London Borough Of Haringey Translation and Interpretation Policy

Contents

1. Introduction

1.1 This is the London Borough of Haringey's corporate Translation and Interpretation (T&I) Policy. It sets out the council's approach to communicating with residents who do not use spoken or written English as their main language and provides a framework for the use of translation and interpretation services across the council.

1.2 The policy is to be used by council officers and those commissioned by the council to provide a service.

1.3 The policy is aimed at supporting residents who:
- Do not have English as their main language.
- Have a sensory impairment such as deafness and blindness and use sign language or braille to communicate.

1.3 As this guidance cannot anticipate every interaction between officer and resident, officers should use their service-level knowledge of resident needs alongside the minimum standards outlined here to determine the appropriate T&I provision required for a specific interaction.

1.4 This guidance is not intended to supersede existing legal frameworks that outline T&I provision in service areas. It should instead be used jointly with them.

2. Terms and definitions

2.1 This document will draw the following distinction between translation and interpretation (T&I).

Translation – to change written words into different languages.

Interpretation – to explain the meaning of something orally or with signs and gestures.

2.2 Broadly, two types of people will provide T&I support.

Professional/Formal – someone qualified and impartial from the council's commissioned T&I provider.

Informal – an unqualified person who may or may not be impartial (friend, relative, multilingual council officer, other members of the public)

2.3 The term "resident" is used in this document as an inclusive term to describe anyone who interacts with or wishes to access the council.

Interactions include:
- Face to face
- Telephone
- Digital
- Written correspondence
- Other council communication material

2.4 A language line is an insert at the end of written communication with details about the communication in other languages.

2.5 English for speakers of other languages (ESOL) courses are qualifications designed to help learners develop English skills and build confidence in using English in everyday life, education, and employment.

3. Context

3.1 Despite making up only 7% of Haringey's population, residents who are not confident English speakers are significantly overrepresented among those seeking support from the council's frontline services, advice and support. Additionally, evidence shows that language barriers delay access to timely care, interfering with support adherence and preventative services, resulting in poor outcomes.[1].

3.2 The council is committed to providing a high-quality public service, improving equity of access and outcomes, and proactively removing the barriers residents may experience when interacting with the council.

3.3 As outlined in the Haringey Deal, the council is committed to creating genuine opportunities for residents to have a say in decisions that affect them, getting the basics right to make everyday interactions with the council as easy and effective as possible and working harder to hear the voices that are too often overlooked. These commitments extend to those who do not use English as their main language for communication.

3.4 Therefore, the council considers making appropriate use of high-quality translation and interpretation services critical for reducing inequality, providing preventative support, improving service outcomes, removing barriers and meeting the commitments set out in the Haringey Deal.

4. Aims of the policy

4.1 To remove language barriers and ensure equitable access to all council services and information.

4.2 To guide council officers and promote consistent decision-making, ensuring a quality service is provided across the council.

4.3 To highlight good practise and set minimum expectations when communicating with residents who are not confident at communicating in English.

4.4 To emphasise the importance of safeguarding, ethical, wellbeing and confidentiality considerations when using informal interpreters and only using them where appropriate.

5. Language and communication in Haringey

5.1 Haringey is an incredibly diverse borough with over 180 languages. Around 30 per cent of residents (69,500) do not speak English as their main language, with the top ten main languages other than English being. [2]

- Turkish - 9,581
- Spanish - 8,011
- Polish - 5,921
- Romanian - 5,369
- Portuguese - 4,204
- Bulgarian - 4,000
- Italian - 3,886
- Greek - 3,098
- Albanian - 1,983

5.2 The main language varies greatly by ward; in the west of the borough, 80% of residents speak English as their main language, but this decreases to 60% in the centre and east of the borough.

5.3 Of those residents in Haringey whose main language is not English, 22.6% said they cannot speak English well, and 4.2% said they cannot speak English at all. This means

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[1] Impacts of English language proficiency on healthcare access, use, and outcomes among immigrants: a qualitative study
[2] Language, England and Wales: Census 2021, ONS

there are nearly 19,000 residents who could have difficulty accessing and understanding council communications, services, advice and support provided in English.

5.4 155 Haringey residents use a sign communication system as their main language. Most of this group (136) use British sign language (BSL), nine use another sign language, and ten residents use a sign communication system.

5.5 The most common languages requested for translation in a five-year period, 2017-2022, were Turkish, Spanish, Polish, Chinese and Portuguese.

5.6 The most common languages requested for interpretation in a five-year period, 2017-2022, were Turkish, Spanish, Polish, Bulgarian and Romanian. These five languages comprised 50% of all interpretation requests, but council services requested interpretation for 135 languages in total.[3]

6. Core principles for translation and interpretation

6.1 While the degree of T&I for each interaction will vary, these core principles should be central to all considerations and decision-making.

