



## **NHSGGC Interpreting, Communication Support and Translation Policy**

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# Interpreting, Communication Support and Translation Policy

## 1. Introduction

- 1.1. The [NHS Scotland Interpreting, Communication Support and Translation \(ICST\) National Policy](#) was agreed in late 2020. This policy ensures that NHS Scotland has a clear, consistent and fair approach to the provision of information and communication support for all. The policy includes both internal and external communication, and should be followed by all NHS Scotland staff.
- 1.2. The purpose of this NHS Greater Glasgow and Clyde (NHSGGC) policy is to ensure there is a consistent and clear approach to the provision and delivery of interpreting and communication support for our patients and service users. The policy is aimed at all staff involved in patient care and has been revised to align with the NHS Scotland Policy provision. It is focused on the operational delivery, protocols and procedures.
- 1.3. This policy is intended to be used in conjunction with the Interpreting Services Booking Procedure (appendix one) which provides details on recommended good practice for accessing interpreters and communication support within NHSGGC.
- 1.4. This policy and associated booking procedure is based on the [NHS Scotland ICST Policy and NHS Scotland Competency Framework for Interpreting](#).
- 1.5. An interpreter/communication support must be provided when:
  - The patient's first or preferred spoken language is not English, or they speak some English but require an interpreter to explain detailed clinical information or understand complex explanations relating to the appointment or their treatment.
  - The patient is profoundly Deaf and therefore their first language is British Sign Language (BSL).
  - The patient has a hearing impairment or hearing loss, is a lip reader or uses an electronic note taker.
  - The patient is Deafblind (dual sensory impaired) and uses manual/tactile sign.
  - The patient is Deafblind (dual sensory impaired) and requires a guide/communicator.
  - The patient requests interpreting support.
- 1.6. The policy aligns to the [NHSGGC's Clear to All \(Accessible Information\) Policy](#), which aims to ensure that all patients and staff receive written information in the specific format that meets their needs.

## **2. Scope**

This policy provides a common set of standards and procedures for interpretation and communication support. The policy aims to:

- Describe interpreting and communication support and why it is important.
- Define the roles and responsibilities of those responsible for implementing this policy and procedure.
- Direct staff to available guidance for the provision, review and monitoring of interpreting and communication support.
- Increase compliance with the Interpreting Services Booking Procedure.

2.1 Interpreting and communication support relates to all forms of communication support that will meet a patients' communication needs whilst using NHSGGC services. This includes face-to-face spoken language interpreters, spoken language telephone interpreting, face-to-face British Sign Language (BSL) interpreters, remote video BSL interpreting, Deafblind communicators, Deaf relay interpreters, lip speakers, note takers and speech-to-text reporters (palantypists) and any other forms of communication support required to meet the needs of the patient. It applies to face-to-face appointments and Attend Anywhere appointments.

## **3. Why is interpreting and communication support important?**

3.1 Effective communication is vital for the provision of high-quality services and care. Many of those who access NHSGGC services have difficulty understanding what is being said to them. This may be because English is not their first language, that they are a Deaf British Sign Language or deafened or have a hearing loss and require a lip speaker or note taker or they have a condition which limits their ability to communicate (e.g. following a brain injury or a stroke).

3.2 It is important, therefore, that for all health appointments or interventions that we provide an appropriate interpreter or communication support for the patient to participate in their care.

3.3 NHSGGC provision of interpreters and communication support enables people to make more informed choices about their care. For staff, it will aid communication with patients, will assist with diagnosis, and help in the process of obtaining informed consent. It will also promote the effective and efficient use of resources.

3.4 There is a legal requirement to provide interpreting and communication support to patients and their carers. The Equality Act 2010 places a legal duty on public authorities to provide barrier free access to those with Protected Characteristics, this includes race and disability. NHSGGC has published an Equality Scheme covering sex, sexual orientation, age, race, disability, gender reassignment marriage, religion and belief, and civil partnership, and pregnancy and maternity. NHSGGC is also committed to addressing the discrimination caused by social class and poverty as it contributes significantly to the increasing health inequality gap.

