

COMMUNICATION SKILLS WORKING WITH INTERPRETERS: SERVICE PROVIDER SUGGESTIONS

PRE PLANNING



The consultation will run more smoothly and effectively if you can plan in advance. Allocate time for the consultation: these appointments need at least double time to allow for discussion with the interpreter as well as time for the interpreted conversation with the service user.

Check the booking confirmation when it comes in to ensure that the times are accurate and the interpreter is appropriate. Here, particularly in a therapeutic environment, it is often good practice to book an interpreter who is the same gender as the service user. But ask at the time of booking – there are instances when a male service user might find it easier to talk about traumatic issues through an older female interpreter.

Monitor body language in the consultation – is the service user comfortable?

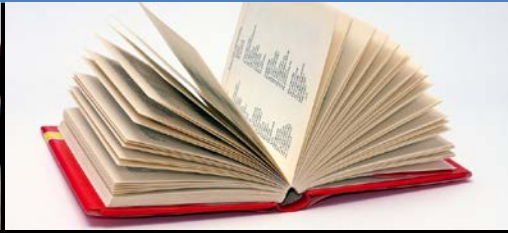
TROUBLE SHOOTING



Plan, through discussion with your team or research, how best to break down key concepts and terms into small, jargon free chunks of information for interpretation.

The resources section has 'plain English' versions of common terms you might use in your work.

What practical solutions can you find to the common issues, such as the best time of day to make appointments with an interpreter?



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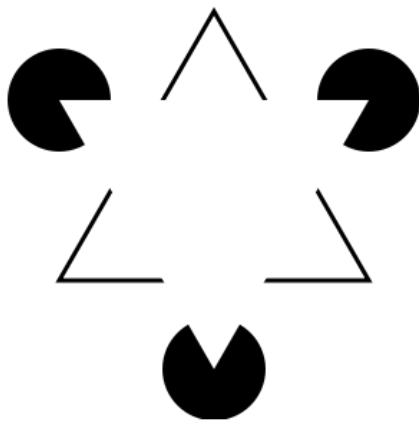
PRE CONSULTATION BRIEFING



A short briefing period with the interpreter will allow you time to discuss any ideas or concerns before the consultation.

What are your aims and expectations for the session? What are the boundaries? Can the interpreter help to explain the context or provide cultural information which might help you and the service user?

LAYOUT



It's important to bear in mind the impact of the physical layout of the room on the consultation.

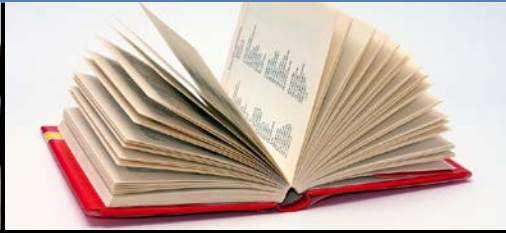
Do the best with the space you have: set up a triangle shape with the chairs so no-one is excluded, with as few barriers (desks etc.) as possible. Is it possible to book another room if there is no way of doing this in your office?

START AS YOU MEAN TO GO ON



You'll need to make sure everyone is welcomed and introduced. Be clear about what you do, it might be easier to give an example rather than using a job or service title. These terms are less meaningful, especially to someone who's not used to the UK health system.

What else can you do to build trust and rapport? Well, you will have set up the room in the triangle shape to make sure the



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client is included.

As the interpreter mentioned before, it is important to speak to the client directly – allowing the interpreter to speak your words as you have said them, so for example, “My name’s Jane” rather than “Can you tell him, that my name’s Jane...” This, I find, also encourages you to look at the service user when you are talking and listening to them – and when you do this it is easier to monitor responses – it’s just more natural this way.

Make sure all speech is interpreted – this includes anything you are speaking to the interpreter about within the consultation. Be clear and explain what is happening.

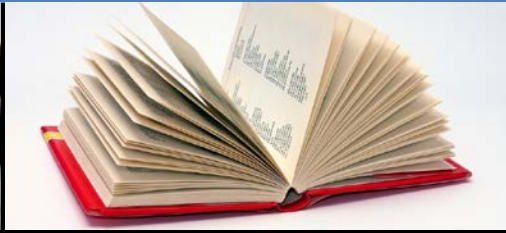
ACTIVE LISTENING



Your body language is more important than usual here due to the language difference – tone of voice, openness of gestures, and facial expressions in reaction to what is being said.

Listen and monitor reactions: in the earlier situation, the interpreter was clearly paraphrasing as well as asking the client about his family situation. Look out for responses, and either deal with issues you have at the time, or in the de-brief after the consultation – depending on the issue.

As you would in your normal work, it’s important to reflect back to the client, to check understanding and encourage their perspective.



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ENDING THE INTERVIEW



Be realistic about how much you will be able to cover with a new service user in the first consultation – particularly where the service user is unsure of the service or working through interpreters. It's important to allow time for the service user to digest information – and for you too – this consultation may be very different to the others you run. Remember it is tiring taking on new information, especially when you are stressed.

At the end of the consultation, give a clear explanation of what will happen next – new appointment? A letter to the service user's house? When will this happen and what information is important? What should they do next? It might be useful to have a checklist as it's easy to lose your thread and forget key points.

The debrief with the interpreter will give you both the opportunity to give feedback and raise any concerns. In this way you can improve future consultations.