Policy

6.2 Language should never be a barrier to accessing services or participating in decision making or community. Or impair the experience of services and outcomes.

6.3 Before considering translation or interpretation, officers should ensure they set out and communicate information in plain English with a simple, accessible and jargon-free style.

6.4 It is the responsibility of all council officers to be mindful of language need and its impact on resident understanding. Officers should actively consider the need to translate material into other languages or provide interpretation services when required.

6.5 Translation and interpretation should not replace the aspiration of residents to learn English, and the council believes that the best possible outcomes, social inclusion and cohesion will come from supporting residents to be fluent in English.

6.6 All officers should look to proactively link residents to the council's ESOL classes where appropriate[4].

6.7 Officers should, where possible, seek to proactively reduce or remove language barriers before residents experience them, e.g., by providing simple written summaries, using language lines and/or bringing interpreters to engagement sessions.

6.8 Council officers should advocate with partners and the wider system for the use of translation and interpretation where it is needed for residents to access other services.

Decision making

6.9 Decisions around when to be proactive in using translation and interpretation and which languages to use should be made with all available data and not be based solely on the most spoken languages in the borough. This will require consideration of the following:

- Which languages have the lowest levels of English proficiency among their speakers. Without T&I, these communities are more likely to be excluded.
- The specific group officers are targeting using intersectional data (e.g., age, sex, disability against English proficiency) to understand their specific language needs.
- Where in the borough the T&I is required, as the language spoken varies across wards.

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[3] LBH Commissioned Translation and Interpretation data, The BIGWORD, 2017-2022
[4] To do so officers can direct residents to the Haringey Learns course guide and advise them to apply directly via the website or visit the Wood Green Library (2nd floor) to apply in person.

6.10   Translation and interpretation should be offered to residents in a welcoming and non-judgemental way that reflects the councils' values of equality and inclusivity.

6.11   Residents' preferred language for communication (both spoken and written) should be recorded following the first contact.

6.12   Technology (particularly AI-driven translation solutions) offers the potential to significantly lower costs with a quicker turnaround. We recognise this can come with concerns about accuracy and nuance; their use should balance service quality considerations against financial savings. As a council, we will be actively monitoring developments in this area, but particularly in 'low risk' situations, it is appropriate to use these tools. Residents regularly use these tools, so if the council does not, this primarily impacts the digitally excluded, an already vulnerable group.

6.13   Some residents will have beliefs that may prevent them from using certain types of T&I. These should be respected and accommodated.

7. Interpretation

Best practice and minimum expectations

When to use interpretation

7.1 Professional interpretation is not initially required when providing basic information to a resident who is not confident speaking English. Officers can use friends, relatives and technology solutions to communicate.

7.2 For situations where a resident is not confident in speaking English and where this is a barrier to service access or to providing information to a professional (e.g., social worker, teacher, police officer), professional interpretation should be used.

7.3 When interacting over complex and high-risk topics with a resident whose main language is not English, using professional interpretation should always be discussed with the resident even if they are confident conversing in English. The resident and officer should agree that professional interpretation is not necessary before proceeding without it. This is because even confident speakers of English as a second language may struggle with subject-specific literacy in English and would understand the issue better in their main language. Examples of complex topics include but are not limited to safeguarding, legal matters, asking residents to sign something and requiring residents to give consent or follow a procedure in a high-risk matter.

7.4 When undertaking consultation, engagement or participation activity, officers should consider how barriers can be removed for residents who are not confident in speaking English. This is especially important where the topic or decision which is the focus of activity, is likely to have a disproportionate impact on communities who are not confident in speaking English.

7.5 It is essential to consider that interactions with residents may become more complex over time; if an officer becomes aware of a language barrier emerging, they should arrange for an interpreter before continuing.

7.6 It should not be assumed that writing can be used as a substitute for interpretation during general interactions with sign users. The resident may not be confident in reading or writing in English. British Sign Language (BSL) is a visual language unrelated to English. As a result, some users, particularly those who have used it since birth, can find it

challenging to process written text and in this case the use of a BSL interpreter would be essential.[5]

Remote or face-to-face interpretation?

7.7 Remote interpretation, where the interpreter is contacted via phone or video call, should be the default form of interpretation and will be suitable for most interactions officers have with residents.

7.8 Face-to-face interpretation, where the interpreter is there in person, should only be used when the officer considers it to be critical for service provision.

7.9 Remote interpretation should be used in all emergencies when there is no time to organise face-to-face interpretation.

Using interpreters effectively

7.10 Residents should be given a choice of interpreter where possible – e.g., in terms of sex, language, dialect, or someone who previously supported them.

