



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

GUIDANCE

Migrant integration: research on foreign language interpretation services

Research on the adequacy and availability of foreign language interpretation services for forced migrants living in Wales.

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Recommendations

The adequacy and availability of immigration foreign language interpretation services for forced migrants in Wales: about

About this report

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Section 1: executive summary

Introduction

The Welsh Government believes it is essential that all forced migrants are able to effectively access all required services. It's vital, for not only their health and wellbeing, but also to successfully integrate and flourish into their host communities. For many forced migrants, key to this success is access to appropriate foreign language interpreter services.

For this research the Welsh Government identified the following aims and objectives:

- provide a detailed overview of current foreign language interpretation services provided to Forced Migrants living in Wales
- determine how well the foreign language interpretation services provided to Forced Migrants living in Wales offer adequate and timely support
- propose viable recommendations for future policy development which could improve the foreign language interpretation services provided to Forced Migrants living in Wales

To achieve these aims, the Welsh Government required participatory research with 5 cohorts of people who use, organise, commission, or deliver foreign language interpretation services for Forced Migrants in Wales. This qualitative approach focused on the knowledge and perceptions of participants working in, or receiving the service. This meant engaging with participants to reflect on their experiences within the system, moving onto their assessment of how the system can be improved. The 5 cohorts were:

1. the forced migrant population of Wales
2. formal interpreter providers
3. informal interpreters
4. public sector stakeholders, commissioning agents and migration/integration officers

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5. Third sector forced migrants support organisations and voluntary community support bodies

This report presents the research's findings and recommendations designed to respond to the studies aims and objectives. This review was guided by working within the principles and practices of systems, and grounded theory analysis. The research was conducted during the first half of 2022.

Key findings

For each cohort, there were many findings. The findings listed below are those where there was cross cohort support.

Interpreter/forced migrant fit

Almost all respondents, in 1 form or another, commented on the 'all too often' lack of fit between the interpreter and the forced migrant. They suggested that the pairing of the forced migrant with an interpreter should include:

- dialect issues
- socio-cultural background
- civil conflict background
- gender
- religion/movement
- lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender plus (LGBTQ+) status

Face to face rather than phone

Face to face interpretation was the preferred choice while the use of telephone services was not popular. The use of video conferencing was supported as an alternative to telephone services.

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The Welsh Government suggested to create universal interpreter system

All support organisations, plus half of informal interpreters, suggested the Welsh Government should create a streamlined universal translation service that takes into consideration the needs of both the third sector as well as people accessing services.

Public Sector suggested to provide dedicated translation budgets

All forced migrant support organisations who received financial support from the public sector believed that translation costs are not properly accounted for within grant funding.

The Welsh Government suggested to create sensitivity guidelines / code of practice

This suggestion was supported by all the migrant support bodies. All informal interpreters were seeking support but did not formulate it in these terms. It was felt by the support bodies that while privately run translation services all had codes of practice, it was not always clear that they were being followed.

The need for pan organisation community support hubs: to support both migrants, support bodies and informal interpreters

The creation of some sort of support hubs was suggested by 57% of the informal interpreters and 2 community support organisations. Creating geographical community hubs that encompass, but are independent of the support bodies in

their location, could help:

- develop wider and richer peer support systems
- create a valuable information exchange
- facilitate a greater understanding of the wider informal interpreter services
- provide free foreign language interpretation services (formal and informal) to all forced migrants in community hubs and also through the third sector organisations
- provide support for community interpreters

Recommendations

Promote and facilitate individual rights to foreign language interpretation

Public bodies must ensure that everyone, including forced migrants, regardless of language and communication needs, has equal access to their services.

Encourage better interpreter / forced migrants / sign language user compatibility

Compatibility between client and interpreter can be key to an effective service, and to achieve this, robust processes must be put in place. The evidence indicates that a lack of compatibility (religious, gender, cultural differences, LGBT+ bigotry and dialect) can have a direct impact on the outcomes for forced migrants. To help ensure this compatibility:

- gather the appropriate forced migrant data
- create robust and shared booking processes
- allow sign language users to select their interpreter of choice
- take into account the forced migrants' mental health support needs

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Explore the creation of a common code of conduct practice

A common code of conduct could facilitate more appropriate interpreter bookings, in terms of matching client to interpreter; and a shared expectation of service quality.

Explore the creation of regional Community of Practice Networks for community interpreters

Informal interpreters are often very isolated receiving little to no support from anyone. Creating Communities of Practice offers a strong solution. They are formed by people who engage in similar activities, have similar goals, and are working within the same domain of human endeavour. They are an extremely effective way to support people and can:

- provide/facilitate accessible equality, human rights and cultural awareness training
- encourage awareness regarding the importance of migrant/interpreter fit.
- provide training on professional terminology, including medical and legal
- provide GDPR training
- facilitate the creation of a shared code of conduct
- provide mental health and wellbeing support to informal interpreters

Recruit, train and retain community interpreters

Explore ways to support community interpreters to qualify as interpreters to at least Level 3. Consideration should also be made to supporting the take up of Level 4 Health and/or Criminal Justice Interpretation. All interpreters working within a public realm should be required to undertake a basic course in Professional Conduct in Public Service Interpreting. Consideration should be

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made for supporting community interpreters to do so.

Professional status of foreign language Interpretation and Translation services

The Welsh Government should explore the feasibility of formalising, regulating and protecting the professional status of foreign language interpretation and translation services in Wales. Currently, there is no formal professional identity of interpreters or translators as a regulated profession in the UK.

All interpreters to undertake equality and cultural awareness training

Explore ways to provide and encourage community and professional interpreters to undertake appropriate equality and cultural awareness training.

Wales Interpretation and Translation Service (WITS) to expand its service to charity and third sectors

WITS service should carefully explore the feasibility of expanding service provision to charities and the third sector in Wales.

Adopt technology and innovation

Whilst it is acknowledged that physical face-to-face interpretation is preferable in most circumstances, public services in Wales should also be encouraged to adopt technological innovations to improve the accessibility and provision of foreign language interpretation services. When comparing remote face-to-face video conferencing (Zoom, Microsoft Teams etc.) to using phone, remote video conferencing was by far the preferred method.

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Governmental bodies to provide more easily available translated information, including:

- information regarding all available services
- details on all available translation services and how to access them
- literature outlining the different support bodies in Wales, local authorities and health providers provide translated literature detailing all their services
- for people who are illiterate, this information could be provided via accessible audio or video

Recruit more staff from Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic communities

Welsh Government should encourage forced migrant support organisations to consider how best this can be achieved.

Ensure Welsh Government funding to organisations working in this landscape includes an element for foreign language interpretation cost

For support organisations who receive public sector financial support, as an addition to their project budget, the grant should include the true costs of foreign language interpretation services.

Explore improvements to sign language interpreter service provision

The waiting times for sign language interpretation in all languages is unacceptable. While there is already available training, the numbers of interpreters remain static and waiting times high. The task then is to maximise

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the efficiency of the existing pan UK resources. The better use of live video technology could be a game changer as could artificial intelligence driven software.

Public bodies directly employ interpreters

Direct employment for the most popular languages could be a way forward in Swansea, Cardiff and Newport.

Create complaint and feedback systems

During this study, many instances were shared where the quality and attitudes of interpreters has had a negative effect on the outcomes of several forced migrants, and none were aware of a complaints procedure.

Section 2: introduction

The structure of this report

This chapter outlines the structure of the report, and also provides a brief outline of the key research themes. For more introductory information, please see the above executive summary chapter.

This introduction sets out the aims of the project and the background to the study. The methodology section discusses the approach taken to the review and outlines the use of a systemic perspective. The sampling and methods are discussed together with the principles behind the data analysis.

The findings section summarises key points from information gathering, then proceeds to the primary research with participants.

The Conclusions section indicates how the findings answer the research themes for the study. Recommendations follow from the conclusions.

Key research themes

- How people and organisations access the system.
- Types of interpreter services used.
- The appropriateness of the use of the formal and informal services.
- The support needs for both formal and informal interpreters.
- Language and dialect issues that can act as barriers when accessing services.
- Assessment of the timeliness of provision.
- Assessment of the quality of service provision.
- Identification of incidents where the cultural, attitudinal and gender differences of the interpreter and the forced migrant impacted service provision.
- Assessment of booking processes including any steps that identify possible lack of fit between the interpreter and the forced migrant.
- Provisions for children, LGBTQ+, and disabled people.
- Managing confidentiality.
- Assessment of costs.
- Barriers to using service for both organisational stakeholders and forced migrants.
- How the quality/availability of the service impacted upon the outcomes for forced migrants.
- Access to services for people with varying immigration statuses.
- Identification of how the service provision can be improved from the perspectives of different people using and working within services.

Section 3: methodology

Background to the methodology

The main aim of this research is to review and seek possible areas for improvement regarding the availability and adequacy of foreign language interpretation services for forced migrants in Wales. In order to respond to the key research themes, service provision was reviewed using a systems approach and grounded theory.

The qualitative approach focused on the knowledge and perceptions of participants working in and receiving the service. This meant engaging with participants to reflect on their experiences within the system moving onto their assessment of how the system can be improved.

The qualitative approach focusing on the knowledge and perceptions of participants was considered most suited to addressing the key research themes. This is described as 'perception-based' methodology.

A key strength of a perception-based study with stakeholders is that much of this knowledge and experience can provide useful information on a range of more practical delivery issues and be fed back to improve the system and communications. A recognised limitation of this methodology is that at times participants' views may be swayed by their subjective interests and/or may be inaccurate, and/or may involve misinterpretation of the questions.

This type of perception-based study fits into a grounded theory approach (Holton, J.A. and Glaser, B.G., Eds. 2012). The research is founded in perceptions and information provided by participants through the project interviews. This means that the themes are allowed to emerge from the data, rather than researchers applying or testing a pre-existing hypothesis. This is suited to drawing out complex, interlocking issues such as those presented in the interpreter support system. Grounded theory also allows for the presentation of different angles on the same phenomenon and the effects of perceptions on

behaviours within a system. This was important as the stakeholder groups were positioned at different locations in the overall system and thus had different perspectives, interests, and knowledge, including participants' own ideas about how improvements could be made.

Research methods

A qualitative intrinsic case study was conducted. What makes this study intrinsic (Stake, R. (1995). *The Art of Case Study Research*, Sage Publications, Thousand Oaks, California) is that it provides a better and deeper understanding of the experiences of the participants accessing foreign language interpretation services in Wales. A qualitative intrinsic case study is the appropriate approach, as it ensures that various lenses are used to generate reliable empirical evidence, focusing on very specific groups of people (Baxter, P. and Jack, S. (2008). *Qualitative Case Study Methodology: Study Design and Implementation for Novice Researchers*. *The Qualitative Report*, 13, (4), 544-556). Intrinsic case studies do not exemplify the evidence, nor do they seek to generate theory, but to gain insight into unique phenomena and groups (Eisenhardt, K. M., Graebner, M. E. (2007). *Theory building from cases: Opportunities and challenges*. *The Academy of Management Journal*, 50, (1), 25-32).

