



Interpretation Guidance for NHS Highland Staff

Warning – Document uncontrolled when printed

Policy Reference: 1219	Date of Issue: 24th August 2015
Prepared by: Helen Sikora	Date of Review: March 2025
Lead Reviewer: Helen Sikora	Version: 5th Edition <i>Updated: 15th May 2020 – updated communication support booking service contact details and Contact Scotland information</i> <i>Updated 29th September 2021 – new phone number for Global Languages</i> <i>Updates 22nd March 2022 to include: Data Protection Statement, updated links, Near Me video interpretation.</i>
Authorised by: Highland Partnership Forum	Date: 21st August 2015
Planning For Fairness: Available at: http://www.nhshighland.scot.nhs.uk/Publications/Pages/EQIASummaries.aspx	
Distribution Intranet – including staff announcement Staff newsletter Public Health newsletter Network distribution lists	
Method CD Rom E-mail ✓ Paper Intranet ✓	

Warning – Document uncontrolled when printed	
Policy Reference: 1219	Date of Issue: 30/03/2022
Prepared by: Helen Sikora	Date of Review: March 2025
Lead Reviewer: Helen Sikora	Version: 5th Edition (updated March 2022)
Authorised by: Highland Partnership Forum	Page 1 of 12

Contents

1. General information	4
2. About Foreign Language Interpretation.....	4
3. Using the Foreign Language Telephone Interpretation Service:	6
4. Using the Face to Face Foreign Language Interpretation Service:	7
5. Using the British Sign Language (BSL) Interpretation Service:	8
6. Payment and Cancellation of Interpretation Services.....	10
7. Working with Interpreters	10
8. Further Information	11

Warning – Document uncontrolled when printed	
Policy Reference: 1219	Date of Issue: 30/03/2022
Prepared by: Helen Sikora	Date of Review: March 2025
Lead Reviewer: Helen Sikora	Version: 5 th Edition (updated March 2022)
Authorised by: Highland Partnership Forum	Page 2 of 12

Data Protection Statement

NHS Highland is committed to ensuring all current data protection legislation is complied with when processing data that is classified within the legislation as personal data or special category personal data.

Good data protection practice is embedded in the culture of NHS Highland with all staff required to complete mandatory data protection training in order to understand their data protection responsibilities. All staff are expected to follow the NHS policies, processes and guidelines which have been designed to ensure the confidentiality, integrity and availability of data is assured whenever personal data is handled or processed.

The NHS Highland fair processing notice contains full detail of how and why we process personal data and can be found by clicking on the following link to the 'Your Rights' section of the NHS Highland internet site.

<http://www.nhshighland.scot.nhs.uk/Pages/YourRights.aspx>

Warning – Document uncontrolled when printed	
Policy Reference: 1219	Date of Issue: 30/03/2022
Prepared by: Helen Sikora	Date of Review: March 2025
Lead Reviewer: Helen Sikora	Version: 5 th Edition (updated March 2022)
Authorised by: Highland Partnership Forum	Page 3 of 12

1. General information

1.1 What is interpretation?

Interpretation is the conversion of speech from one language to another e.g. interpretation of a foreign language or British Sign Language (BSL) to English. Interpreters provide a communication bridge between client and professional. They do not provide personal views/opinions to either party involved.

1.2 Providing interpretation services in NHS Highland

- It is the responsibility of NHS Highland staff to ensure interpreters are made available for people who require them.
- Providing interpretation services is a legal requirement.
- It is **not** the responsibility of the patient/service user to book an interpreter.

Services within NHS Highland must have systems in place to:

- Ensure interpreters are booked where required.
- Appropriately document the requirement, to ensure the patient/service user is supported at subsequent appointments and in future communication.
- Document when an interpreter has been used, noting the job number or interpreter ID number in patient/service user notes.
- Document when an interpreter is refused by the patient/service user.

In keeping with national good practice guidelines, the use of family, friends or members of staff to interpret is not appropriate except in exceptional circumstances.