7.11 Interpreters should be given an introductory briefing beforehand, clarifying the purpose of the interaction and anything they may need to understand to provide accurate interpretation.

7.12 For general interactions, it may be sufficient for interpreters to paraphrase. When greater detail is required in more complex interactions, they must precisely interpret what is spoken between the officer and resident. The required approach should be clarified to the interpreter at the beginning.

7.13 Officers should make the resident the focus of attention, looking at them and keeping eye contact; they should not speak to the interpreter and instead use them to communicate with the resident directly.

7.14 When officers assess that interpreters have supported residents well, officers should make a record of the interpreter so they can be used again where possible. Repeat use of interpreters helps build familiarity with residents and develops their subject-specific knowledge.

Using friends and relatives

7.15 Informal interpreters such as friends and relatives can interpret basic information for a resident or assist in arranging for interpretation for more serious matters.

7.16 While officers should take steps to proactively provide interpreters for consultation and engagement activity, if this cannot be arranged, informal interpreters can be used.

7.17 If used, only one informal interpreter should be present in the interaction, and the standards, as in the above section, "using interpreters effectively," should be applied.

7.18 Informal interpreters should not be used to support residents wishing to access council services or provide information to a professional (such as social worker, teacher or police officer). This is because there may be a conflict of interest between the resident and the informal interpreter, and because doing so may compromise our ability to act in the resident's best interests (including safeguarding).

Involving children

7.19 Children under 18 should never be used as interpreters except to help organise professional interpretation or provide information in an emergency until professional interpretation can be arranged.

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[5][Sign Solutions: Why do some Deaf people struggle with written text?](#)

7.20 Even in these circumstances, officers should be cautious as children and young people may have limited proficiency in their parents' main language and may not have the vocabulary to explain technical topics.

7.21 Using children as informal interpreters, particularly in serious matters, is a form of adultification and a safeguarding issue that can significantly impact the child's mental health and wellbeing.

Using multilingual officers

7.22 Where appropriate, services should consider whether proficiency in a particular language should be a requirement for specific, community facing roles. In support of this, officers can have their translation and interpretation work recognised in their salary.

7.23 The council does not expect multilingual officers to offer interpretation skills unless hired to do so. But they may choose to provide interpretation, which is generally acceptable, provided it has minimal impact on their routine work or is an emergency.

7.24 If offering help outside their routine work, multilingual officers should be fully briefed on the context and expected content of the interaction so they may make an informed decision about their capacity to help. If they choose to help, they should receive the same standard of support as professional interpreters set out in the "using interpreters effectively" section.

7.25 Essential considerations for deciding when to use a multilingual officer for interpretation include:

- Is the subject matter emotionally challenging, and could it impact officer wellbeing?
- Could acting as both a council officer and interpreter impact the officer's (real or perceived) impartiality?

If the answer to either of the points was yes, it is inappropriate to use a multilingual officer as an informal interpreter outside of their routine work.

Interpretation case studies

David suspects modern slavery

Situation: David is a council officer in a high street team responsible for engaging with businesses around the borough. They visit a high street business and introduce themselves to the owner. While there, they notice some staff are avoiding eye contact with them and showing signs of injury and malnourishment. David talks to some of these staff, but they do not speak English. The business owner looks frustrated that David wants to talk to his staff but offers to interpret for them.

Action: The behaviour and appearance of the staff make David concerned that they are victims of modern slavery. David knows this is potentially an emergency, and there will likely be a conflict of interest if he allows the business owner to interpret. David asks a member of staff what language they speak, and eventually, they tell him. David then calls the council-commissioned remote interpretation service, explains the situation and uses the interpreter to speak to the staff member.

Result: Working with a professional interpreter, David quickly identifies that the staff at this business are victims of modern slavery. David calls the police, and the staff gets the support they need. By appreciating that the situation was an emergency and using remote interpretation to provide immediate support, David ensured that the staff did not disappear after their initial meeting.

Jade's engagement at Broadwater Farm

Situation: Jade is a public health engagement officer who wants to speak with women on the Broadwater Farm estate about the support available to women at the local health centre. Jade wants to proactively remove barriers to ensure this information reaches as many residents as possible.

Action: Jade speaks to officers who regularly work on Broadwater Farm and looks at ward and borough-level data about main language and language proficiency. From this, Jade learns that there is a sizeable Turkish community on the estate; there are many people who speak Turkish as their main language who are not confident English speakers and older women, the group she is hoping to engage with, are significantly more likely to be less confident English speakers. Jade organises an interpreter on the engagement day, and because of the target group, Jade requests that they be female. On the day, knowing that some of the subject matter might be complicated, Jade briefs the interpreter on the material and aims of the engagement and asks if they have any questions or advice on how best to communicate it in a culturally sensitive way.