To ensure the study's reliability, (Yin, R. K. (2003). *Case study research: Design and methods* (3rd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.) protocol was used, which posits that there was a need to be prepared for unexpected findings during data collection. Anticipating unexpected findings allowed them to be dealt with constructively during data analysis, avoiding gaps. According to the same protocol, researcher bias was minimised by performing reliability checks throughout the data collection. Data was collected over the course of two months, using different methods, to avoid misinterpretation and strengthen the study's reliability (Denzin, N. K. (1970). *The Research Act in Sociology*. Chicago: Aldine.)

This qualitative case study's external validity is challenging, as the participants

are very specific and “seldom heard” and the policy environment is ever-changing, thus, the findings are not applicable to other situations or populations. Stake (1995) suggests that even though qualitative intrinsic case studies are unique, sufficient contextual and background information is provided to ensure that the issues at hand are well understood. Triangulation was engaged by cross-referencing information that the participants shared with, for example, evidence in UK policy documents that was identified through information gathering. By scrutinising their viewpoints and experiences and verifying them against trustworthy sources, it paints an enriched picture of their experiences (Van Maanen, 1983).

Research samples

The sampling framework was determined by the sampling population and sampling size. One of the biggest barriers was the lack of organisations that engage exclusively with forced migrants.

In comparison to the rest of the UK, Wales has a significantly smaller number of third sector organisations, service providers, and stakeholders that engage exclusively with forced migrants and who are comfortable discussing their processes and policies.

Also, unlike England, Wales does not consistently collect data on the numbers of forced migrants. This is a conscious decision from the Welsh Government to safeguard such marginalised population. This decision contributed to recruitment issues.

In order to enhance the report’s generalisability and paint an accurate picture for Wales, an All-Wales approach was taken, and the sampling technique was customised based on each population’s criteria. Thus, resulting in 2 distinct sample groups: the forced migrants and various other stakeholders.

All of the interviews with forced migrants were face to face, while the interviews

with other cohorts were a mixture of face to face, telephone and video conferencing.

The forced migrant population of Wales

To achieve generalisability, forced migrants from across Wales were recruited. Thirteen forced migrants were interviewed with a balanced ratio across the Equality and Diversity characteristics (gender, race, sexual orientation, age, disability, faith, legal status in the UK). The participants came from the Middle East, North Africa, Indian sub-continent and Sub-Saharan Africa and they belonged to 8 different ethnic minority groups. They were all recruited through a number of organisations, using a combination of extreme case and snowball sampling methods. All participants could speak, understand, and write English to various degrees. Participants were aged between 21 and 50+ years old. The majority were aged 25 to 35. Half of the participants were asylum seekers and half were refugees. They all identified as Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic; a number were LGBTQ+. A third of the participants were disabled, and more than half identified as Muslim. The gender balance was 69% male and 31% female thus almost mirroring the general gender balance of forced migrants.

The participants were very positive in regard to the interview process. They all said that it was the very first time someone discussed with them their experiences with foreign language interpretation services. They thought that hearing their views was a very positive move towards creating a more inclusive service and they welcomed the opportunity to help to address the various issues.

Third sector forced migrants support organisations and voluntary community support bodies

Ten third sector organisations and people in community groups were approached to contribute to this study with 8 agreeing to take part. Those with a track record of direct engagement with minority ethnic communities and forced migrant communities were approached. The aim was to tap into their knowledge of foreign language interpretation services, the challenges they have faced over the years and the access barriers. Through engagement work, 1 to 1 discussions took place with 8 organisations based across Wales. For this part of the study, purposive sampling was used, as there are only a certain number of such organisations in Wales (Guarte, J.M. and Barrios, E.B., 2006. Estimation under purposive sampling. *Communications in Statistics-Simulation and Computation*, 35(2), pp.277-284.). The feedback on the interviews was positive, as third sector and support bodies representatives mentioned that it was the very first time someone discussed their challenges with foreign language interpretation services. They thought it was a positive move towards more inclusive and cost-effective services.

Formal interpreter providers

Of the 6 contacted providers, 2 fully and 1 partially took part, while the remaining 3 did not engage with this exercise. From the discussions held with the 3 who declined to take part, commercial interests and a belief that this study was not relevant to them appeared to be the main motivation.

Informal interpreters

Informal interpreters were very keen to take part with all 5 readily agreeing. Their keenness seemed to come from a position of seeing the value of this opportunity to explain to the Welsh Government what problems they are having as an informal interpreter.

Public sector stakeholders; commissioning agents and migration/integration officers.

For some of this cohort, their ability to participate within this research has been heavily restricted by the current Ukrainian refugee crisis. A total of 11 people were interviewed, grouped as follows:

- National Health Service: 3
- Local authorities: 5
- Department for Work and Pension: 2
- Crown Prosecution Service: 1

Whilst the cohort figures were less than anticipated, the researchers are confident that the issues and themes emerging from the data is an accurate snapshot which gives a broad understanding of the issues experienced by commissioning agents in Wales.

Data analysis

Grounded theory was used for data analysis to explain social processes around foreign language interpretation and using tools, such as intensive one-to-one interviews and memos, all key ingredients for data collection and analysis (Robrecht, LC. (1995). Grounded theory: evolving methods. Qualitative Health

Res, 19, (5)169–77). Grounded theory allows for in depth investigation into experiences that are unique or complex. As such, qualitative interviews using a reflexive model are seen as collaboration between participant and researcher (Ryan, L., Golden, A., (2006), Tick the box please: A reflexive approach to doing qualitative social research, *Sociology*, 40, (6), 1191-1200).

For the 1 to1 interview questions, based on key themes, using open-ended questions to encourage researchers to keep interviews informal and conversational. This allowed participants to discuss their experiences (personal/ organizational) in depth. Semi-structured interviews were separated into three distinct sections that are represented by a different set of questions: initial open-ended questions, intermediate questions and ending questions. A fourth category was added containing probing questions, which were used as a guideline to eliminate intrusiveness. Each of the 3 sections explores a different aspect of the participants' experiences. The initial open-ended questions serve a double purpose, allowing the participant to give their account. The intermediate questions allow for exploration of themes and ideas but also address any new concepts that the participant may have brought up in the first section. The ending questions were more follow-up questions for clarification purposes to ensure that their point was understood. Closing questions were used to make sure the interview exit is respectful to the participant.

Coding strategy

Converting data into codes is one of grounded theory's most significant analytic approaches. Codes were created through data extrication to start making analytical sense. Grounded theory coding fragments the data and, thus, connections between codes emerge that lead to theory construction (Charmaz, K. (2012). The Power and Potential of Grounded Theory. *Medical Sociology Online*, 6, (6), 2-15). Three grounded theory coding phases were adopted, starting with initial line-by-line coding, which is recommended when examining empirical problems in interviews, offering the opportunity to take a closer look at the participant narrative (Glaser, B. (1978). *Theoretical sensitivity Advances in the methodology of grounded theory*. Sociology Press, Mill Valley). Focused

coding then provided a clear theoretical direction, with the purpose of making sense of the large data as it directs the analysis down more conceptual paths (Charmaz, K. (2002). Grounded theory analysis, Handbook of interview research, 675–694. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage. Charmaz, K. (2003). Grounded theory, Qualitative psychology: A practical guide to research methods, pp. 81–110. London: Sage). Finally, theoretical coding as means of conceptualization, as it is a process through which the relationships between codes are explored and get integrated into theory and abstract analysis (Glaser, B. (2005). The grounded theory perspective 111: Theoretical coding. Mill Valley, CA: Sociology Press). Grounded theory coding ensures that the collected data is approached, understood and analysed with care, eliminating any nuances. Each phase of coding adds a different layer of data interaction that feeds into the next, thus, creating an analytic and theoretical chain (Star, S. L. (1989). Regions of the mind: Brain research and the quest for scientific certainty. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.).

Reflections on process

There were several cohorts who could not or would not take part. However, the researchers are confident that this report does offer an accurate snapshot of how the service operates in Wales. The researchers would like to thank the Welsh Government project team for always being supportive and informative.

Section 4: findings

Information gathering

When gathering information to supplement this report's findings, it became clear that there remains a limited number of formal research or organisational based reports in regard to the forced migrant population in Wales in general, and very little focusing on the need for an effective interpretation services.

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Of this limited number of published reports, some issues were raised that impact on the availability of good quality and timely foreign language interpretation services. They related to **employment and education**, **health**, **housing**, Violence Against Women, Domestic Violence and Sexual Violence (**VAWDASV**) and Adverse Childhood Experiences (**ACE**). Of equal concern is the lack of published policy documents produced by local authorities and other public sector organisations, such as health boards, criminal justice services; they all described forced migrants as ‘asylum seekers and refugees’ and the vast majority not having (or not publishing) stand-alone forced migrant policies, but rather integrated the topic into their strategic equality plans. However, both Swansea and Cardiff council are exceptions here, as they both blazed the trail with their City of Sanctuary status.

The following documents were also useful:

- Welsh Government ‘**Nation of Sanctuary: Refugee and Asylum Seeker Plan**’
- Wales Audit Office report, ‘**Speak my language: Overcoming Language and Communication Barriers in Public Services**’
- **Equality Act 2010**
- **Social Services and Well-being Act (Wales) 2014**
- **Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015**

The Welsh Government is keenly willing to provide sanctuary to people forced to leave their countries of origin and is clearly determined to ensure those arriving in Wales are fully supported to settle, integrate and flourish. However, without a robust evidence base there are only insights into what may be happening which may not be enough to facilitate the development of efficient and effective services.

Findings from project interviews

The primary research findings are organised by cohort.

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The forced migrant population of Wales

Barriers to interpreter services

Barriers for forced migrants accessing foreign language interpretation services have been categorised in several ways, based on findings, personal, societal and institutional. A second set of groupings includes psychological, relating to the way the individual perceives the service, financial, relating to the cost of service which is not always covered by the organisation and resources, relating to the capacity versus demand for the service.

Summary of barriers to access and take-up of interpreter services by forced migrants:

- Linguistic: especially when someone's dialect is rarer. This means relying on those around them or translating apps.
- Information: lack of appropriate and accurate information on how foreign language interpretation services work and its benefits, provided in a language and format fitting to each individual's needs. This leads to a failure to access foreign language interpretation when needed, especially when an individual relies on digital delivery/online service.
- Communication: how third sector organisations and the Home Office interact with forced migrants and foreign language interpretation services around sensitive issues that require translation e.g. gender-related trauma, sexuality, culture and mental health.
- Knowledge: when during the asylum process translation services are available, what types of services are provided, and how forced migrants could access services without having to rely on others or pay for these services.
- Personal Experience: particularly if there has been issue in the past with translation services and how (if any) care was provided.
- Lack of trust: in public authorities, third sector organisations and foreign

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language interpretation services. The “formality” of the services alienates the forced migrants even further, as their agency during the asylum process is further removed.