2. About Foreign Language Interpretation

NHS Highland has **3** options for providing foreign language interpretation:

- ① By telephone.
- ② Face to face - in person.
- ③ Face to face - by video conferencing using Near Me.

2.1 Foreign language identification

Language identification resources are available to help you find out what language a patient/service users speaks. They can be found on NHS Highland's [Equality & Diversity/Accessibility & Communication](#) intranet pages. Hard copies can be ordered from NHS Highland's [Health Information Resource Library](#) (HIRS). They include:

- [Global flag identification chart.](#)
- [Language Line identification poster](#)
- [Global identification card](#)
- [Language Line identification card](#)




Warning – Document uncontrolled when printed	
Policy Reference: 1219	Date of Issue: 30/03/2022
Prepared by: Helen Sikora	Date of Review: March 2025
Lead Reviewer: Helen Sikora	Version: 5 th Edition (updated March 2022)
Authorised by: Highland Partnership Forum	Page 4 of 12

2.2 Telephone or Face to Face Foreign Language Interpretation:

<p>① Telephone Interpretation:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provided by Language Line Solutions. • Is available 24 hours a day • Can be accessed immediately and does not require pre-booking. • An interpreter is made available within 30 seconds. • You can use this service if your patient/service user is: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➢ With you in person. ➢ On the telephone calling you (if you have conferencing facilities). ➢ If you need to call them. <p>N.B Contact Language Line to pre-book interpretation for rarely used languages: Mongolian, Sinhalese, Welsh or Gaelic</p>	<p>②③ Face to Face Interpretation:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provided by Global Language Services Limited. • Can be provided: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➢ In person ➢ By video using Near Me • Generally 24 hours' notice required to book an interpreter. • Booking staff are on call 24 hours a day and will attempt to provide an interpreter at any time, dependent upon availability. • A staff guide, "Using Near Me with Interpreters" can be found on the Equality & Diversity/Accessibility & Communication intranet pages.
<p>When to use</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In an emergency or unplanned consultation • If you have had regular contact with the patient and there has been a clear understanding of an initial diagnosis (probably through the use of face to face interpreters) • If you expect the consultation to be straight forward • If your patient/service user prefers not to use a local face to face interpreter (for confidentiality or any other reason of personal preference) 	<p>When to use</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Where there is a clinical need, for example: a consultation booked in advance to discuss complex and personal/sensitive information which will require detailed interpretation.
<p>Things to consider when deciding which Interpretation service to use:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is there a clinical need for face to face interpretation • Would face to face interpretation using Near Me be more efficient/appropriate than in-person interpretation • How long will the consultation to last • The location of the consultation i.e. is a local interpreter available or will they have to travel to you (Global can advise you) • What are the likely waiting times before, between and after the consultation • If using face to face interpretation; could a number of consultations/interventions be arranged in one session 	

Warning – Document uncontrolled when printed	
Policy Reference: 1219	Date of Issue: 30/03/2022
Prepared by: Helen Sikora	Date of Review: March 2025
Lead Reviewer: Helen Sikora	Version: 5 th Edition (updated March 2022)
Authorised by: Highland Partnership Forum	Page 5 of 12