Result: By bringing an interpreter and letting them use their cultural expertise to guide conversations, Jade effectively communicated information to residents who would have otherwise been excluded. The interpreter was very skilled at communicating public health information, so Jade made a note of their name so that she could quickly access a reliable interpreter with some experience in the future.

Colin provides an informal interpretation.

Situation: Colin is a regeneration officer for the council who works in the Northumberland Park team. Colin speaks a second language, but he was not hired to his job to do so. He usually works behind a desk, but the team's engagement lead has asked him if he would volunteer to do some door-knocking in Northumberland Park to update residents on the council's plans for the area and get any feedback from them. The engagement lead has asked Colin to volunteer over others primarily because of his language skills. Around the same time, someone from a housing team in Colin's directorate asked if he could give some time to help translate a few documents.

Action: Both requests are outside Colin's routine work, and he anticipates each will take at least a day to complete. Colin discusses what to do with his manager, and they decide that if he wants to, Colin should volunteer to do the door-knocking as it supports his team, and it may be beneficial for him to get out into the borough. They also decided Colin should decline to translate the documents for the housing team as it would take him away from his routine work for too long, and he does not understand the team's functions very well.

Result: Using his language skills, Colin could support his team and engage with residents who otherwise might have been excluded. While it took up a whole day, by speaking to residents in Northumberland Park, he learnt a lot about the people who live in the area he works in. The experience added value to his regular work as well. Additionally, it is okay that he may be a day behind on his job, as he ensured his manager knew what he was doing. By declining to translate the documents for the housing team, Colin ensured he didn't offer his language skills in a way that would significantly interfere with his routine work.

8. Translation

Best practice and minimum expectations

Considerations when thinking of translation.

8.1 Even if residents can converse well in English or their main language, they should not be assumed to be confident at reading or writing in that language.

8.2 As with interpretation, friends and relatives should not be used to translate documents where there could be a conflict of interest.

8.3 Multilingual officers should not be expected to provide translation support unless they are hired to do so. Outside of their regular work, willing multilingual officers can provide basic and quick translation support, provided it does not interfere with their routine work.

8.4 The council does not operate bilingually and does not translate things by default. While we want to be proactive, resource constraints mean we cannot translate everything. Translation decisions should consider how, why, and to whom the information needs to be communicated. This should be supported by language data, knowledge of community needs, and known language barriers language barriers.

8.5 It may be more effective to use an interpreter instead of providing a translation, especially if the document in question is complex, the resident is not confident at reading in their main language, and if the content is of particular importance to the resident.

8.6 Officers should identify frequently used generic documents/guidance/terminology to be translated into relevant languages or identify where other legitimate organisations have already translated this information which the council can use.

Translating documents for residents

8.7 Residents can request that council documents be translated, and officers should proactively offer this where they believe it would result in a positive outcome.

8.8 Officers should consider whether a document can be summarised before being translated. The level of detail required for document translation should be based on what information is critical to communicating the document and the risk associated with miscommunication.

8.9 Residents should not be required to consent to documents or adhere to plans if they cannot read them confidently. Documents asking residents to sign something or follow a plan should always be translated (or interpreted) into the resident's main language if they are not confident at reading in English.

Translation when communicating with residents.

8.10 For general correspondence with a resident who is not confident at reading or writing in English, providing the text in both English and the resident's main language is good practice.

8.11 Letters and documents sent to residents should have a language line at the end. It should describe the letter's content and clarify if the resident is required to act or respond to it. This language line should then explain how residents can request the document in a different format if required. Residents should be able to request translations in an accessible way online and by post. A minimum of five languages should be used in language lines, and these should be based on Haringey's available language data and service-level knowledge of community needs.

8.12 Many of Haringey's language communities use group messaging such as WhatsApp as their preferred way to share and stay updated with important information. Officers should consider working with Haringey's community networks to use these.

8.13 Officers should consider using voice notes or videos to communicate with residents. These will be particularly effective with communities with oral traditions or where literacy may be an issue, and they can be circulated rapidly and widely through existing community channels.

AI or professional translation?

8.14   AI translation solutions should be used in low-risk interactions such as general correspondence with residents, producing language lines or translating summaries of low-risk documents. This results in a low cost and quick turnaround that saves council resources for when professional translation is critical.

8.15   Professional translation should be used for high-risk interactions such as legal or safeguarding matters.

Translation case studies

Mia's welfare support mailout

Situation: Mia administrates a welfare scheme that makes direct payments to residents through vouchers they can cash in at the Post Office. They are sending the vouchers to qualifying residents via post. From experience, Mia knows that the take up for these vouchers is often not as high as the council would like, so they want to take every step possible to maximise take up.