- Discrimination: the likelihood of foreign language interpretation services and practices to discriminate, intentionally or unintentionally, and forced migrants’ fear of discrimination.

The barriers mentioned above are not mutually exclusive, and there are a range of overlaps. Thus, a holistic approach and a collaboration between the third sector and Welsh Government is required.

Speaking from experience: forced migrants

Initial use of interpreters

Almost all participants accessed foreign language interpretation services during their initial asylum claim and their Home Office interview or during a meeting with a third sector organisation. Their views are mixed.

“ I was so stressed about the (Home Office) interview and on top I had to worry about the translator too! All that stress really affects your mental health! ”

“ I was glad to have been provided with a translator. At least the UK cares enough to do that. I know my country does not care that much for asylum seekers. ”

“ In my interview with the Home Office, I went with a friend who could speak OK English but not enough to be a confident interpreter. After interpreting for a while, the interpreter seemed not to like what I was saying and in English told the Home Office official that I was lying. My friend challenged

the interpreter and the Home Office official shut the meeting down. ”

“ I was applying for asylum on the grounds of religious persecution. I was a Christian living in a Muslim State and I was being persecuted by the local Muslim villagers. My interpreter was Muslim and did not believe that Muslims would persecute a Christian and so refused to translate. My solicitor explained to the Home Office person what was going on and was asked to take over the interpreting task. ”

Appropriate use of services

A theme evidenced through all interview responses was a lack of understanding of what services interpreters can provide and when it is appropriate to ask community hubs or third sector organisations to hire foreign language interpretation services. Thus, indicating a communication breakdown on how information regarding foreign language interpretation services reaches forced migrants.

Examples:

“ To be honest with you, I didn’t know how it could work. I didn’t realise we would call her, and she would translate over the phone. And what do I do if I must pop in without an appointment? Would they call an interpreter every time I walk in? ”

Marginalised by lack of services

Moreover, just over half of the participants emphasised that many forced migrants require interpreting services for even the smallest tasks, and that they often feel marginalised and misunderstood, as they fail to liaise with service providers as well as begin their integration.

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Example:

“ I want to improve my English even more. I don't want the Council (Welsh Refugee Council) to have to call an interpreter almost every time I have an appointment. Otherwise, I won't be able to fit in. ”

Interpreters removing agency

An important point uncovered somewhat during approximately half of the interviews with forced migrants was that relying on interpreters removes their agency, as their voice is not heard. This results in lack of confidence.

Example:

“ I wish I could use my own voice, share my own story, tell them about me and my life and not have to rely on a stranger's (the interpreter) perception of me. He didn't know me and yet my claim relied on his translation. ”

Expressing narratives, homophobic interpreters and dialect issues

Almost all forced migrants explained that foreign language interpretation is their only way of proving who they are to support their asylum claim. When dialect issues arise, especially during the Home Office interview, their asylum claim is at stake. This is particularly important for LGBTQ+ forced migrants who have more complex narratives to present and who may be dealing with trauma, repression, and denial.

Examples:

“ My interpreter was homophobic, never used one again. It took me another two years to learn English. ”

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“ Translating LGBTQ language from one Arabic dialect to another other does not work because we all use different slang, it’s very country specific. So, if the interpreter doesn’t know the slang, they can ruin someone’s claim. Also, lots of people don’t really want to talk about their (LGBTQ) experiences, for many reasons, some are still in the closet, some are too scared to admit to officials that they are gay. ”

Effects of stress

Additionally, almost 70% added that they are left feeling stressed, since they have no control regarding exactly what is translated and how it will directly impact upon their everyday life and asylum claim.

Example:

“ Some things I’ve been through are quite difficult to discuss and I was worried that because the translator did not know me personally, my background may be downplayed or over exaggerated, which I was afraid may be detrimental to my claim.” ”

Problems with phone foreign language interpretation

76% of the forced migrant participants mentioned that phone foreign language interpretation is not a great solution, as they feel that interpreters will not take time to listen properly to their specific issues and in some cases, they appear not to want to understand the cultural issues which are important to their claims.

Example:

“ I didn’t want the officials (Home Office and interpreter) to think less of me. I wanted to build rapport with them, to show that I am worthy to be in the

UK. But I wasn't sure if the translator would interpret correctly or fill in the gaps in my story. I am a shy person and I come from a strict religious family. I didn't want anyone else to hear about my life or judge me without knowing what it really means to be a gay Nigerian. ”

The need for more diversity within the Home Office

If more Home Office and third sector staff were themselves from minority ethnic communities, there would be a better understanding of dialect and cultural issues as well as more opportunities to confidently communicate and integrate

Example:

“ I would feel safer and more confident to interact and communicate, if more Home Office staff looked like me, spoke my language or if they were from refugee background. Because only then they would be able to empathise with us. ”

Formal interpreter providers

The UK is supported by numerous foreign language interpretation services organisations, along with innumerable global providers operating remote services. Three of the most used providers in Wales were interviewed or engaged with. It was disappointing that 3 other contacted providers did not engage with this research, with 2 only willing to participate anonymously. However, their choice not to do so was respected with an understanding that a position of independence, client confidentiality, commercial sensitivities along with government jurisdictions complicate the provider landscape.

Summary of the barriers to access and take-up of interpreter services by forced migrants using formal in foreign language interpretation services.

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- Recruitment and retention of interpreters: problems with the operating model. This is a demand driven 'Just in Time' model resulting in no guaranteed work for the interpreters.
- Professional development: there is no supported Continuing Professional Development with the onus being on the interpreter to manage and fund their own development.
- Unregulated service provision: while regulation comes with its own problems, so does having no regulations.
- Operate with no training: it is possible to operate with no formal training or qualification as there is no statutory guidance in this field.
- Poor incentives: there are few incentives to gain recognised qualifications as there is no guaranteed returns on investment.
- Professional conduct: there is a lack of robust training regarding codes of conduct, safeguarding or managing confidentiality.
- Interpreter/client match: there is a lack of incentive for providers to match the most appropriate interpreter with clients as any delay may result in the booking organisation going to a different interpreter service.
- British Sign Language (BSL): there are unacceptable waiting times for BSL interpreters.
- Gathering forced migrant demographic data: there is a lack of adequate information gathering from support bodies and commissioning agents, making matching client to interpreter services more difficult.
- Rights: lack of knowledge regarding the rights of forced migrants.
- Providing information to interpreters: there is a lack of information sharing with interpreters. This becomes a barrier to fully efficient and effective foreign language interpretation, particularly for complex, legal, health or sensitive cases.
- Remote technologies: providers have not fully embraced the advantages of using remote technologies, and overly rely on Language Line with all its known deficiencies or push for in person services.

Speaking from experience: interpreter services

Language diversity

Wales is a very diverse country with a long and proud history of welcoming immigrants and forced migrants from all over the world. As a result, “we use just over 120 different languages in Wales, not including Welsh and English” (formal provider).

However, the most commonly used languages remain relatively static with limited movement between places within the top ten most requested languages. However, as Wales continues to play its part in offering sanctuary to displaced people from across the globe, certain fluctuations can be seen in linguistic needs as Wales responds to the varying humanitarian crisis, such as the recent conflicts in Syria and Afghanistan and now in 2022, the effects of the Ukrainian invasion.

“ Our most requested languages rarely change Arabic is the most common, followed by Polish and then BSL. The other 7 top languages are Lithuanian, Czech, Mandarin, Cantonese, Urdu, Bengali and Romanian. Obviously, we are now seeing an extraordinary demand for Ukrainian and Russian interpreters and translators. Before the recent crisis those languages were rarely requested. We expect the demand to remain for at least the next 12 months. It is an example of why it would not be easy to have our interpreters as employees rather than contractors. The language needs of the communities’ ebbs and flows which makes long term employment [of interpreters] complicated and expensive (formal provider). ”

Recruitment, retention and training requirements of interpreters

The issue of recruiting and retaining interpreters remains an issue with all respondents in this research. All organisations that were consulted with did not employ interpreters, but rather commissioned them as self-employed contractors or freelancers. It is assumed that this arrangement gives flexibility to the agencies, allows interpreters to set their own hours and be registered to several agencies, increasing the chances of commissions.

“ All of our interpreters are self-employed. This is the model we use because interpreter services operates on a supply and demand model. For instance, the current Ukraine crisis is putting extra demand on Ukraine languages and Russian (although Russian is less so) but before the crisis the Ukraine language was rarely required. So, we wouldn't employ our interpreters on a PAYE basis because of the cost burdens to the organisation without them being a revenue source, this sounds mercenary, but you understand what I am saying. It wouldn't be a sustainable business model and would increase our costs and therefore our service charges. (formal provider) ”

“ It wouldn't be a sustainable business model and would increase our costs and therefore our service charges.”(formal provider) ”

“ The professional recognition of interpreters is very poor, and some agencies treat interpreters in a way that I don't find acceptable, and I don't want to be treated, so now I just mainly work over the phone and have moved more over to translation services because I find it more satisfying. (Interpreter) ”

Interpreter agencies operate on a 24/7 basis with mutually beneficial support structures to operate and offer as many different languages to meet the needs of

the communities. For instance, WITS operate with approximately 500 registered interpreters, and have working agreements with other agencies such as The Big Word and Language Line to meet any additional needs if necessary. However, it is unclear how many of their interpreters are qualified or 'community' interpreters. Within the WITS interpreter application pack potential recruits are graded as follows:

- little or no experience (under 50 hours)
- some experience (50-100 hours)
- extensive experience (100+ hours)
- hold a professional qualification in language
- hold a Diploma in Public Service Interpreting qualification or are signed up with the National Register of Public Service Interpreters (WITS interpreter application form)

Half of the full interview respondents reported that there is no formal requirement to be a qualified or registered interpreter, but agencies encourage people to work towards a Diploma in Public Service Interpreting (DPSI), and/or register with National Register of Public Service Interpreters (NRPSI) as they are more 'bookable' and attract the highest fees. However, it was noted by almost all respondents, that the qualification process is expensive and does not guarantee a 'liveable' income at the end of the process.