## 4. Roles and Responsibilities

- 4.1 NHSGGC requires a clear structure and process to implement the Interpreting Policy and to ensure that it is co-ordinated across the entire organisation. Each Director will be expected to take a visible leadership role in their areas of responsibility for the implementation of this policy.
- 4.2 All staff are required to put the patient's communication needs at the centre of the services they deliver. Staff will ensure that:
- 4.3 Only professional interpreters should be used in a health appointment or intervention. Only in an urgent/emergency should a friend or family member be used until a professional interpreter arrives, but not children under 16 years. A young person may be asked for information to establish facts only.
- NHSGGC staff, family and carers are not to be used or operate in any capacity as interpreters.
  - Should a patient insist on using a family as an interpreter against advice, or in an urgent or emergency situation, then this must be documented. This should be recorded in Trakcare, but clinicians will need to use free text in EMIS.
  - As part of our person centred care approach staff must consider each patient's personal needs to ensure that any appointment requiring interpreting support is booked for an adequate length of time.
  - Staff must follow the instructions described in the Interpreting Services Booking Procedure (appendix one). It is not the responsibility of the patient to book or provide interpreters.
  - Continuity of interpreters, whereby the same interpreter is booked for a set of appointments, is to be offered in the following circumstances:
    - Mental Health appointments
    - Trauma related appointments
    - Maternity appointments
    - A series of therapeutic interventions
    - End of life care
    - For patients with additional vulnerabilities such as dementia
    - All appointments for children (whether the child or the parent/guardian requires an interpreter). Where there are concerns around the child's safety or welfare, interpreters must be used to interview children alone without a parent or guardian present to clarify the child's version of events and to enable their wishes and feelings to be understood. Any deviations for this should be recorded on the patient's records.
  - For in-patient wards, it is important to ensure that interpreting support is available for significant clinical interactions such as admissions, discharges, ward rounds, nurse interventions and if the patient deteriorates.
  - For patients requiring written information in other formats as part of a patient pathway, refer to the [NHSGCC Clear to All website](#).

- 4.4 Managers must ensure that all staff are familiar with the Interpreting Policy and the Interpreting Services Booking Procedure and that key staff access the 'Working with an Interpreter' e-learning module.
- 4.5 The cost of providing interpreting and communication support lies with NHSGGC and must not be passed on to any member of the public. A central NHSGGC budget covers the cost of providing interpreting and communication support (as well as translation and accessible formats). Services provided through third sector partners where patients have been referred from NHSGGC through a care pathway can and should utilise the NHSGGC interpreting service.

## **5. Review**

- 5.1 This policy will be reviewed every three years, or earlier than that if there are significant changes to laws or practice.

## **6. Monitoring**

- 6.1 The process of monitoring the policy and guidance will be ongoing. This may take different forms of engagement with both staff and patients, including the Staff Interpreting Reference Group and a rolling programme of meetings with areas of high use. Reporting will take place on an annual basis and will form part of the reporting requirements for the Equality Scheme.

## **7. Impact Assessment**

- 7.1 The NHSGGC's Interpreting and Communication Support Policy and Clear to All (Accessible Information) Policy and associated guidance have been equality impact assessed to make sure that the identified groups are not disadvantaged or discriminated against. The Equality Impact Assessment can be found on NHSGGC's equality website ([www.equalitiesinhealth.org](http://www.equalitiesinhealth.org)).

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# NHSGGC Interpreting Services Booking Procedure

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**Lead** Staff Bank Service Manager  
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## 1. Deciding if an interpreter is needed

Interpreting support should be booked for any consultation, appointment or health care interaction in a hospital or a community setting (e.g. doctor or dentist) where a patient cannot communicate or understand English sufficiently well to participate in their appointment or procedure. This includes Deaf patients as well as those who speak another language. This interpreting support should be provided via telephone or online services, but may need to be provided by a face-to-face interpreter in certain circumstances. Guidance on providing this support is detailed in this document.