Action: Mia sees from Haringey data that a significant proportion of households eligible for welfare support have no members who speak English as their main language, so the mailout should include a language line. The letters will be going to residents across the borough, so Mia will look at available data on a borough level to find out which five language communities have the most users who are not confident communicating in English. She then produces a language line for each of the five languages at the end of each letter. The language line details how residents can get the document translated if they require and, most importantly, states the purpose of the letter and the action residents should take, e.g. "This letter contains a voucher for £100 to support your household with cost-of-living expenses to receive this money you must take the voucher to the post office".

Result: By having a language line that explained the purpose of the letter in five different languages, Mia could ensure that many households with no confident English readers could still claim the support. By explaining the letter's content in the language line, Mia ensured that residents would not consider it unimportant or ignore it. Finally, because the language line clearly stated the action residents needed to take, very few requested a complete letter translation, saving time and money.

Aaron translates a personal housing plan.

Situation: Aaron is a housing needs officer going through a personal housing plan with a resident who is threatened with homelessness. The plan outlines the steps the residents and council will take to prevent the residents from becoming homeless. They are going through it, conversing in English. At the end of the meeting, Aaron hands the resident a printed copy of the plan in English because he knows the resident does not have regular access to the internet. However, the resident tells him they are not confident at reading in English and can only read in their main language**.**

Action: While the plan is not very complicated, it is long and requires the resident to do a lot. Aaron worries that while the resident has understood everything they have spoken about, they might forget things without a written document. The resident does not have regular access to the internet, so Aaron knows they can't use translation software themselves. Aaron summarises the actions the resident needs to take, translates them into the resident's main language and then prints them out for the resident.

Result: By providing the actions the resident must take in their main language, Aaron ensured they would not forget any of them, and if they needed any more clarity, they could

call him for help. By simplifying the document first, Aaron could support the resident much more quickly and at a significantly lower cost.

Appendices

1. Haringey language and communication data[6]

The data below provides an example of what is available to officers' making decisions around translation and interpretation and the council has access to a lot more information. For a deeper analysis officers should use the Census 2021 and Knowing Our Communities data and consult with the council's data team.

1.1 Main language

The data from the 2021 census below lists the total number of residents who speak a language other than English as their main language. Some languages are grouped where the number of speakers is small, and the languages are from the same geographical region.

Main language	Haringey Residents aged 3+ (number)	% of Haringey residents aged 3+
Turkish	9,581	3.76
Spanish	8,011	3.14
Polish	5,921	2.32
Romanian	5,369	2.10
Portuguese	4,204	1.65
Bulgarian	4,000	1.57
Italian	3,886	1.52
Greek	3,098	1.21
Albanian	1,983	0.78
French	1,927	0.76
Somali	1,712	0.67
Hungarian	1,669	0.65
Arabic	1,457	0.57
Bengali (with Sylheti and Chatgaya)	1,441	0.56
Kurdish	1,286	0.50
All other Chinese	869	0.34
Russian	809	0.32
Yiddish	797	0.31
Gujarati	656	0.26
German	638	0.25
Persian or Farsi	611	0.24
Akan	592	0.23
Lithuanian	552	0.22
Urdu	467	0.18
Tigrinya	457	0.18
Tagalog or Filipino	439	0.17
Cantonese Chinese	408	0.16
Vietnamese	395	0.15
Amharic	394	0.15
Mandarin Chinese	384	0.15
Lingala	290	0.11

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[6] Language, England and Wales: Census 2021, ONS

Japanese	267	0.10
Hebrew	249	0.10
Panjabi	239	0.09
Swedish	238	0.09
Ukrainian	230	0.09
Any other West or Central Asian language	215	0.08
Dutch	212	0.08
Slovak	211	0.08
Bosnian, Croatian, Serbian, and Montenegrin	203	0.08
Any other African language	186	0.07
Tamil	186	0.07
Czech	184	0.07
Pashto	182	0.07
Igbo	177	0.07
British Sign Language	136	0.05
Hindi	131	0.05
Northern European language (non-EU)	126	0.05
Nepalese	120	0.05
Swahili or Kiswahili	112	0.04
Latvian	111	0.04
Any other West African language	105	0.04
Any other European language (EU)	105	0.04
Yoruba	98	0.04
Thai	98	0.04
Other language	95	0.0
Luganda	87	0.03
Finnish	82	0.03
Danish	81	0.03
Any other South Asian language	76	0.03
Malayalam	71	0.03
Any other East Asian language	71	0.03
Korean	68	0.03
Any other Nigerian language	55	0.02
Sinhala	49	0.02
Welsh or Cymraeg (in England only)	44	0.02
Malay	33	0.01
Any other Caribbean Creole	32	0.01
Romany English	29	0.01
Afrikaans	23	0.01
Slovenian	22	0.01
Estonian	20	0.01
Shona	15	0.01
Marathi	12	0.00
Krio	11	0.00
Any sign communication system	10	0.00
Gaelic (Irish)	10	0.00
Any other sign language	9	0.00
Gaelic (Not otherwise specified)	6	0.00