The NRPSI is an independent voluntary regulator of professional interpreters specialising in public services. They have approximately 1800 registered interpreters at any one time. However, to register with NRPSI there are minimum requirements which you must meet:

- full status: minimum of 400 proven hours of Public Service Interpreting (PSI) experience undertaken in UK with a minimum of QCF Level 6 or higher
- interim status: (a) no minimum hours, but minimum QCF Level 6 or higher
- interim status: (b) partial completion of a qualification that meets the full status requirements. Minimum of 400 hrs of proven PSI experience undertaken in UK
- rare language status: the rare language status is for those languages for

which there is no PSI qualification available in the UK, however there is a demand for the language from the public services. You must provide acceptable evidence that you can speak the language to an appropriate standard. Standard of English: You must provide evidence of having passed a qualification that tests spoken and written English equivalent to International English Language Testing System (IELTS) band score 7.0 or above (CEFR C1). Qualifications that test this include the Cambridge English: Advanced (CAE), Cambridge English: Proficiency (CPE) and IELTS. A minimum of 100 hrs of proven PSI experience undertaken in the UK is required

As it is a non-statutory requirement to register with NRPSI or similar groups such as the Association of Police and Court Interpreters (APCi) service commissioners are not aware of the benefits of requiring a qualified or registered interpreter.

“ Nobody is asking for any qualifications for any experience. And I just feel that the interpreters are not even aware of the role, and they're not aware of the Code of Conduct principles, because it is a profession although unregulated and then they need to be protected, as well as the members of the public have to be protected by principles of the professional conduct just like confidentiality, for example. ”

“ Sometimes we see a stepping over the boundaries by an interpreter, mostly from a a community interpreter. It isn't from a negative, but trying to be helpful without understanding the whole situation. So sometimes, that trying to be helpful becomes a huge problem that couldn't be predicted. ”

“ You don't have to have a formal qualification to work as an interpreter. In that respect it is totally unregulated, but we do have a code of conduct and minimum standards that we expect all of our community interpreters to adhere to. ”

“ The interpreters we work with, there is a dedication to their communities, that they want to help the community and they want to make a difference, to help others and to give back a little. Sometimes it can be a bit of a problem because they cross the professional boundary trying to help, there’s no malice or bad intent, but you have to remember that some of these people are coming from countries where the support mechanisms that we have just don’t exist back home, so they have no frame of understanding of the boundaries of the role sometimes. ”

“ We need a flexible approach to community interpreters. The Ukraine crisis is a perfect example. The challenge with Ukraine has been due to a very low population of Ukrainian interpreters. So, we have been able to get people who speak Ukrainian but have no qualifications whatsoever. So, we’ve accepted the fact that they can speak the language and do the interpretation at a community base level to meet the emergency’. ”

Formal interpreter providers believe the existing system is a success

All of the interviewed professional service providers, believed the interpreter system overall worked well. They believed that this success was gained through using a mix of providers, such as WITS, Language Line, BigWord, Clearvoice, as well as the countless number of other private providers along with the combination of professional and community interpreters. However, there are areas of the system that they thought could be improved. These areas are detailed in this section.

Geography of Wales: a barrier to service

All respondents commented that the geography of Wales presents challenges to offering the range of interpreters required to meet the needs of its diverse

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population. Previously forced migrant populations in Wales have been mostly located within the city regions of Swansea, Cardiff, Newport and Wrexham. More recently there has been a shift towards requiring all local authorities in Wales to offer assistance in the resettlement of individuals and families. Whilst this is broadly welcomed it does provide challenges for local services within the more rural areas.

“ It is much easier in the urban areas of Wales for obvious reasons, however North and West Wales it is more challenging because of the isolated geographical areas. North Wales is a problem mostly as the interpreters are not from the area, they come over from England (Liverpool and Manchester) so then you’re adding travelling time, costs, milage etc so the costs can be quite large when all accumulated together. So, for some appointments the interpreters may travel for 2 hours there and back for a 20 minute appointment. ”

Technology and innovation

All respondents believed that the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic has offered many opportunities for services to adopt innovative approaches to engaging with their service users. The most obvious has been the increased use of remote engagement techniques through digital technology, use of online apps and video conferencing platforms such as Microsoft Teams and Zoom. This has been a welcome development as it allows much quicker or dynamic appointments with reduced costs.

“ We have a very good and strong relationship with Language line, so if we are very desperate for an interpreter at short notice, or they’re very remote, we match through Language Line which obviously is interpretation over the phone which isn’t always ideal, but sometimes it is necessary. However, they’ve got a new product called Insight. It is pretty amazing. It’s a 24/7 service through an app, using a tablet, phone or iPad or whatever.

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It's an on-demand service, there's no annual cost, no set up costs, you literally pay for what you use. So, if someone turns up say at a police station or A and E and doesn't speak English you turn to the app and it will source an interpreter for you from across the world instantly and you have an instant face-to-face (albeit via the app) interpreter. I think it costs something like £1.20 per minute. It isn't perfect, but for the short, snappy instant needs it's pretty fantastic. Especially in cases of emergency waiting for an interpreter to arrive or even one available geographically. Also, you may find that actually, even if the per minute is a little higher, you're using and paying it for a 5-minute consultation rather than a 30-minute consultation with a physical 1-2-1 service. ”

“ We've seen an uptake in remote engagements. This could be due to ease of access for geographical reasons as well as us all now being used to working remotely. It's no longer seen as scary or a lesser way of working. We see lots of requests for zoom, teams or whatever platform they want to use to attend anywhere at anytime it's really up to them how they manage their time and scheduling. Of course, if we see this as a new trend, I'd expect investment in the internet access in hospitals etc. So, it's really up to the establishments that need interpreter services to make it as easy and safe for interpreters and users to operate remotely, and also if there's an emerging market for the interpreters to make themselves as accessible as possible to maximise bookings. We will not dictate to them but will facilitate as much as we can to ensure the continuation of service. ”

British Sign Language and other signed languages

BSL was seen as a real problem area by the providers.

“ BSL is an ongoing problem, we only have about 30 BSL interpreters and the demand outstrips supply. We also have the added problem of a

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reluctance of BSL interpreters who will work with police interviews because they feel that their work requires a level of scrutiny that they are not comfortable with. The recording of the interviews, that may then require court appearances etc. ”

“ BSL interpreters are booked 6 weeks in advance as a minimum. It is one of our most challenging languages. I think people are really ignorant of the needs of the deaf community. Most, if not nearly all, believe that a BSL user will be able to just read the information in English, but that isn't true. Their language is BSL not English and there is no form of written BSL. I have to admit I assumed that too before taking this job. ”

“ We are very occasionally asked to provide International Sign Language, but that is very rare. We have done it on previous occasions. ”

Ease of access and timeliness

All respondents from all cohorts identified this as an issue.

Provider comments:

“ Pre-arranged meetings are not a problem, if you can book in advance, we will always source an interpreter. The problems are when it is unexpected or short notice. Then obviously depending on the location and the language we may struggle at short notice, which is when services like Language line become necessary, but not always the best means through which to interpret. ”

“ Our KPI for allocations is 98% and last month we managed 99.2% so we're exceeding our targets and we have always been around that figure,

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and we have never dropped below 95%. So, service continuity is important to our clients, as is being able to operate on a 24/7 basis. ”

“ If the meeting is booked weeks in advance, there is usually no problem, however, if it is short notice, we may not get the right interpreter. (Community support worker) ”

“ We do offer remote interpretation services, but how that works is for the client and the interpreter to agree we act merely as the finding agent in that respect. So that is up to the interpreters to be innovative to meet the needs of clients, we’ll support whatever it is to match client with the interpreter. (Provider) ”

“ I think we give a very good service we offer a pretty consistent service, but we have seen in the last two months a massive spike in demand as the covid regulations have lifted, public services are pretty much back to normal service, but we now have more use for remote interpretation via calls and videos. We don’t see much demand overall for remote interpretation, usually 350 to 400, but this latest report shows 750. (Provider) ”

Interpreter and forced migrant fit

All interviewed respondents from all the cohorts, in different forms, identified this as an issue.

Providers stated:

“ It’s difficult for us because we don’t know what we don’t know, if we know OK then that means the commissioning officer has asked the questions

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and the individual has given that level of information. So, for instance, the Afghan dialect has similarities within the Arabic dialect enough for you to understand and interpret, but the Afghans often don't know that they need to be, or can request the precise dialect they speak and we can then match exactly what their requirements are, but if we don't know, we don't know that we need to be specific. So, we'll just get a request for an Arabic interpreter. Dari and Pashto I think are the most common, and Farsi, but there are really very many different languages spoken in Afghanistan, so yeah it's the knowledge of the people booking an interpreter to be specific. ”

“ If we are told about it yes, when we get an assignment, we ask for as much detail as possible, but often the people needing interpreters especially asylum seekers and refugees, they won't disclose that much information especially if it's to do with say sexuality and things like that. ”

“ Our ability to match is dependent on the quality of the information provided when we get the assignment and of course the user being willing to disclose such personal information. It is difficult for some people who are very traumatised, mistrustful of authorities, etc. ”

Formal interpreters stated:

“ We don't get any information about the person we are interpreting for. I can tell you why we don't get any information no one is asking for it! The agencies don't ask for the information and we end up in tricky situations. ”

“ The people requesting the interpreters don't know what information they should be giving or why it is important outside of the language they need or maybe it's because it is a centralised request, so the organisation has a specific person that requests the interpreters but are not directly involved

with the client at all. ”

“ Sometimes they say we can't tell you because of the GDPR. Right, confidential information, for example. I may not be able to prepare for the assignment because it could be a very specific medical condition that you need to research, I mean, even doctors don't know everything about all medical conditions. ”

Informal interpreters

Five informal interpreters were interviewed who spoke the following 7 languages:

1. Urdu
2. Arabic
3. French
4. Portuguese
5. Polish
6. Hausa
7. Kanuri

Two respondents were based North Wales with the 3 remaining based it South Wales.

Barriers to informal interpreter services

Barriers for the informal interpreter sector when providing foreign language interpretation services have been categorised as organisational, relating to the informal interpreter personal and professional development needs, career progression, relationship with commissioning bodies, cost, peer support, cultural fit and personal aims and goals.

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Summary of barriers to access and take-up of interpreter services by forced migrants

- Linguistic: dialect issues preventing some quality foreign language interpretation.
- Terminology: lack of appropriate and accurate information regarding difficult terminology.
- Personal support: lack of support for informal interpreters. There are no pre planned structured mental health and wellbeing support for community interpreters.
- Professional support: the professional support that is needed to support these interpreters does not exist.
- Training: while there are training opportunities, face to face courses do not appear to be universally available across Wales, however, online training is.
- Training costs: the training available for community interpreters comes at a cost. Many of the community interpreters are not working so costs are a real issue.
- Peers support: while there is some ad-hoc peer support groups, usually based on friendship, there are no structures to enable this to happen systematically.
- Career development to professional level: while there is a possible career path, this information does not appear to be well known.
- Career/professional development for community interpreters: there is no obvious career path for people who want to remain within the realm of being a community interpreter.
- Knowledge: while all respondents in this cohort understood the asylum processes very well, there was a lack of understanding of the civil and human rights legislative context, and the practical implication of those rights
- The lack of professional support for community interpreters in regards to simple knowledge development.