3. Using the Foreign Language Telephone Interpretation Service:

Step 1: Access your department's unique six digit ID code	
These are stored on the Equality & Diversity/Accessibility & Communication intranet pages. Please note this code is confidential to your organisation or dept.	
Step 2: Contact Language Line	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • From a landline call: 0800 028 0073. • From a mobile call: 0845 310 9900 then select Option 1. • The operator will ask for your: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➢ Unique 6 digit ID Code. ➢ Full name. ➢ Organisation name/department (be specific e.g. the full name of the GP surgery, your ward name/number). ➢ Language you require, if you are not sure explain what you know (say if you need a specific interpreter). ➢ Your client's location, i.e. with you/not with you. ➢ If the patient is not with you and you want to make an outgoing call to them, tell the operator their name and telephone number. • Stay on the line; you will be connected with an interpreter in 30 seconds. • Note the interpreter's ID code (you can be re-connected with the same interpreter if you get cut off) • Introduce yourself. 	
Step 3	
The patient is with you in person	Making an outgoing patient call
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tell the interpreter what phone you are using, e.g. single/ dual handset, speaker phone or mobile. • Ask the interpreter to introduce you and them self to your patient/service user- and give the interpreter the first question/ statement. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tell the interpreter the operator is phoning your patient/service user. • Ask the interpreter to introduce you/them self to your patient/service user and give the interpreter the first question/ statement. • The operator will connect your patient/service user into the call.
Handling an incoming patient call (if you have conferencing facilities)	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Record your patient's telephone number. • Put them on hold using your conference call facilities • Follow step 1 and 2 above & tell the operator your patient is ON HOLD. • Brief the interpreter, then conference your patient into the call. • If you have no conferencing facilities, note your patient's name, telephone number & language & tell them you will call back with an interpreter. • Follow the procedure above for 'making an outgoing call'. 	
Advice	Record your Unique 6 Digit Code
Print this page and display in your department	

Warning – Document uncontrolled when printed

Policy Reference: 1219	Date of Issue: 30/03/2022
Prepared by: Helen Sikora	Date of Review: March 2025
Lead Reviewer: Helen Sikora	Version: 5 th Edition (updated March 2022)
Authorised by: Highland Partnership Forum	Page 6 of 12

4. Using the Face to Face Foreign Language Interpretation Service:

<p>Step 1: Access your department's unique six digit ID code.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • These are stored on the Equality & Diversity/ Accessibility & Communication intranet pages. Please note this code is confidential to your organisation or dept.
<p>Step 2: Contact Global Language Services</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Telephone 01463 592116 (24 hours) or email: mail@globalinverness.com • You will be asked to provide details of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➢ Your operational unit/department/service or GP Practice. ➢ Your unique 6 digit departmental code. ➢ Your full name and job title. ➢ The language and specific dialect required. ➢ Your patient's name and date of birth. ➢ Any special requirements i.e. gender/faith of the interpreter required by the patient. ➢ Date, time and place of the appointment. ➢ A brief description of the nature of the appointment (so the interpreter can prepare for the consultation). ➢ Approximate length of the appointment. • If you are using video interpretation using Near Me you will need to provide a link to the relevant clinic. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➢ A staff guide, "Using Near Me with Interpreters" can be found on the Equality & Diversity/Accessibility & Communication intranet pages.
<p>Step 3: You will be issued with a Job Number.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This is unique to the job • Each booking will generate a new number, even if it is a re-booking with the same patient or service user. <p>The booking will generally be confirmed straight away. You may need to wait for confirmation if the language you have requested is not commonly spoken in the Highlands and an interpreter has to be found from elsewhere.</p>
<p>Step 4: Following the session:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sign the interpreter's time sheet. • Retain a copy in your service/department's records (in the individual's notes or in a separate file). • Please record feedback about the interpretation service in the comments section of the time sheet. • To book a follow up appointment follow the procedure above. You cannot make a booking directly with the interpreter. • If you would like the same interpreter at a future appointment request this when you make the next booking. This will be accommodated if possible.

Warning – Document uncontrolled when printed	
Policy Reference: 1219	Date of Issue: 30/03/2022
Prepared by: Helen Sikora	Date of Review: March 2025
Lead Reviewer: Helen Sikora	Version: 5 th Edition (updated March 2022)
Authorised by: Highland Partnership Forum	Page 7 of 12

5. Using the British Sign Language (BSL) Interpretation Service:

NHS Highland has **2** options for providing BSL interpretation:

- ① **Face to face - in person**
- ② **Face to face - by video conferencing using [Near Me](#)**

Resources to help you work with British Sign Language interpreters can be found on NHS Highland's [Equality & Diversity/Accessibility & Communication](#) intranet pages. They include:

- A staff guide, "[Guidance – Working with Sign Language Interpreters](#)"
- A staff guide, "[Using Near Me with Interpreters – Staff Guide](#)"
- [Communication Support Service Poster](#)



BSL interpreting is paid from a central budget; there is no cost to operational units.