Pakistani Pahari (with Mirpuri and Potwari)	6	0.00
Maltese	5	0.00
North or South American language	4	0.00
Telugu	4	0.00
Any other Eastern European language (non-EU)	2	0.00
Manx Gaelic	1	0.00
Cornish	1	0.00
Gaelic (Scottish)	1	0.00
English-based Caribbean Creole	1	0.00

1.2 Total English proficiency

Proficiency	Haringey residents aged 3+ (number)	% of Haringey residents aged 3+
The main language is English	185,666	72.8
The main language is not English: can speak English very well	25,880	10.1
The main language is not English: can speak English well	24,854	9.7
The main language is not English: cannot speak English well	15,762	6.2
The main language is not English: cannot speak English	2,970	1.2

1.3 English proficiency by main language

When making decisions on translation and interpretation, it may be more impactful to consider the total number of speakers of each language who do not speak English well. The 2021 census allows us to do this for larger language groups, and the table below presents the top 20 main languages in Haringey by number of residents aged 3+ who are not confident English speakers (cannot speak it well or at all).

The main language spoken	Residents who are not confident speaking English
Turkish	4,626
Spanish	2,572
Bulgarian	1,447
Polish	1,327
Portuguese	1,073
Romanian	993
Greek	746
Albanian	601
Kurdish	553
Bengali (with Sylheti and Chatgaya)	530

Somali	470
All other Chinese	359
Italian	339
Arabic	317
Yiddish	250
Vietnamese	228
Cantonese Chinese	203
Hungarian	199
Gujarati	173
Mandarin Chinese	165

Additionally, officers should also consider not only the total number of speakers who do not speak English well but the percentage of speakers of a language who do not speak English well. This is because the higher the proportion of speakers who cannot speak English well, the harder to reach and the more at risk of social exclusion that community may be. The table below presents the top 20 main languages in Haringey by % of residents aged 3+ who are not confident English speakers (cannot speak it well or at all).

Main language	Residents who are not confident speaking English	% of the residents who are not confident speaking English
Vietnamese	228	57.90%
Cantonese Chinese	203	49.80%
Turkish	4,626	48.30%
Kurdish	553	43.00%
Mandarin Chinese	165	42.90%
All other Chinese	359	41.40%
Bengali (with Sylheti and Chatgaya)	530	36.80%
Bulgarian	1,447	36.20%
Ukrainian	80	34.90%
Spanish	2,572	32.10%
Yiddish	250	31.40%
Albanian	601	30.30%
Panjabi	67	28.20%
Somali	470	27.40%
Persian or Farsi	164	26.90%
Gujarati	173	26.40%
Portuguese	1,073	25.50%
Tigrinya	112	24.50%
Greek	746	24.10%
Polish	1,327	22.40%

1.4 English proficiency by ward

When making decisions on translation and interpretation, officers need to consider where in the borough they are working and if language barriers are likely to be an issue and if so, what languages are required in that area. This is because main language and English proficiency varies across wards. The below map presents the % of residents who are not confident English speakers (can't speak English well or at all). The council also holds data on the top languages spoken in each ward by the total number of speakers and English proficiency.