Speaking from experience: informal interpreters

The role of informal interpreters

All the respondents recognised the benefits and the limitations regarding the use of informal community interpreters. None were contracted by the formal commissioning bodies such as the Home Office, CPS, police, local authorities, and Health Boards, although all had supported people when communicating with these bodies. While all informal interpreters reported that they do support forced migrants, 60% of the interpreters stated that interpreting for older people and new arrivals, was the largest part of their work.

All interpreters reported that while not being directly contracted by state bodies right at the start of a forced migrant's journey, as the forced migrants developed more confidence and were met in informal settings, trust can develop, sometimes resulting in the forced migrant, requesting their support directly.

Problems with dialects

This was a series issue for all bar one (Polish) of the respondents. They reported that differences in dialect can pose problems if the interpreter and the migrant have quite different histories.

Examples:

“ Most Portuguese speakers in the UK are from Portugal with these people making up the vast majority of interpreters. The problem is that most Portuguese speaking forced migrants are not from Portugal. They come from places like Brazil, Guinea-Bissau, Mozambique, and Angola. The dialects and slang are very different and can resulting in interpreters getting it wrong. ”

“ I am part of a Portuguese speaking group that is mainly based in Wrexham. We have people from not just Portugal, but from the whole of the Portuguese diaspora. This means that I have had the opportunity of learning the different dialects essential when interpreting. ”

“ Arabic is quite different in many different countries. As an interpreter, I am very lucky because my father’s work meant that until I was in my twenties I lived in many countries across North Africa and the Middle East. ”

When discussing dialect miss match between migrant and interpreter:

“ It just when people go to the hospital, they leave the hospital without fully knowing exactly what’s happening with them. Just different accents, words, and grammar. ”

Problems with the formal foreign language interpretation services

Three out of 5 respondents had stories of when the formal interpreter services failed in situations where the authorities would not let an informal interpreter assist.

“ In the court system there are problems, perhaps mainly because they usually don’t let us be interpreters. They get someone from Manchester or Birmingham, and they don’t always fully understand the case leaving out a lot of information that should be part of the case in court. They just read what’s on the paper and that’s how they work for a lot of the time. ”

“ A man was arrested who did not speak English, and rather than allowing his friend to interpreter in this instance, the police insisted on getting a

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formal interpreter. This resulted in the individual being locked up for a further 24 hours while they waited for one to become available. The situation was immediately resolved as it was mistaken identity. ”

“ In hospitals, when going in for an appointment, the hospital can book in advance an interpreter. The problem is that they do sometimes fail to attend resulting in many months of delay in their treatment. ”

Reported problems with the formal foreign language interpretation booking systems

Three out of 5 respondents gave negative examples regarding booking formal foreign language interpretation services. The way they are booked can often result in a very poor service.

“ All the services where I live use Language Line. We (her community) tend to not like them as they make assumptions about who they are supporting and do not find out what our needs are. When I was a forced migrant, they sent a Romanian interpreter who had lived in Portugal for nearly 7 years. I couldn't understand everything as his Portuguese was very poor, let alone his understanding of African Portuguese. This has happened many times, and they still do the same again! ”

Create registered community interpreters

Three out of 5 informal interpreter respondents wanted their role to be developed and semi professionalised.

“ It would be great if there were more opportunities for our community interpreters. We can't register anywhere. Maybe with more opportunities

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to get community interpreters trained, so they could have something like a card to show authorities in places like hospitals so that they don't automatically just go directly to paid interpretation service that charges £150 an hour, or even more. Community interpreters only charge about £20 per hour or do it free when supporting people. ”

The need for mental health and wellbeing support for community interpreters

The need for support systems was mentioned by 3 of the respondents while all expressed the negative impact that being a community interpreter can have:

“ I mean, you may end up dealing with a terrible paedophile case. And nobody wants that in their head. ”

“ Being an interpreter, it can be, it can be very traumatic, you might have to tell someone that they're dying, or that their, their husband beats her half to death, and then you have to take that home with you. There is no support when support could be very helpful. ”

“ I think there's a lot of burdens carried by community interpreters without the help and the support to get them get through it. We could create some kind of structure to do that. I don't know. I'm just saying. ”

Professional support for informal interpreters

Three out of 5 respondents reported times when the lack of formal support and ethical direction has been a problem.

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“ Not long ago, I have known this couple since I arrived because in the UK they were they were in their late 40s and I assisted them on many occasions as an interpreter. One day he told me that he had a rope on his chimney ready for him to hang himself. He said don't say anything to my wife. I did not know what to do so as there is no support for community translators like me. I contacted his GP and told him what happened asking him to create an emergency appointment. He did straight away, and I contacted my friend apologising to him saying that I forgot to tell him that he had a GP appointment right now and that I would take him. He is still alive. ”

The first or second language dilemma

It was reported by an informal interpreter that there was an increasing dilemma regarding when to use an interpreter who is a first or second language interpreter:

“ If the interpreter was brought up in the UK, then they can understand more difficult and technical terms than say an Arabic interpreter from the Yemen. But that Arabic interpreter from the Yemen may understand Arabic technical terms better than the UK born interpreter. So, what's best for the client? ”

Costs of career progression

While 4 out of 5 of the respondents wanted some sort of careers progression, 3 saw professionalisation through training as prohibitively expensive:

“ It's a very unpredictable business. And that's a problem I think because to progress the courses costs money. The qualifications cost money. And the question is, should the interpreter invest? We are often not rich

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people, and they really have to think very hard about whether we can afford to do it, is it a good investment? Am I going to get the money back? How many hours will I need to invest to get the money back? All the time I am learning I am not earning, cost of living? can I afford to do that? And some of us know we don't have to qualify, they don't have to register and they still can work, so we need some thinking around this area to work out what the incentives to qualify are and what are the barriers for people to do so. ”

A respondent felt the costs were not too high when done online:

“ The interpreter course up to level 3 is taught online. This is very good because a lot of us community interpreters have families and caring responsibilities or not very much spare cash for travel, so it allows people to access the course that perhaps wouldn't have before. There's something about being in your own home that is comforting, and being in a classroom can be quite intimidating for some people, so it's working well in that respect. Also, it allows helps community interpreters to be completely comfortable with using online technology and interpreting that way. ”

However, the 3 respondents from grassroots organisations working directly with forced migrants offered some caution to online technology being the only solution:

“ New technology is great and most people have a mobile phone, but not everyone can afford the latest phones. Not even my phone can use the QR codes and all that kind of thing. I think sometimes people forget that some people are really very poor, and we know about digital exclusion. Welsh Government talk about it all the time, and then progress ahead with things that digitally exclude people! I was in a meeting the other day with the maternity services and this whole thing, the Welsh NHS is all going digital. But we've got to be careful, that it doesn't widen that gap yeah. So,

we've got a service, but who is accessing it and who isn't and ask ourselves why that is? (charity worker) ”

Working as community interpreters for personal ethical reasons

All interviewed community interpreters expressed that their work focus was for the betterment of their community and not career or financial betterment. One interpreter who had moved back in the realm of community believed the private agencies were unethical in regard to profiteering from what is a necessary service right:

“ Well I just do telephone interpreting now because, well I'm not keen on working for private agencies, who have reduced their rates for interpreters. It's just my personal opinion, my belief, that private agencies shouldn't be making money from public services. They just shouldn't be making a profit from the taxpayer and exploiting a public service. ”

Others reported similar thoughts to the comment below:

“ I do it for the community, I help them, they are people like me. My understanding of them and their background helps me provide them a better service that someone who is there on minute and gone the next. ”

Code of Conduct protocol, data management and training

Whilst all agencies that were engaged with required their interpreters to sign up to a code of conduct, none of the informal interpreters had anything similar. The lack of identifiable professional ethics and standards can be a problem for informal interpreters, in regards to the confidence of the people requesting their

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service, especially if they identify GDPR deficits. This can result in a diminished service.

“ As a professional or community interpreter, you are very rarely are given any information about who you are going to be interpreting for. Nothing. Often, it’s just the address and the time of the appointment. That’s it. I think there isn’t just one reason for this there are many. Not even the agencies are asking for information. ”

“ The people and organisations requesting the interpreters don’t know what information they should be giving or why it is important outside of the language they need. Maybe it’s because it is a centralised request the organisation has a specific person that requests the interpreters but are not directly involved with the client at all. ”

“ Sometimes they say we can't tell you because of the GDPR. Right, confidential information, for example. Or I will not be able to prepare for the task because it could be a very specific medical condition that you need to research, I mean, even doctors don't know everything about all medical conditions. This is where community interpreters have an advantage because we often know the people involved. ”

“ Nobody is asking for any qualifications for any experience. And I just feel that some interpreters are not even aware of the role, and some are not aware of basic Code of Conduct principles, because it is a profession although unregulated and then we need to be protected, as well as the members of the public have to be protected by principles of the professional conduct just like confidentiality, for example. ”

Welsh Geography and the universal coverage of

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interpreters

The 2 North Wales based interpreters stated that the size of Wales and the structure of population centres makes timely coverage extremely difficult.

“ It is difficult in Wales because most of us interpreters either live in the bigger cities or outside of Wales, and I don't think it is right that the private agencies charge travel fees which you could travel for hours and hours there and back for a very short assignment. It seems very wasteful to do that. ”

Public sector stakeholders: commissioning agents and migration / integration officers

For some of this cohort, their ability to participate in this research has been heavily restricted by the current Ukrainian refugee crisis. However, although cohort figures were less than anticipated, researchers are confident that the issues and themes emerging from the data is an accurate snapshot which gives a broad understanding of the issues experienced by commissioning agents in Wales.

Barriers to usefully obtaining the most appropriate interpreter services

- Lack of knowledge or awareness from agents regarding the supplementary needs of the forced migrant population.
- A general lack of comprehensive booking systems.
- Face-to-face or remote video conferencing supported foreign language interpretation is considered the more successful medium. However, it is more expensive and can have time delays.

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- The geographical nature of Wales indicates the need to improve remote video conferencing foreign language interpretation services which will benefit the whole of Wales, not just the rural areas.
- Cultural awareness and equality training of all interpreters is necessary
- Basic training which must include ethics, confidentiality and codes of conduct must be made available to all informal and formal interpreters.