Guidance on providing this support is detailed in this document and is determined by the patient and/or clinician by requesting communication support.

To determine which language is required use the list of languages found at [HR Connect / Interpreting](#).

Language ID cards and posters are also available – order from [equality@ggc.scot.nhs.uk](mailto:equality@ggc.scot.nhs.uk)

If you are unable to identify the language, call Capita on **0800 496 1508**.

## 2. Different Types of interpreting service available

There are different types of interpreting / communication support:

- Telephone interpreting is used for spoken languages when the patient is with the clinician and the interpreter is on the telephone. The service is accessed via a 0800 number or an app downloaded by the service user. A comprehensive range of languages is available through this service. This service should be the first option considered and offered to the majority of service users.
- Face-to-face interpreting when the interpreter is in the room with the patient and the clinician; face-to-face interpreting is available for all types of communication support. This service is only to be used where the patient has additional vulnerabilities, such as a cognitive impairment or hearing loss, or is a child over 2 years old.
- Remote video interpreting for spoken languages is when the interpreter is remote on a video and the patient is with the clinician or Attend Anywhere where all three parties are remote for each other.
- Remote BSL interpreting for Deaf patients is accessed through iPads on all wards, or unplanned services where the patient is with the clinician but the interpreter is remote or Attend Anywhere can be used for out-patient appointments using a British Sign Language (BSL) interpreting booked utilising Attend Anywhere.
- Note Taking and Lip Speaking.

For more information go to the [Interpreting Services website](#).

Associated guidance:

- Best practice for booking an interpreter.
- Benefits of telephone interpreting and face-to-face telephone interpreting.



### Telephone Interpreting

Accessing interpreting over the telephone is an immediately available method of interpretation and will normally be the preferred solution.

Telephone interpreting can take place either by:

- Using the loudspeaker facility on your phone, or;
- Connecting the three different parties - the service provider, the interpreter and the patient – in three different places through a telephone conferencing system.
- The service provider and patient being in the same place and using a handset each, sharing a handset or a telephone with central speaker and hands-free button.

When to use telephone interpreting:

- Telephone interpreting should be used for all appointments under 46 minutes. This applies to all short appointments unless the patient has additional vulnerabilities, such as a cognitive impairment or hearing loss, or is a child over 2 years old. Capita is our provider for telephone interpreting and can be accessed 24 hours per day, 7 days per week.

Telephone interpreting service can also help:

- to establish the patient's language if it is not apparent
- if there is a medical emergency and no time to wait for a face-to-face interpreter
- to meet interpreting needs in wards for doctor's rounds, or any significant nurse intervention
- to call out to a patient with results or to change appointments; tell the call handler the patient is not with you.

### Face-to-face Interpreting

Face-to-face interpreting is carried out using simultaneous or consecutive interpreting and requires the interpreter to be present during the consultation. Simultaneous interpreting is when the interpreter speaks at the same time as the English speaker with a slight delay. Consecutive interpreting is when the interpreter hears a section of English, then interprets it.

Simultaneous interpreting should be requested for any group work situations or when there is more than one language speaker in the room, e.g. ante natal group work.

Interpreters will generally be allotted one hour for each assignment, however, in some cases the length of assignment can last several hours.

Interpreters will be booked as per the requested appointment time. This is decided by the requesting area and should allow for enough time to complete the appointment with the interpreter present. This will always take longer than an appointment with a patient who does not need interpreting support.

### 3. Using a telephone interpreter

**Capita LiveLINK – Telephone Interpreting** - Please note that telephone interpreting should now be used for all appointments under 46 minutes. This applies to all short appointments unless the patient has additional vulnerabilities, such as a cognitive impairment or hearing loss, or is a child over 2 years old.

Capita is our provider for telephone interpreting and can be accessed 24 hours per day, 7 days per week. They have 2 options, which are telephone interpreting and interpreting via an app, they are both known as LiveLINK.

When you experience a language barrier, call Capita Translation and interpreting (Capita TI) and you will be connected to an interpreter within seconds.

