

1. Preparing effectively for multi-agency meetings (see *Dialogue Interpreting* p. 215)

“Research indicates that when children, young people and their families feel fully included, having been central to the assessment, planning and review processes, that they are more likely to work with professionals on agreed action plans and that outcomes for children are more positive as a result.” (source: *Preparing for Multi-Agency Meetings*, Moray government, Scotland: http://www.moray.gov.uk/moray_standard/page_79759.html accessed 9 January 2016).

Very little training is currently available for interpreters required to work in cases where social support is required; however, as the quote above suggests, engagement with support is more likely to be positive where people feel their voice is being heard. For limited proficiency speakers, interpreters are therefore a crucial link in securing the support needed for the safety and security of individuals identified as being at risk. Sometimes this can involve working with families that present a very complex range of problems (e.g. housing issues, health problems, financial problems, involvement in gangs, criminal behaviour, substance abuse, violent interpersonal relationships).

Interpreters can support their preparation for this type of assignments by familiarizing themselves with key processes and documentation, much of which is available online. As an example, in Britain, a Common Assessment Framework (CAF) helps with the early identification of children and young people and families who may experience problems or who may be vulnerable to poor outcomes. It is a tool to gather information and identify what type of support is needed. A CAF can only be carried out with a person’s consent. Many local authorities provide examples of CAF forms online and examples of good/bad practice in their completion. The forms present a range of language challenges in terms of acronyms and phrasing that is likely to seem impenetrable to the lay person; however, most of the forms and guidance come with a glossary which is a useful additional support for interpreters.

Interpreters can be involved in meetings with families and a range of services; however, certain meetings take place between professionals only.

Here is an example of a case referred to a multi-agency safeguarding hub for early intervention. The case concerns the arrest of a pregnant woman and her husband and concerns for the wellbeing of the unborn child following the discovery of a large amount of drugs in the couple’s home. The husband had been living in the UK for 4 years, but the wife had only arrived 18 months ago.

During the meeting the following agencies presented information that helped intervention in the situation (the meeting did not involve the family):

1. Police services: reported on drugs found at the family home and multiple interventions with the husband for reasons of violence.
2. Housing services: reported 43 complaints from neighbours in the past 8 months due to comings and goings from the home at all hours of the day and night.
3. Healthcare services: reported the mother was not registered with a local GP and had not attended hospital appointments since becoming pregnant.

As a result of these disclosures a child protection conference was held and the unborn child placed on a child protection plan. Arrangements were made to coordinate support for the family for the remainder of the pregnancy and after the child was born.

Activity

You are assigned to interpret between the social services and the family at the meeting during which the action to protect the unborn child and support for the family will be outlined. Identify relevant resources to support your understanding of the meeting and the performance dimensions (see Chapter 1 of *Dialogue Interpreting*) that will require most attention. Consider the extent to which you think it important that you continue to interpret for this family as different agencies implement action and monitoring plans.

During the meeting, you discover that the father has a history of violent behaviour - knowing the new information, what action might you take to ensure your personal safety if you were to interpret for this family in the future?

1.2 Example of multi-agency meeting guidance where family presence is invited

Suggested Agenda and Notes on Running Meeting

No discussion of children and families should take place before the meeting has been officially started by the Chair. Children and their parents should be invited to meetings whenever possible. Their views are essential to the process. The Chair should introduce themselves to the child/parent/carer before the start of the meeting, and explain how the meeting will be run. Translation services should be available if required. If parents would like additional independent support they should contact the Parents Advice Centre.