% of residents that cannot speak English well or at all (2021)
- ≥ 10.5 ≤ 12.6 %
- ≥ 9.1 < 10.5 %
- ≥ 8.4 < 9.1 %
- ≥ 1.7 < 8.4 %
- ≥ 1.5 < 1.7 %
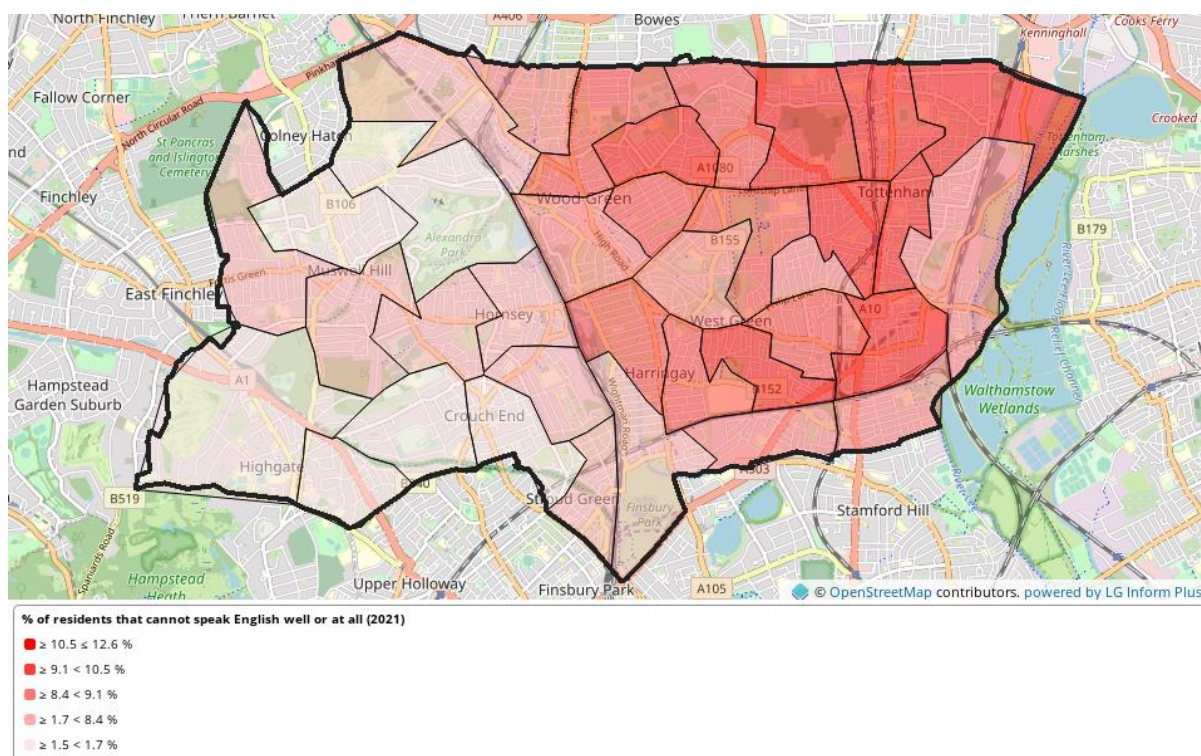
1.5 Intersectionality, proficiency in English by sex, age and disability

When making decisions around the need for translation and interpretation, officers should also consider the group they are trying to reach and how their language needs may differ from Haringey's population.

Age band	% of Haringey population whose Main language is not English and who cannot speak English well or at all	
	Male	**Female**
3-15	2.8	2.7
16-24	2.8	2.6
25-34	4.6	5.0
35-49	8.0	10.0
50-64	10.9	13.7
65+	8.1	12.7
Total	6.5	8.2

In the table above, you can see that not only does English proficiency tend to decrease as age increases, but at the older age bands, a significant disparity between male and female

English proficiency appears. Past age 35, females become notably more likely to have lower English proficiency than males.

Disability	% of Haringey population age 3+ whose main language is not English, who cannot speak English well or at all
No long-term physical or mental health conditions	6.6
Has long-term physical or mental health condition, but day-to-day activities are not limited	3.0
Day-to-day activities are limited a little	7.3
Day-to-day activities are limited by a lot	16.5

The table above shows that English proficiency among disabled people decreases as the severity of the disability increases. Disabled people, in general, are also overrepresented among residents with lower English proficiency.