Telephone interpreting is now available via a mobile app as well as by telephone. There is no operator to go through, making it quicker and easier to use the service.

You will need your 6-digit department code for telephone interpreting and a password for the mobile app. If you do not yet know your code and password –

Acute sites – [click here](#) or go to StaffNet/Interpreting services

All other sites – call 0141 347 8811

#### How to Use Telephone Interpreting

- Call 0800 496 1508
- Enter your 6-digit department code
- Enter the 3-digit language code – [click here](#) to view list or go to HR Connect/Interpreting
- You will be now connected to an interpreter
- Tell the interpreter if your patient is with you or if you need them to contact the patient on another number
- Use your speaker phone to give the interpreter your first question/statement
- Let the patient and interpreter know when you are finished the conversation

#### Mobile App

- Download the Capita LiveLINK Client App free from your app store
- Log in using email address – which is your CODE@capitalivelink.com - and your password
- You will only need to log in once - not every time you need an interpreter.
- Click 'Get Service'
- Select the language you require.
- You will then be connected to an interpreter.
- Use the speaker on your mobile to start the session.
- You can use this service to phone your patient by clicking on 'Add Call' and entering their number.
- Click 'merge'.

### Direct Patient Access to Telephone Interpreting

Patients can now use the telephone interpreting service to contact any NHSGGC service. For example, patients can use the telephone interpreting service to make an appointment with their GP, discuss medications with their Pharmacy, book a Maternity appointment or contact NHS 24.

An information leaflet is available in multiple languages. It explains how to use the service by calling or by using a mobile app. It provides codes specific to NHSGGC services so can only be used for this purpose.

All information leaflets are available from the [Interpreting Services web page](#) and should be downloaded and shared with patients as required. [Click here to view the English translation.](#)

## 4. Booking a face-to-face interpreter or a BSL interpreter

If you need to book a face-to-face interpreter you will be asked to provide the following details:

- Location in which you require the interpreter
- Department
- Language and/or dialect required
- Specific gender required
- Is the same interpreter required
- Date of assignment
- Time of assignment
- Estimated length of assignment
- To whom the interpreter should report on arrival
- Name of person booking the interpreter
- Contact number
- Date of request

It is important to ensure that the additional time required for interpreting is accommodated when booking the appointment.

In certain circumstances, the same interpreter may be booked for consecutive assignments with the same patient. This is appropriate for sensitive appointments such as infertility/andrology services, maternity, gender based violence, trauma and terminal illness. This should be arranged through the Interpreting Service, not the interpreter.

When the booking office processes your request, you will be allocated a unique Booking Reference Number (BRN) which will also be passed on to the Sessional Interpreter/Agency.

This number will be used as the reference for the interpreter's timesheet which they will bring with them to the assignment.

This Booking Reference Number (BRN) should be recorded in the patient's notes. Following the assignment you are required to sign a timesheet for the interpreter.

### Contact Details & Opening Times

Core hours: 8am until 4pm, 7 days.

### Interpreting Services Contact Numbers

Contact Centre Tel: 0141 347 8811  
[interpretingservice@ggc.scot.nhs.uk](mailto:interpretingservice@ggc.scot.nhs.uk)

Contact Centre Team Lead Andrew Stewart Tel: 0141 278 2679 Email:  
[Andrew.Stewart2@ggc.scot.nhs.uk](mailto:Andrew.Stewart2@ggc.scot.nhs.uk)

Contact Centre Supervisor Laura Traquair Tel: 0141 278 2677 Email:  
[Laura.Traquair@ggc.scot.nhs.uk](mailto:Laura.Traquair@ggc.scot.nhs.uk)

## 5. Procedure for Attend Anywhere/Near Me Appointments

Request is sent to Interpreting booking team with all details of appointment with as much notice as possible (see section 4.1). Email: [interpreting@ggc.scot.nhs.uk](mailto:interpreting@ggc.scot.nhs.uk).