Speaking from experience

BSL and other signed languages

The sign language interpretation services for forced migrants are poor with there seeming to be little knowledge within the commissioners or the support groups:

“ A family we have been supporting, the father is deaf due to the effects of a bombing raid. He is newly deaf, he has come here and has gained refugee status, so the benefits, they have with refugee status, they were going to have their benefits taken away. The Job Centre was saying you're not applying for jobs, etc so we're going to stop your benefits. He didn't speak English and couldn't sign or say he didn't use BSL. His only method of communication was shouting very loudly in his own language. I contacted maybe five different agencies that work with deaf people in Wales. all of the national providers all of them and then they will signpost here there, and everywhere, and not one of them provided support for a speaker of a language who is also deaf. If I hadn't accidentally come across this family, they would have been sanctioned and desolate. It's ridiculous. (charity worker) ”

Technology and innovation

All 11 interviewed commissioners were office based and fully appreciated the

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benefits of online face to face video as an interpretation aid. It appears that there is a transition taking place within organisations where non-office-based staff are prevalent:

“ I mean, we've all started from an NHS point of view, we've learned quite a lot from COVID. Yeah, because we're not a tech savvy workforce. So, for us to have, gone over to MS Teams and whatever it was we were using before it's been quite a shift for most NHS staff. My experience of over 20 plus years of nursing is that having interpreter services via the telephone is really difficult. So having the ability to do it face to face or at least on a screen it's just the outcome for the patient is so much better. I get that sometimes you can only do it on the phone, but I would say the gold standard should always be in face to face. (NHS staff) ”

“ My impression is that it's so much better for the patient to be able to have that in person or at least on a screen. I totally understand about the geographical challenges within Wales that comes with that, but even just being able to see the face [online] makes such a difference, so if we can further embed technology to assist with that, then yeah the outcomes for the patient will be much, much better. (NHS Staff) ”

Ease of access and timeliness

All 11 interviewed commissioners, saw the interpreter booking lead time, as a crucial factor in the availability of service:

“ So, from previous experience, I've learnt that you have to book ahead to get the interpreter you need or want so we'll try and book quite a long time, at least a week, in advance. But for that reason, I have never been told they're not available or been asked to wait for availability. I don't think that is a problem here, but I know that's very different for my colleagues in A and E where the need for immediate interpretation is necessary. (NHS

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worker) ”

“ Never had a problem in this job nor in my previous, but that may be because it was all booked in advance of a set event. I’ve never worked in a frontline role, so maybe it is an issue for those that do. I imagine it could be actually be the case. My experience of needing interpreters was for community events, seminars, workshops, and events of that nature, so all booked well in advance. (Local authority) ”

Interpreter and forced migrant fit

All 11 respondents, in 1 form or another, commented on the ‘all too often’ lack of fit between the interpreter and the forced migrant:

“ I guess 1 area here is retaining the dignity, respect or confidentiality of patients. I would never out someone as gay to WITS if I didn’t have the expressed permission of the patient, neither would I ever disclose or request that information from a patient without a clinical need to do so. So, we keep the requests to the absolute bare minimum, of language needs, age (maybe), male or female, and then a brief background to the situation. (NHS worker) ”

“ If I’m speaking for instance to an Urdu speaking woman, you see the woman who has been a victim of domestic violence, fleeing domestic relationship, and if the interpreters bring in their own opinions on this sensitive subject, then yes. Some communities believe this should never be discussed outside the family. (social services) ”

The Right to Interpreter services

Two respondents clearly stated that having access to an interpreter is a right, and that this right was not always provided:

“ We see a lack of awareness that to have services provided in your language is a right not a privilege, especially when it comes to health and social work or housing. These are complicated areas and it’s vitally important that the person understands everything that is being asked or said or agreed. (Local authority) ”

“ The organisations such as local authorities do not share the information with all their members of staff that interpretation services are a right not just a bonus offered service. Equally service users are not aware that it is their right to have the services provided to them in the language most appropriate to meet their needs. (Local authority) ”

Geography of Wales

Geography itself can become a barrier. The reasons presented by 3 respondents included travel distance for interpreters, commissioner familiarity, and the lack of understanding that that access to an interpreter is a right.

“ We do see in rural areas that not everyone is aware of translation services and overly encourage the use of family members to interpret for them, often this includes children which isn’t always appropriate. (Local authority) ”

“ “Quality is good from WITS as you’d expect. I think the issue isn’t much of a problem in the cities, but the problems arise in rural settings. Often in

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face-to-face meetings interpreters need to travel up from say Cardiff to Brecon and then there is the added cost of travel expenses. I mean this is an added burden for the LA to cover, not the service user, but it is an issue of course with ever decreasing resources. I think though that having interpreters travel into an area has an upside because in rural settings the communities needing interpreters are quite small, so an outsider has less chance of being personally connected to the service user. (Local authority) ”

“ In the more rural areas of Wales, many of the services that are coming into contact with asylum seekers or refugees, have never had to think about providing another language outside of Welsh or English. In most cases, it isn't a reluctance to provide an interpreter, it is as simple as not being aware of how to do it, who to ask, what to do, whether they are allowed to, or whether they should do. I think an awareness raising campaign within the organisations, and the communities is necessary. (Local authority) ”

Objectivity of interpreters

A social worker whilst understanding the benefits of community interpreters also identified potential problems.

“ When people are interpreting for somebody of the same culture or friend, they really want to help them and so maybe interpret something out of context to support them. In general, if from the same culture, interpreters sometimes minimise negative things said or try to over blow it, to support the person. I am a multi linguist and sometime able to understand the language of the person and so I can see just what they are doing. Sometime you can sense a compatibility issue and that sometimes comes out in how they interpret including the intonation of words which contain

much information itself. ”

Concerns about lack of training

Five of the interviewed commissioners commented on the issue of training:

“ I really think training is very important. Providing information is very important. But, I suppose the hospital may be reluctant to give information about the patient and the medical condition if they are not reassured those interpreters are bound by confidentiality or that they have signed Code of Professional Conduct. ”

“ We know that there are many interpreters that are out there working that have not had any formal training and are working in very complex environments like ours where the need for confidentiality or knowledge of conflicts of interest are extremely important but are not being sufficiently followed or let’s be honest, I don’t think some people are even aware of it. That is a very real problem. ”

“ The training, up to level 3, is apparently pretty good and they go through conflicts of interest and confidentiality, but I don’t think enough time is given to it. ”

Third/voluntary sector and migrants support bodies

Barriers to interpreter services

Barriers for the third and voluntary sector organisations accessing and providing foreign language interpretation services have been categorised as

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organisational, relating to the interpretation need and demand each organisation has been facing since the “migration crisis”, financial, relating to the cost of the services/related budgets and cultural, relating to the aims and goals of each organisation.

Summary of barriers to engage with interpreter services for Third Sector Organisations:

- Linguistic: as the linguistic needs and demands change frequently, prompted by world events and internal relocation, the third and voluntary sectors have to frequently adapt the accessibility of their services and support, by hiring new staff, and constantly recruiting new volunteers.
- Staff and volunteers: most of the third and voluntary sector organisations primarily rely on staff and volunteers to provide ad hoc foreign language interpretation services. Some organisations have seen a sharp staff and volunteer decrease, post-COVID-19 pandemic. As a result, the character of the foreign language interpretation services has changed. In many cases, the forced migrants must book their appointments far in advance to secure an over the phone foreign language interpretation, which is less approachable and friendly.
- Financial: especially post-COVID-19, third and voluntary sector organisations ask for the service referees to cover the foreign language interpretation fees, which have increased alongside the interpretation providers fees. This makes foreign language interpretation a challenging aspect of budgeting.
- Monitoring: it is becoming increasingly challenging for third and voluntary sector organisations to record information where they have identified linguistic interpretation gaps, as they lack a centralised system (or even any system) to capture information at the outset.
- Waiting times: most of the third sector organisations explained that the foreign language interpretation services they use are inflexible. There are increasingly longer waiting times for appointments which impacts the forced migrants wellbeing. The voluntary and third sector organisations, all expressed their reliance on community interpreters for their general day-to-

day foreign language interpretation needs.

- Distrust: many communities have developed their own network and support groups to allow for ad hoc foreign language interpretation. However, such community network help is not monitored and contributes to perpetuating distrust toward the foreign language interpretation services offered by the third sector.

The barriers mentioned above are not mutually exclusive, and there is a range of overlaps. Thus, a holistic approach and a collaboration between the third and voluntary sectors and Welsh Government is required.

Speaking from experience: third and voluntary sectors

The migrant and COVID-19 crisis

The migrant crisis and COVID-19 have contributed to a sharp increase in foreign language interpretation needs across Wales. The third and voluntary sectors are struggling to meet the demand and the ever-shrinking funding makes it challenging for smaller organisations to keep up with the increasing foreign language interpretation service fees.

Example:

“ We get multiple translation requests daily. I would say that since 2016 with the war in Syria and now with Covid, the demand has tripled. We are an established organisation, and we still find it difficult to keep up with the demand. I can't imagine how smaller organisations manage. ”

Issues with private companies' interpreter services

The ways in which translation is provided by private companies was a recurring

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theme expressed by all respondents. Ensuring effective translation services are available in a person's language and dialect of choice is a constant stress for the third sector. Foreign language interpretation services that are available whenever needed, ensure accuracy, and used without fail is far from the norm. Smaller organisations suffer, as they must organise their own services around the availability of translation services. The waiting times are increasingly longer, which appears to be time consuming for staff and not tailored to the needs of the third sector.

Example:

“ There is always an element of challenge with translation. Sometimes the translator doesn't speak the right Arabic dialect, or no one is available to translate when we need them and the service users have to wait for a few days or weeks to get an appointment. But specifically with the Home Office interviews, we tell our service users to go back and check the video with their lawyer and their lawyer's translator to correct any translation mistakes. Mistakes happen all the time. ”

Terminology

All respondents stated that the language and terminology used through interpreter services, and community interpreters can be problematic, as the interpreters are not always familiar with migration and policy “jargon”, acronyms, and professional and/or technical terms which can make it more difficult for the third sector to offer their services. Moreover, this situation is contrary to the ethos of the third/voluntary sector organisations in their wish to provide people-centred services for forced migrants.

Example:

“ Our staff and volunteers are trained by us to use the right language, the right terminology. They also go through Equality & Diversity training

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regularly, and they know how to use LGBTQ+ friendly language, for example. Now, I can't say that this is the case for all translation services because we had people complaining because the translator has used complicated or insensitive language. They are supposed to help us do our job, not hinder it. ”

Recruiting interpreters

In discussion, all the third sector bodies stated that recruiting more people from minority ethnic communities that speak various languages is a constant difficulty, as staff from minority groups appear to be more reluctant to return to employment and volunteering post-COVID-19. However, this has also been a long-term issue.

Shortages of staff and volunteers impact the day-to-day operations of the third and voluntary sectors, as both sectors rely on staff and volunteer interpreters to cut down on their expensive use of private foreign language interpretation services.