5.1 How to Book a BSL Interpreter:

In Office Hours Monday – Friday 9am – 5pm	All Other Times
Contact Communication Support: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Telephone: 01349 886650 • Email: communication.support@highland.gov.uk <p>Please contact the Communication Support Booking Service as soon as you know a patient requires a BSL interpreter to attend an appointment. The service may not be able to provide a last minute interpreter.</p>	Contact Raigmore switchboard: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Telephone: 01463 704000 • Ask for contact details of freelance interpreters <p>Please inform the Communication Support Booking Service:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Telephone: 01349 886650 (voice message) • Text: 07884 731378 (sms only) • Email: communication.support@highland.gov.uk
You will need to provide:	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Your name, contact details, designation and department. ➤ Patient name and contact details. ➤ Appointment details e.g. date/time/length/location of in person appointments, and staff member leading the appointment. ➤ Whether the appointment will be in person or using Near Me. ➤ Brief background information. ➤ Contact details for further information. ➤ If using Near Me you will be asked to provide the clinic link (this service is available for scheduled appointments only) 	

Warning – Document uncontrolled when printed	
Policy Reference: 1219	Date of Issue: 30/03/2022
Prepared by: Helen Sikora	Date of Review: March 2025
Lead Reviewer: Helen Sikora	Version: 5 th Edition (updated March 2022)
Authorised by: Highland Partnership Forum	Page 8 of 12

5.2 Contact Scotland

Contact Scotland BSL is a Scottish Government service that allows deaf and deafblind BSL users to make contact through an online interpreter to any public, third, and private sector telephone numbers. The service is available 24/7, 365 days a year.

If your patient/service user is a registered with Contact Scotland BSL they may request that you contact them via this service.

To do this call: 0131 510 4555. You will be asked your patient/service user's name and the interpreter will check if they are online and available.

If a patient/service user wants to call you, they must have the number to hand as Contact Scotland BSL interpreters do not search for contact numbers.



This service is only appropriate for use at the patient/service users request for **administrative purposes for example to cancel an appointment at short notice.**

Further information and free resources are available from:

<https://contactsotland-bsl.org/>

Warning – Document uncontrolled when printed	
Policy Reference: 1219	Date of Issue: 30/03/2022
Prepared by: Helen Sikora	Date of Review: March 2025
Lead Reviewer: Helen Sikora	Version: 5 th Edition (updated March 2022)
Authorised by: Highland Partnership Forum	Page 9 of 12

6. Payment and Cancellation of Interpretation Services

Foreign Language – Telephone:

Operational Units pay for telephone language interpretation for managed services and independent contractors.

Foreign Language - Face to Face:

Operational Units pay for face to face language interpretation (delivered in person or via video using Near Me) for managed services.
Independent contractors pay for face to face language interpretation (delivered in person or via video using Near Me).

Interpreter waiting time: If the interpreter is requested to wait for longer than 30 minutes, the minimum interpreting time of 1 hour will be applicable.

Cancellations: Cancellations made less than 24 hours in advance are charged

For further information about current interpretation and cancellation rates please contact NHS Highland's Equality and Diversity Lead.

Email: nhsh.healthimprovementtraining@nhs.scot

British Sign Language:

BSL interpretation and other forms of communication support are paid from a centrally held budget which covers the costs for all services.

7. Working with Interpreters

7.1 Confidentiality

All interpreters used by NHS Highland take account of confidentiality. Interpreters adhere to their profession's Principles of Practice/Code of Conduct which includes confidentiality and impartiality. They will remain impartial and will not offer views or comment on what's being discussed.

7.2 Good Practice

A Good Practice document from The Scottish Translation, Interpreting and Communication Forum can be found at:

[The Scottish Translation, Interpreting and Communication Forum Good Practice Guidelines - gov.scot \(www.gov.scot\)](http://www.gov.scot/Resource/0045/0136/gov.scot.nhs.uk/0136.pdf)

7.3 Training

NHS Highland and Highland Council jointly provide training in working with foreign language and British Sign Language interpreters.

