

1

Background

Some adults with care and support needs, and their carers, may require the services of an interpreter, signer or another professional who has specific communication skills.

This may be as a result of not having sufficient comprehension or command of spoken English or other communication difficulties, as the result of hearing problems or learning or physical disabilities for example.

Best Practice Video:

[Working with Interpreters | Lambeth Safeguarding Children Partnership \(lambethsaferchildren.org.uk\)](#)

2

Why it matters

People who require interpreters report facing barriers when accessing services and both national and local case reviews reference the importance of breaking down those barriers to keep people safe.

How services communicate with vulnerable adults is key, and can be an indicator of abuse or neglect including finding out about domestic abuse, discriminatory abuse, modern slavery, Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) etc.

3

Information

There are a number of main principles that should be considered when a person has communication needs:

1. Family members should not be used as interpreters, including children;
2. The person acting as the interpreter should be acceptable to both the adult and the local authority;
3. The adult should be consulted in relation to any concerns they may have about an interpreter's gender/religion, and issues of confidentiality

4

Before the meeting or conversation, ensure that sufficient time is scheduled, identify in advance any particular terms you will need to use so that the interpreter is equipped to be able to explain the meaning, set boundaries and expectations so that they translate everything, and consider the emotional and mental impact on the adult, family and translator.

During the meeting or conversation, ensure that

5

you make eye contact and speak directly with the adult/family member in the first person, speak slowly and use concise sentences, asking one question at a time, get feedback from to ensure they have understood and be aware of cultural difference that might impact e.g. body language.

After the meeting or conversation, check back with the interpreter in relation to any impact the meeting may have had on them, particularly if the meeting was emotive.

7

Questions to consider

- Do you think the person you are communicating with is vulnerable?
- Are you only ever allowed to speak to family members who speak on the persons behalf? Why is that?
- Can you access interpreter services through your organisation?
- Have you ensured that a written record has been made of the discussion to support assessments, wants and needs of the person involved?

6

What to do

Check with your organisation on what language support services are in place.

Make use of advocacy services as additional support

[Advocacy Services - Lancashire Safeguarding Children Board](#)
If you cannot speak to the person directly, consider safeguarding and report any concerns [Are you concerned about a vulnerable adult? - Lancashire County Council](#)