2. Officer decision chart for interpretation

The following decision chart is intended to help guide officer decision-making about interpretation.
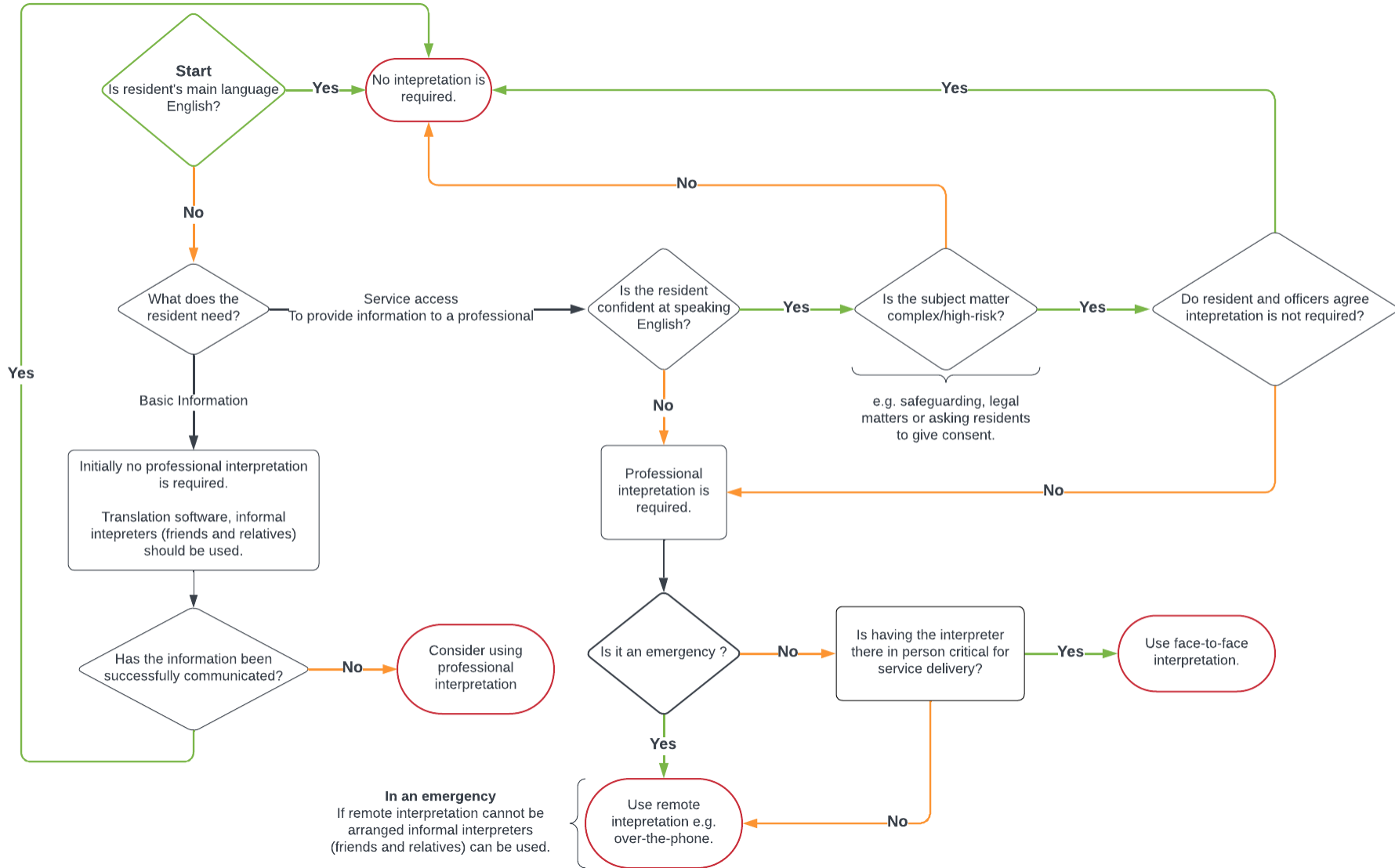
3. Guidance for council officers working with interpreters.

This guidance applies to using interpreters over the phone and face-to-face.

Before

1. Using an interpreter lengthens the time of any interaction, so if a meeting usually takes one hour, you should anticipate that this could take up to 1.5 hours when using an interpreter.
2. Give residents a choice of interpreter where possible – e.g., in terms of sex, language, dialect, or someone who previously supported them. Check if this information is already recorded before asking the resident.
3. Consider if you need an interpreter with previous experience interpreting the subject matter.
4. Give the interpreter an introductory briefing beforehand, clarifying the purpose of the interaction and anything they may need to understand to provide accurate interpretation. The time this takes will vary based on the subject matter being interpreted.
5. For general interactions, it may be sufficient for interpreters to paraphrase. When greater detail is required in more complex interactions, they must precisely interpret what is spoken between the officer and resident. The required approach should be clarified to the interpreter at the beginning.
6. Let the interpreter's cultural knowledge guide etiquette and ask interpreters for advice on cultural considerations during the initial briefing if needed.

During

1. Introduce yourself and the interpreter. Ask the interpreter to explain their role.
2. Explain to the resident that everyone in the room will keep all information shared confidential.
3. Make the resident the focus of attention, looking at them and keeping eye contact; don't speak to the interpreter; instead, use them to communicate directly with the resident.
4. Use plain English, avoid jargon and speak in short sentences.
5. Ensure the resident understands everything and recap if anything is unclear.
6. If you become concerned about what occurs between the interpreter and the resident, stop the conversation and ask the interpreter to explain what is happening. Remind the interpreter that they are only there to interpret and should not comment or give their opinion.

After

1. Debrief the interpreter and provide additional support if the subject matter of the interaction is emotionally challenging. Give positive feedback on what went well and ask for clarification on any issues.
2. Do not ask the interpreter for an opinion on the case.
3. If the interpreter provided an excellent service, record their name in association with the resident and specific subject matter. This supports residents by allowing them to become familiar with and comfortable using an interpreter they have met before. This supports officers by developing a pool of interpreters with repeat experience interpreting more complex subject-specific information.