NHSGGC team will allocate an interpreter and send confirmation of receipt of the request to the requestor and confirm any missing or additional information prior to the appointment date (notice permitting).

On the day of the appointment the allocated interpreter will join the waiting area and identify themselves with their first name and “interpreter” as their surname.

It is best practice to invite the interpreter into the call first to give a short briefing on the requirements of the call and any relevant information. The patient can then be invited into the call with interpreting support from the beginning.

If the patient requires assistance with the Attend Anywhere process it is usual practice to use the telephone interpreting service prior to the Attend Anywhere appointment to discuss any queries or set up issues.

The Attend Anywhere medium may also assist patients who have hearing loss who can lip read to augment their hearing.

## 6. Booking an Out of Hours Face-to-face Interpreter

(Out of hours: 4pm to 8am, 7 days)

If you need a face-to-face spoken or BSL interpreter out of hours, please call the interpreting service phone number 0141 347 8811 – then select the option you require, and your call will be redirected.

### Accident and Emergency / Out Of Hours

To book a BSL interpreter for unplanned visits or out of hours please contact one of the following agencies:

- Sign Language Interactions on 0333 3447 712
- Deaf Services Lanarkshire on 0123 6604 808
- D.A Languages on 0161 9282 533

### BSL Online Service

We also provide an online interpreting service, enabling the patient to communicate with staff while waiting for a face-to-face interpreter to arrive. This is done via the NHSGGC communication support iPads on the wards or in unplanned services.

The iPads come ready to use with simple instructions. Staff should contact the relevant departments to access the service. A full list of where to access the iPads can be found [here](#).

To view a short film on how to use BSL Online, [click here](#) or go to HRConnect/Interpreting.

The online service means that in an emergency, staff can quickly link up to an interpreter at any time – 24 hours a day, 7 days a week - and communicate with their patient.

It can also be used during hospital stays, when an interpreter is not available.

## **7. AVA Remote Note Taking**

A face-to-face note taker is booked through the Interpreting Service by calling or emailing the Interpreting Service. In the event that a face-to-face note taker or remote note taker is unavailable AVA is an app based service for use with patients who require a note taker on demand.

The AVA app is available on the communication support iPads in all wards and unplanned services. The iPads come ready to use with simple instructions. Staff should contact the relevant departments to access the service. A full list of where to access the iPads can be found [here](#).

## **8. Process for dealing with an interpreter booked through an external agency**

In the event that the Interpreting Services Call Centre is unable to source an interpreter for a booking they will forward this request to specialist interpreting agencies to cover the booking.

A member of staff at the location of the assignment must check and sign the agency interpreter's time sheet.

## **9. Pre-Assignment Check**

The NHSGGC interpreter or interpreter from the external agency should present themselves to the specified person as detailed at the time the booking request was made.

The unique Booking Reference Number (BRN) and photo identification badge should also be checked to ensure that the details match the request.

If there is any doubt as to the details of the assignment please contact the Interpreting Services Call Centre for assurance.

The interpreter should be briefed by staff prior to commencement of the patient appointment of any specific terminology and the general context of the health appointment.

## 10. Cancellations

### Cancellations of Interpreting Bookings – Core Hours

Cancellations of interpreter bookings must be made more than 4 hours in advance of the booking start time by contacting the Interpreting Services Call Centre either by:

- E mail: [interpretingservices@ggc.scot.nhs.uk](mailto:interpretingservices@ggc.scot.nhs.uk)
- Telephone: 0141 347 8811 (if less than 24 hours in advance.)
- If, on arrival, the interpreter is no longer required e.g. the patient fails to attend, the Interpreting Services Call Centre must be informed.

### Cancellations of Interpreting Bookings – Out of Hours

If on arrival for the booking the interpreter is no longer required, the Interpreting Service Call Centre must be informed no later than the following morning.

### Cancellations by Interpreters

It is expected that once a booking has been allocated the interpreter will attend the assignment.

Interpreters are advised that they must give as much notice as possible of any cancellations to allow for the Interpreting Service Call Centre to allocate another sessional interpreter.