Agenda Structure:

- 1 Protocol Statement including Status of Meeting
- 2 Introductions / Apologies for absence
- 3 Household details
- 4 Reason for meeting / Review of previous recommendations
- 5 Contributions regarding each child (Children who are present should be supported/encouraged to contribute if they wish)
- 6 Contributions regarding parents / carers
- 7 Agreement on action
- 8 Chair's summary of information presented
- 9 Recommendations, to include who does what and when

Specific tasks may include:

- Appoint a lead professional
- Identify the core group

- Establish how children, parents/carers and wider family members wish to be involved and what support, advice and advocacy is available to them
- Consider any BHP implications (Budget Holding Lead Professional)
- Timescale for meetings of the core group
- Identify what additional assessments (if any) are needed to make judgements on how to best safeguard the child or promote their welfare
- Consider the need for a contingency plan if circumstances change quickly
- Clarify the purpose and remit of any actions
- Date of review meeting or date by which reports should be submitted to lead

Note on Child Protection Concerns:

Sometimes during the course of these multi-agency meetings child protection concerns may be mentioned or may emerge. If these have not been previously raised these MUST be passed on to the Child Protection Advice Line immediately.

Child protection concerns may involve:

- Physical abuse, Emotional abuse, Sexual abuse, Neglect

In addition, any allegation of professional misconduct against a child must be reported to the Child Protection Advice Line, regardless of who raised the concern.

Extract taken from Tower Hamlets, London UK, *Protocol on Team Around the Child and the Role of the Lead Professional*, available at:

http://webfronter.com/towerhamlets/supportforlearning/menu7/CAF/CAF_files/images/Team_Around_the_Child_Lead_Professional_Protocol_2007.pdf accessed 9 January 2016.

2. Recruiting and supporting interpreters in the non-profit and charities sector (see *Dialogue Interpreting* p. 228).

2.1 Recruitment: Developing a guide to good practice

Organisations in the non-profit and charities sector often run volunteer schemes to support their activities. This can include recruiting interpreters and translators to work on a volunteer basis to support professional services where appropriate or in some cases to plug a gap where access to professional services is not available or possible due to budgetary constraint.

Activity

Read through the following list of factors for volunteer managers to consider when recruiting and managing translators and interpreters in non-profit and charitable organisations. Consider the extent to which you would consider each statement an example of good practice and make alternative recommendations based on your experience and knowledge of organizations where volunteers are used to support service delivery:

1. Bi-lingual volunteers do not necessarily wish to support interlingual communication within the organization and may have put themselves forward to develop other skills. They should not be pressurised into taking on interpreting work on a regular basis.
2. Volunteer interpreters and translators who have not received trained should only be asked to undertake informal and low-level communication events.

© Rebecca Tipton and Olgerda Furmanek, 2016

3. Volunteers may over-estimate their capacity as an interpreter and tend to paraphrase or say what they think they heard/what they thought the service user wanted to say, rather than transmitting information as it was spoken. Although volunteer interpreters may play a more advocacy role within the organisation, volunteer managers should guide them to be aware of what they are saying, how and why, and provide appropriate guidance. There is a risk that volunteers may transfer practices to other organisations and even act in a paid capacity without having insight into the expectations of professional practice.
4. Trained interpreters who wish to give their time to an organisation on a pro-bono basis can be a useful source of support, but clear parameters need to be set in terms of commitment: there is a risk of unreliability of paid work opportunities need to take priority over pro-bono work.
5. Complex assignments in which vulnerable service users require specific service support should be delivered using a professional interpreter.
6. Organisations need to factor budget allocations into bids for funding for professional services especially where delivering services in conjunction with central or federal government structures.
7. Staff expectations need to be managed in relation to using professional and volunteer interpreters. For example, volunteers may perform other roles in the organisation to interpreting and establish relations with service users in ways that professional interpreters would not seek to do. Staff who work with professional interpreters need to be aware of the more stringent attention to role boundaries given by professional interpreters and ensure that service users are aware of the different expectations.

2.2 How can organisations best support the work of interpreters?

- recognise that volunteers are an important asset and demonstrate support by holding development sessions
- hold regular briefing sessions on the nature of the work, organisational goals and ethos
- set out expectations of interpreters and awareness of how their work might differ from a professional interpreter (i.e. set up career aspirations and guide to personal and professional development)
- develop peer mentoring schemes
- put measures in place to support the psycho-social wellbeing of volunteers, especially volunteers who have been service users in the past and whose work may trigger difficult emotional feelings.