radia, Principal Accountant, 37 4082

4.2 Legal implications

There are no legal implications arising from the recommendations of this report.

Claire Sinnott, Solicitor, 37 1408

4.3. Climate Change implications

There are no climate change implications associated with this report.

Mark Jeffcote, Environment Team, 37 2251

4.4 Equality Implications

As part of our public sector equality duty under the Equality Act the council has a duty to ensure that the residents of Leicester City can access our services effectively. The interpretation and translation of our services helps to ensure that we are meeting the duty placed on us, across all protected characteristics as defined by the Equality Act, with particular emphasis on the protected characteristics of age, disability and race, with individuals whose first language may not be English or in alternative formats such as BSL. We have met the duty by providing consultation material in alternative formats when necessary, as well as ensuring we meet our statutory obligations across our service areas, such as housing and adult social care when providing information or services.

Sukhi Biring, Equalities Officer, 37 4175

5. Background information and other papers:

- **Written statement to Parliament
Translation into foreign languages**

From: Department for Communities and Local Government and The Rt Hon Sir Eric Pickles

Part of: Council Tax reform and Community integration

Published and delivered: 12 March 2013

<https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/translation-into-foreign-languages>

6. Summary of appendices:

- Appendix A - Interpretation and Translation Policy
- Appendix B - Customer Services and Revenues and Benefits, and Housing Options data for 2016-17