Cancellations of bookings will be monitored, and performance issues where required will be addressed and monitored by the Interpreting Services Business Manager.

## 11. Submission of Timesheets/Payment Process

Interpreters will be supplied with timesheets by the Interpreting Services Call Centre. Timesheets are required to be signed off to verify completed assignments and facilitate payment to the sessional Interpreter.

Staff members who booked the assignment must ensure that all the relevant columns are completed accurately, and signed.

Timesheets should not be authorised prior to the end of the assignment.

## 12. Performance and Capability Issues

Interpreters are bound by all NHS Greater Glasgow and Clyde Policies and Procedures when undertaking an assignment. Should you have any concerns in relation to an interpreter who is assigned to your service, they should be reported to your line manager and the Interpreting Service Manager for the NHSGGC Interpreting Service.

## 13. Incident Reporting

All incidents including not providing an interpreter for someone who needs one should be recorded in writing using the DATIX system.

This form is intended as an immediate record of events following an incident involving a member of the Interpreting Services.

## 14. Contact Details

### How to contact us

- Phone: 0141 347 8811
- Email: [interpretingservices@ggc.scot.nhs.uk](mailto:interpretingservices@ggc.scot.nhs.uk)

For out of hours requirements, please call us on 0141 347 8811 to be connected to the appropriate service; you will be provided options for your interpreting requirements and your call will be re-directed.

## 15. Booking an Interpreter – Best Practice

- Clearly state the required language and dialect (if appropriate) when initiating an assignment.
- Ascertain if the gender of the interpreter is important.
- Give as much notice as possible for the assignments.
- Ensure that the information regarding the department and location are accurate.
- For further information or advice regarding how to work with interpreters, contact Interpreting Services Manager or undertake an e-learning module
- Give accurate information regarding approximate duration of the assignment.
- Block book for future appointments, if possible, especially where continuity of interpreter is essential e.g. therapeutic appointments.
- Give consideration to the safety of the interpreter when you book e.g. does the service user/patient have history of volatile behaviours?
- All inpatients should be provided with interpreting support on every day of their stay. If they are able, this should be telephone interpreting via the inpatients own smart phone. If a face-to-face interpreter is required, the booking should be timed to correspond with healthcare conversations.
- Not providing a professional interpreter either face-to-face or remote for someone who needs one is a breach of the Equality Act (2010) and could result in harm to the patient.
- For further information or advice regarding working with interpreters contact, NHS Greater Glasgow and Clyde Interpreting Service on 0141 347 8811.



## **16. Benefits of Telephone, Face-to-face and Online Interpreting**

### Telephone Interpreting

The benefits of telephone interpreting include:

- Immediate availability for most languages.
- Dealing with ad hoc or unplanned appointments.
- Anonymity for the patient, particularly for small communities.
- Can be less intrusive to the consultation setting.
- Allows quick resolution to a situation.
- Responds to emergency and urgent situations, rather than wait for a face-to-face interpreter.
- Cost effective for an appointment which is less than 60 minutes.
- Useful for setting up a future interpreting session that is face-to-face or to confirm an appointment.
- Establishing the patient's language if it is not apparent.
- Calling out to patients to invite in for appointments.

### Face-to-Face Interpreting

The benefits of face-to-face interpreting include:

- Allows good eye contact and ability to see body language of the patient, the staff member and the interpreter.
- Beneficial when working with sensitive issues, for example trauma, gender-based violence and child protection cases.
- Appropriate for dealing with bereavement and breaking bad news.
- Helpful if the consultation involves therapeutic counselling.
- A more cost-effective form of interpreting for longer appointments, however, local cost thresholds will differ across NHS Boards.

### BSL Online Interpreting

The benefits of online interpreting include:

- Immediate availability, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week
- Can be accessed quickly for unplanned and emergency situations.
- Enables Deaf patients to communicate with staff if waiting for a face-to-face interpreter to arrive.
- Can be used to communicate with patients during hospital stays when a face-to-face interpreter is not always there.