For further information contact the NHS Highland's Health Improvement Team.
Email: nhsh.healthimprovementtraining@nhs.scot

Contact NHS Highland's See Hear Highland Education and Learning Service (SHHELS): shhels@nhs.scot for information about:

Warning – Document uncontrolled when printed	
Policy Reference: 1219	Date of Issue: 30/03/2022
Prepared by: Helen Sikora	Date of Review: March 2025
Lead Reviewer: Helen Sikora	Version: 5 th Edition (updated March 2022)
Authorised by: Highland Partnership Forum	Page 10 of 12

- Tailored Deaf awareness training
- Basic 10 week BSL training free to NHS staff
- E-Learning: A Deaf awareness training module is available on Turas, just click the link to the Equalities Zone.

7.4 Hints and Tips for working with Interpreters

- **Prepare:** provide the names of attendees, aims of the appointment/rough idea what it's for, terminology which may be unfamiliar to the interpreter.
- **Allow enough time:** Appointments with an interpreter take longer so allow for this. It is also helpful to give an estimate of how long you expect the appointment to last. It is advisable to allow **double** the usual appointment time
- **Make introductions:** Explain who is present at the start of the appointment, including anyone off screen, such as students etc.
- **Provide breaks:** If the consultation is lengthy provide breaks, e.g. every 30 minutes (if needed). The interpreter may go away/off screen during the break to avoid getting drawn into interpreting any "chat" between participants.
- **Speech & Pace:** Speak clearly and steadily to ensure everyone can understand you. Pace your speech, do not rush sentences and keep sentences short. Ensure that only one person speaks/signs at a time.
- **Pause & Take Turns:** Be mindful of turn-taking. Allow pauses for the patient to respond. Prompt them or repeat a question if needed. There will be a slight time-lag while interpreting between the patient and clinician.
- **Be Clear:** Clearly explain any actions that need to be taken and by whom. Summarise the outcome of the appointment and agree any further actions for example, if a further appointment needs to be arranged.
- **Obtain Feedback:** Ask for feedback at the end of the appointment to see if anything should be done differently next time.
- **Long and complex appointments with BSL interpreters:** Video interpretation using Near Me may be challenging for these types of appointments - face to face interpretation may be more suitable. Two interpreters will be required to facilitate breaks. Enhanced coordination of the appointment using Near Me is needed to ensure the relevant BSL interpreter is visible on screen. Please discuss with the booking service in advance.

8. Further Information

8.1 Translation

Translation is the conversion of **written text** from one language to another.

- For more information refer to "**Guidance – Translation**" found on the [Equality & Diversity/Accessibility and Communication](#) intranet pages.

Warning – Document uncontrolled when printed	
Policy Reference: 1219	Date of Issue: 30/03/2022
Prepared by: Helen Sikora	Date of Review: March 2025
Lead Reviewer: Helen Sikora	Version: 5 th Edition (updated March 2022)
Authorised by: Highland Partnership Forum	Page 11 of 12

8.2 Legislation

The Public Sector Equality Duty was created under the Equality Act 2010 to harmonise the equality duties and to extend it across the protected characteristics. In summary, the NHS must **have due regard to the need to:**

- Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct prohibited by the Act.
- Advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.
- Foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.

The Act explains that **having due regard** for advancing equality involves:

- Removing or minimising disadvantages suffered by people due to their protected characteristics.
- Taking steps to meet the needs of people from protected groups where these are different from the needs of other people.
- Encouraging people from protected groups to participate in public life or in other activities where their participation is disproportionately low.

For more information about the Public Sector Equality Duty visit the Equality and Human Rights Commission website: [Equality and Human Rights Commission](#)

Warning – Document uncontrolled when printed	
Policy Reference: 1219	Date of Issue: 30/03/2022
Prepared by: Helen Sikora	Date of Review: March 2025
Lead Reviewer: Helen Sikora	Version: 5 th Edition (updated March 2022)
Authorised by: Highland Partnership Forum	Page 12 of 12