Example:

“ We are constantly trying to recruit more volunteers and staff from ethnic minority background that are multilingual. It's much harder after Covid, because the world has changed so much and BAME people, who were especially affected by the pandemic, are still reluctant to get back to the old “normal”. This has a knock-on effect on our day-to-day needs and demand for translation, as we have to limit our face to face services and spend more money on translation services. ”

Trust

All respondents outlined that client/interpreter trust as a key issue.

The lack of provision for interpreters/translation in “formal” settings, such as hospitals, forces third sector organisations to rely on family members and friends to interpret, which can present other challenges as they may not be aware of specific terminology.

Example:

“ We have a duty of care which is partially met. We would love to be able to provide all our service users with appropriate translation whenever they need it, instead of them having to rely on friends and family who may mean well but don't always translate accurately. We've had more and more cases of service users not getting the right prescription because of a mistranslation. We can't control that. ”

Interpreter/customer fit issues

Sensitive foreign language interpretation services are a focal point for the third sector. The research highlighted examples where the response of the interpreters had not reflected and/or understood cultural/religious beliefs/gender/sexuality of the individual.

Example:

“ Many times, service users request a male or female translator which is not always provided. We deal with people that have experienced severe trauma and such requests must be taken into consideration by the translation services. Unfortunately, sometimes we have to weigh in the urgency of the translation. ”

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“ It's not only as a case of affordability. It's quite hard to get hold of an interpreter who can match like the needs of the clients and the refugees and asylum seekers. It is often easier to go to community interpreter to match the needs of the refugees and asylum seekers. The problems come with technical language. ”

However, when one support organisation was asked about how they achieve interpreter/customer fit, they stated:

“ A checklist for informal interpreters, pointless, because they'd be like, tick, tick, tick. Oh, cool. And then send me only Arabic speaker they have available. The reality is that we just don't have the luxury of choice hence mismatches regularly occur. ”

The cost of private translation services

The affordability of the private translation services is another issue. As large pots of funding have been allocated for COVID-19, the translation budgets for the third sector have suffered.

Examples:

“ We use Big Word which is expensive, they charge per minute. But then we have access to translators worldwide. It's unsustainable to keep using them though because our budgets have taken such a hit with COVID-19 and usually for our projects the Welsh Government does not allocate a translation budget- which they absolutely should. ”

“ We don't use any interpreter services, only community-based ones, because like, we can't afford it. The cost means it's just not assessable to pay for any interpretation services. Last year, the centre had a surplus of

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just £500, so how can we? ”

Make it free and easily available:

“ Arranging appointments with someone who doesn't speak the same language with you is really difficult. I'd like to actually see the Welsh Government take on some initiative and provide a free and not a charged services where you can just call down an interpreter or get on the phone and be able to translate on the spot. I don't know what the financially limitations are, or even the physical limitations that would be on the government's behalf. ”

Problems due to the reduction of face-to-face discussions

Some third sector organisations rely on face-to-face discussion at community centres as their main point of information. One of the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic is that the language barrier has been very difficult to overcome without face-to-face contact.

Example:

“ 90% of our services are face to face. It's challenging when we turn people away because the waiting times with the translation service is so long. It impacts the quality of our service and our users well-being. ”

Digital exclusion

Digital exclusion remains a key issue, as various third sector organisations cannot communicate with their service users. However, the pandemic has had a positive effect; some people are now better able to use technology and some third sector organisations have provided access to smart devices and training for

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online meetings.

Example:

“ We regularly top up our service users’ phones and we provided them with tablets and laptops during the pandemic. This doesn’t mean that people know how to use technology or certain software (like zoom) or even translation apps. ”

A third sector respondent stated

“ New technology is great and most people have a mobile phone, but not everyone can afford the latest phones. Not even my phone can use the QR codes and all that kind of thing. I think sometimes people forget that some people are really very poor, and we know about digital exclusion. Welsh Government talk about it all the time, and then progress ahead with things that digitally exclude people! I was in a meeting the other day with the maternity services and this whole thing, the Welsh NHS is all going digital. But we've got to be careful, that it doesn't widen that gap yeah. So, we've got a service, but who is accessing it and who isn't and ask ourselves why that is? ”

“ We also cannot assume that everyone is literate. A lot of our service users they often have no formal education and cannot read in their own language let alone English or Welsh, so just shoving translated material in their hands and assuming they're then fully informed is just, well it just isn't very good of us is it and then we punish them for not knowing what they're supposed to do. It's awful really. So yes, modern technology, but it isn't the answer to everything. ”

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Sense checking interviews

Six people from the target cohort were asked what their thoughts were regarding this report's conclusions and recommendations. Four responded, all very positive, although there was a wish for pan-organisation community support hubs outlined in the conclusions sections to be an actual recommendation.

Section 5: conclusions and recommendations

Conclusions

This Conclusions section reflects how the cross correlated findings from all cohorts respond to this studies research themes.

Interpreter/forced migrant fit

Just about all of the respondents, in 1 form or another, commented on the 'all too often' lack of fit between the interpreter and the forced migrant. They suggested that the decisions regarding the pairing of the forced migrant with an interpreter should include:

- dialect issues
- socio-cultural background
- civil conflict background

The forced migrant participants indicate that this would make them feel more "at home" and will allow them to offer more background information, since they are confident that their interpreter will be able to understand the context.

Comment from a forced migrant:

“ I was offered an Egyptian translator for my Home Office Interview. I’m from Saudi Arabia, we have very different accents. My sister is married to an Egyptian, which is why I could understand his version of dialect, I was lucky in that respect. To be honest with you, I’m happy I was given a translator, I could not have gone through the interview without one. ”

Comment from an informal interpreter:

“ Time and time again I hear examples of interpreters turning up to see a client when they should be aware that there may be dialect issues. This is a real ethical issue because I am sure that they must know that may well be an issue of dialect, but they choose not to recused themselves because they are getting paid. ”

Almost all of the respondents wanted this Interpreter/forced migrant fit to include one or all of the following criteria:

- gender
- dialect
- religion/movement
- LGBTQ+ status

This was supported by all the openly gay and lesbian respondent forced migrants, as well as all cisgender women who have undergone physical and emotional trauma in their countries of origin and have difficulties sharing their traumatic experiences, out of fear of discrimination.

Comments from forced migrants:

“ My translator was a man. On the one hand, I was happy that I did not have to worry about any miscommunication in Arabic, but on the other hand, I know that there is a lot of homophobia in Egypt this is why I left. I know all the negative stereotypes that Egyptian men have for lesbians and

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feminists, for people like myself. I was extremely worried that my interpreter will jeopardise my case by mistranslating on purpose! ”

“ I was applying for asylum on the grounds of religious persecution. I was a Christian living in a Muslim State and I was being persecuted by the local Muslim villagers. My interpreter was Muslim and did not believe that Muslims would persecute a Christian and so refused to translate. My solicitor explained to the Home Office person what was going on and was asked to take over the interpreting task. ”

Face to face rather than phone

66% of forced migrants wanted face-to-face contact rather than over the phone/online so that the interpreter and forced migrant can build rapport and get to know each other and specific issues prior to any formal foreign language interpretation.

Example:

“ For the Home Office interview, I would have preferred it if the interpretation was face-to-face and not over the phone. Because you understand a lot from body language and demeanour. I’m a human, not just an asylum case. ”

Mirroring the forced migrant’s preference, face-to-face was also preferred by the informal interpreters, however, the formal interpreters saw no real problems with phone-based foreign language interpretation. The support and commissioning bodies recognised the benefits of face-to-face, but were in reality just driven to secure some form of service.

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Welsh Government to create universal interpreter system

All of the support organisations, plus half of informal interpreters, suggested Welsh Government should create a streamlined universal translation service that takes into consideration the needs of both the third sector as well as the service users.

Examples:

“ A streamlined translation service run by the Welsh Government would be ideal. A service specifically for forced migrants and the third sector. ”

“ Let’s remove the profit motive. ”

Public Sector to provide dedicated translation budgets

All forced migrant support organisations who received financial support from the public sector believed that translation costs are not properly accounted for within the grant systems. They wanted a translation budget as a prerequisite for all forced migrant-funded projects.

Example:

“ We need financial support from the Welsh Government regarding translation. If each project had an allocated translation budget, we would be able to deliver our services in a timely manner and that would build trust with our service users. ”

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Welsh Government to create sensitivity guidelines/code of practice

This suggestion was supported by all the migrant support bodies. All the informal interpreters were seeking support but did not formulate it in these terms. It was felt by the support bodies that while the privately run translation services all had codes of practice, it was not always clear that they were being followed.

Example from migrant support body:

“ I would say we need strict guidelines around cultural sensitivity for the translation providers. ”

In addition to all forced migrant support bodies, this view was also backed by almost all forced migrants when it was put to them (none suggested it) as an option. When declaring their support, just over 60% recanted what had happened to them, and/or witnessed for others.

The need for pan organisation community support hubs to support both forced migrants, support bodies and informal interpreters

The creation of some sort of support hubs was suggested by 57% of the informal interpreters and two of the community support organisations.

Distilling the responses:

- Creating geographical community hubs that encompass, but are independent of the support bodies in their location, could help:
 - develop wider and richer peer support systems
 - create a valuable information exchange
 - facilitate a greater understanding of the wider informal interpreter

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services

- provide free foreign language interpretation services (formal and informal) to all forced migrants in community hubs and also through the Third Sector organisations
- provide support for community interpreters

And while there is a very strong case for something similar to what is outlined above, it could be seen as beyond the scope of this study, so it is not being recommended as part of this research, although researchers feel it should be explored by Welsh Government.

Recommendations

Promote and facilitate individual rights to foreign language interpretation

Public bodies must ensure that everyone including forced migrants, regardless of their language and communication needs, can equally access their services. Relevant duties are set out in the Equality Act 2010, the Social Services and Well-being Act (Wales) 2014 and the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015. Without the knowledge of when, how and where to access services there is the potential for vulnerable people to experience poorer services and outcomes. This also leaves public services at risk of legal consequences for non-compliance of their legal duties.

Public services in Wales should undertake a comprehensive awareness raising campaign, to inform the public of their rights to receive information in their chosen language.

Public service bodies (and other relevant partners) in Wales should effectively inform all staff members of their duties with regards to offering foreign language interpretation services.

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How:

Linking in with public sector equality officers, Welsh Government should undertake a rights-based awareness raising exercise regarding the statutory requirements of foreign language interpretation provision. Working with strategic partners, public service bodies in Wales should also be encouraged to undertake a comprehensive awareness raising campaign within their organisations and amongst the communities they serve. This exercise should also include targeted engagement with the forced migrant communities.

Encourage better interpreter / forced migrants / sign language user compatibility

Compatibility between the client and the interpreter can be key to an effective service, and to achieve this, robust processes must be put in place:

Gathering data

The public sector commissioning bodies and the forced migrant support organisations must collect (and use) all data that can assist in achieving the best possible client/interpreter compatibility. This should include:

- language, dialect, and country of origin
- gender
- LGBTQ+ status
- disability access issues, including BSL, Arabic Sign Language etc.
- mental health support needs
- the forced migrants' preferences regarding the interpreter. This is important as over time, trusted relationships can develop

The above information should be gathered at the earliest opportunity, as almost all forced migrants stated that most of the problems they experienced, took

place in the first few times they used an interpreter.

Create robust and shared booking processes

- The staff making the booking must be made aware of the need to use the above gathered data.
- This gathered information must be used each and every time an interpreter is booked. This will require a shared understanding between the people who book the interpreter and the interpreter/agencies regarding what data needs to be used when booking an interpreter.
- As part of the booking process, and within the constraints of GDPR, the interpreter may need to have an outline of the context in which the work is to take place.
- All providers in the public, private and charity sectors should be encouraged to sign the Wales Accord on the Sharing of Personal Information (WASPI).
- Allow sign language users to select their interpreter of choice.

Many sign language users greatly prefer certain interpreters. Sometimes rather than using another interpreter, they will wait for the preferred person to become available. The booking systems should record these preferences. The better use of video technology would allow greater efficiencies for the interpreters making this need more possible.

Take into account the forced migrants' mental health support needs

Compatibility between the forced migrant and the interpreter in this scenario can be incredibly important. Careful consideration must be made when selecting the foreign language interpreter. All triggering issues must be taken into account.

This requires Welsh Government to take on this engagement task, not just to inform this landscape regarding what data needs to be gathered, but to also explain why. Welsh Government may also wish to use its contractual levers because this landscape receives much Government money.

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How:

The most effective way of doing this would be for Welsh Government to appoint a specialist engagement company. Their tasks would include:

- engaging with the public sector commissioners, support organisations, and the providers regarding what data should be gathered
- engaging with the public sector commissioners, support organisations, and the providers regarding their ideas of what robust and shared booking processes would look like
- create a draft data model of the required information
- create a draft booking process
- consult on drafts by engaging with the public sector commissioners, support organisations, and providers
- create final version
- re-engage with the public sector commissioners, support organisations, and providers to gain buy-in

How:

The commissioning requirements included within the service level agreements between providers and commissioners must include detailed demographic data collection for the purposes of ensuring compatibility between the interpreter and the service user.

An awareness raising exercise outlining the need and purpose of the demographic data requirements and matching should be undertaken by the relevant organisations

Explore the creation of a common code of conduct practice

A common code could facilitate more appropriate bookings and a shared expectation of service quality.

How:

Welsh Government should work in partnership with the relevant agencies to co-produce an agreed code of conduct by:

- engaging with the public sector commissioners, support organisations, and the providers regarding what should be in a code of practice
- create a draft code of conduct practice
- consult with the public sector commissioners, support organisations, and the providers to ascertain their views on the draft code of practice
- create final version
- re-engage with the public sector commissioners, support organisations, and providers to gain buy-in
- explore the creation of regional Community of Practice Networks for community interpreters

Communities of Practice are formed by people who engage in similar activities, have similar goals, and are working within the same domain of human endeavour. They are an extremely effective way to support people, and to allow people agency in their own training and development.

A Communities of Practice for foreign language community interpreters could:

- provide/facilitate equality, rights and cultural awareness training in the form that works for them
- encourage awareness regarding the importance of migrant/interpreter fit
- provide informal interpreters training on professional terminology, including

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medical and legal, while recognising that this type of service should be provided as a right and delivered via professional interpreters

- provide community interpreters GDPR training

During the interviews, situations were identified where data breaches may have taken place.

- Facilitate the creation of a shared code of conduct.
- Provide mental health and wellbeing support to informal interpreters.

While there would be few direct overheads, it would be advisable that a small stipendiary is paid to each regional Community of Practice Network organiser.

How:

The Welsh Government should work in partnership with the relevant agencies to co-produce an agreed code of conduct by:

- working with forced migrant support organisations, known community interpreters, and community groups, to build up a database of existing community interpreters
- explore with community interpreters and the forced migrant support organisations what a regional Community of Practice Networks for community interpreters would look like
- with this information, create a model for Community of Practice Networks across Wales
- consult this model with forced migrant support organisation and known community interpreters
- create final template for Community of Practice Networks for community interpreters
- re-engage with forced migrant support organisations and known community interpreters to gain buy-in
- identify key community interpreters who could act as regional Community of Practice Network organisers

- recruit, train and retain community interpreters

Explore ways to support community interpreters to qualify as interpreters to at least Level 3. Consideration should also be made to supporting the take up of Level 4 Health and/or Criminal Justice Interpretation.

All interpreters working within a public realm should be required to undertake a basic course in Professional Conduct in Public Service Interpreting. Consideration should be made for supporting community interpreters to do so.

How:

The Welsh Government should explore ways of funding (or other appropriate means) to provide support for community interpreters to qualify as formal interpreters.

The Welsh Government may also wish to explore the possible benefits to creating a voluntary registration system for community interpreters through which they could demonstrate their skills and experience.

Professional status of foreign language interpretation and translation services

Welsh Government should explore the feasibility of formalising, regulating and protecting the professional status of foreign language interpretation and translation services in Wales. Currently, there is no formal professional identity of interpreters or translators as a regulated profession in the UK.

How:

Welsh Government should explore ways to professionalise and regulate the profession in Wales, to achieve this would require some form of minimum

standards, along with a regulatory body.

All interpreters should undertake equality and cultural awareness training

Explore ways to provide and encourage community and professional interpreters to undertake appropriate equality and cultural awareness training.

How:

- Welsh Government should encourage all formal interpreter providers to ensure that their interpreters and backroom staff undertake equality and cultural awareness training
- working with regional Community of Practice Networks for community interpreters and forced migrant support bodies, Welsh Government should encourage all community interpreters to undertake equality and cultural awareness training
- WITS should expand its service to charity and third sectors

The WITS service should carefully explore the feasibility of expanding its service provision to charities and the third sector in Wales.

Consideration should be given to exploring the existing financial arrangements while seeking an initial sliding scale of fees charged to the charity and third sector.

Further consideration should be made to examining how foreign language interpretation services can be provided free at the point of use for support services.

How:

Welsh Government should encourage this to happen.

Technology and innovation

Whilst it is acknowledged that face-to-face interpretation is preferable in most circumstances, public services in Wales should also be encouraged to adopt technological innovations to improve the accessibility and provision of foreign language interpretation services. This is especially important for short notice appointments and emergency services, as well as improving the availability of foreign language interpretation in the rural and less populous areas of Wales. When comparing remote video conferencing (Zoom, Microsoft Teams etc.) to using just phone, remote video conferencing was by far the preferred route.

How:

Welsh Government should encourage commissioners to use remote video conferencing (not telephone) rather than have delays in service provision.

Governmental bodies should provide more easily available translated information including the following

- the Home Office should provide outline information regarding all the available services and how they can benefit forced migrants
- Welsh Government should provide literature outlining all the available translation services and how to access them
- Welsh Government should provide literature outlining the different support bodies in Wales and how they can assist forced migrants
- Local authorities and health providers should provide translated literature detailing all services that are available to forced migrants and how they can

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access them

- for people who are illiterate, this information could be provided via accessible audio or video

How:

Welsh Government should:

- encourage the Home Office to provide better outline information regarding all the available services and how they can benefit forced migrants
- identify and provide literature outlining all the available translation services and how to access them
- encourage local authorities (through the Welsh Local Government Association) and health providers to provide translated literature detailing all services that are available to forced migrants and how they can access them

Recruit more staff from minority ethnic communities

Forced migrant support organisations should recruit more staff from minority ethnic communities who have the appropriate language skills. These same staff should then be trained so they can act as an interpret when needs arise. This directed approach would very beneficial as it is often the case that staff in support bodies, when possible, interpret for the people they support.

How:

Welsh Government should encourage forced migrant support organisations to consider how best this can be achieved.

Ensure that Welsh Government funding to organisations working in this landscape includes an element for foreign

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language interpretation cost

For the forced migrant support organisations who receive financial support from the public sector, as an addition to their general budget, the grant should include the true costs of the foreign language interpretation services.

How:

Welsh Government can action this and could encourage all grant providing bodies to do the same.

Explore improvements to the sign language interpreter service provision

The waiting times for sign language interpretation is unacceptable. While there is already available training, the numbers of interpreters remain static and waiting times high. The task then is to maximise the efficiency of the existing UK resources, while continuing to encourage/incentivise people to train as sign language interpreters.

Use live video technology

Driven by the COVID-19 pandemic, the use of live video technology has greatly increased. Indeed, Welsh Government has used it in all its meetings where a Deaf person may attend. Across the UK, there are many of these services and the commissioning bodies should explore this landscape outside of WITS. In addition to accessing a wider pool, using video technology to access sign language interpreters anywhere in the UK, should greatly increase the possibility of accessing this service in more foreign languages.

How:

Welsh Government could issue advice to commissioners and support organisations encouraging this approach.

New ways to provide a service

The Welsh Government could explore alternative ways to achieve an equitable service. A number of university projects to computerise sign language interpretation have taken place, and the proof of concept was deemed successful. Using a combination of AI and machine learning, the computerisation of sign language interpretation is possible. This software market may not be large enough for the private sector to cover R and D cost, but as with many other previous inventions and developments, this is where the State can step in. The Welsh Government should explore this landscape and step in if feasible.

How:

Welsh Government could explore this possibility, seeking financial and technical partners to drive this potentially game changing option into reality.

Public bodies directly employ interpreters

Many public bodies are of a size where directly employing interpreters/ translators from their most used language may be cost effective. Video could be used to cover their estate. Smaller bodies could also enter into sharing arrangements.

Create complaint and feedback systems

During this study, researchers heard many instances where the quality and the attitudes of foreign language interpreters has had a negative effect on the outcomes of several forced migrants. None of these forced migrants were aware of any process through which they could complain.

Create a complaint system

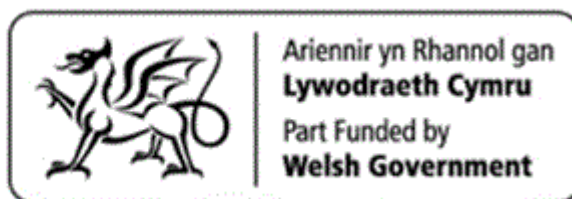
Encourage the creation of a clear, accessible, and robust complaint system for interpreters and forced migrants.

Create a shared two-way customer service feedback system

These type of feedback systems can be a key driver in the improvement of service delivery.

Section 6: about

About this report



The Migrant Integration project is part-funded through the European Union Asylum Migration Integration Fund.

Views expressed in this report are those of the researchers and not necessarily

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