

From mountain to sea

# English as an Additional Language

## Guidelines: Accessing Interpreting and Translation Services

Updated June 2023



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# 1 Interpreting and Translation Service Guidance for Schools

## 1.1 Context

These guidelines are to ensure that Aberdeenshire Council is complying with all relevant legislation with regard to providing adequate language and communication support. A summary of the relevant legislation and relevant reports states that:

*'Failure to provide language and communication support where there is a known need is:*

- *indirect discrimination*
- *institutional racism (if an organisation cannot deliver a proper service to all) (Working with Interpreters, Scottish Refugee Council).*

## 1.2 Purpose

The purpose of these guidelines is to inform staff of interpreting and translation services that are available for people who speak languages other than English, and how these services can be used most effectively.

Schools can access interpreting and translation services through the English as an Additional Language (EAL) Service. **There is no cost to the school when requesting the service through EAL as it holds the central budget for all Education Interpreting and Translation Services requests.**

Therefore, requests for interpreting and translation services **are to be made to, and will be processed by the EAL Service** to allow coordination of payment and remove some of the workload from school office staff.

Additionally, the EAL Service offers advice on the best form of translation/interpreting for a specific context to avoid duplication of resources that have already been translated. The EAL Service also gives advice where schools have little experience of working with interpreters. It will also give continuity if providers change.

## 1.3 Procedure

The following procedure applies when requesting Interpreting and Translation Services:

### 1.3.1 Translation of documents:

Please [click this link to request text translation](#) and send to [eal.service@aberdeenshire.gov.uk](mailto:eal.service@aberdeenshire.gov.uk). The translation will then be sent back to you once received.

### 1.3.2 Interpreting:

*Note: Video conference should be the preferred option, with face-to-face (in person) by exception for a specified reason. Within the current financial context, it is important to consider the high costs associated with using face-to-face over video/telephone calls (due to factors including large area of Aberdeenshire, travel time, mileage etc). In some circumstances it will be more appropriate to request a face-to-face interpreter (for meetings of a particularly sensitive nature where parent/carer/child may need a lot of emotional support), but for the majority of meetings a video link will meet requirements. Schools can purchase a conference call speaker to improve audio quality (for around the cost saved by making just one video call rather than face-to-face).*

#### Preparation:

- Ensure you know the correct language and dialect.
- When booking an interpreter:
  - confirm the parent's availability – in the first instance you can send a translated letter (available in most commonly required languages from the EAL Service) to check availability for a meeting at a given date and time. If there is not a response you may need the interpreter to call the parent first to make sure they are free at a specific time and would have access to their phone.
  - The appointment must be booked at least 3 days in advance.

#### Booking the interpreter:

- Please [Click this link to book an interpreter](#) and send to [eal.service@aberdeenshire.gov.uk](mailto:eal.service@aberdeenshire.gov.uk).
- After the job please [click this link to confirm the job length](#).  
\*Please keep a copy of the timesheet from the interpreter if the job was face-to-face (in person).

### Using Microsoft Teams:

**\*If you need to add the parent/carer to the call, you must use an account that can dial to outside telephone numbers, usually an admin or management staff account.**

### On the day:

- Start the meeting a few minutes early
- If you are phoning the parent, add the parent into the call once the interpreter has been briefed \*(see note at top)
- Make the call in a quiet space with sufficient time to conclude the call.
- Have all information written down in advance of phone call.
- Ensure you cover all points before concluding the conversation.
- Ask the parent/carer to summarise to confirm their understanding.

### 1.3.3 Emergency Telephone Interpreter

In some circumstances you may need to call a parent/carer immediately. Rather than book an interpreter you can call Global Language Solutions:

1. **Call 01463 592116** \*(see note at top of page)
2. **Give requested information** including the Telephone Interpreting PO Number for this year.  
(An updated PO number to cover the current financial year will be sent by the EAL Service each year. You do not need to raise one in school)
3. **Please note down** the interpreting **job number** (Please ask for this if it is not given)
4. If you are phoning the parent, add the parent into the call once the interpreter has been briefed \*(see note about Teams accounts at top of page).
5. Please **note the start and end time** of the call and **[click this link to confirm the job length.](#)**

#### 1.4 *What's the best way to use the available options?*

If a parent/carer has requested information in a different language:

**Urgent?** Where you need to communicate with the parent/carer urgently please use a telephone interpreter to call the parent/carer or use speakerphone with the parent/carer present with you. Please follow the above guidance on accessing a telephone interpreter.

**Meeting with parents:** If an interpreter is required at any time e.g. future meetings with parent/carer, please follow the guidance at the beginning of this document.

**Confirming attendance:** When contacting parents/carers to confirm attendance it is always best to confirm through a telephone interpreter so you are able to have a two-way discussion and respond to any questions. There may also be occasions when you can confirm face-to-face e.g. taking advantage of meeting with an interpreter by setting the date for next meeting. Translated notes are available to arrange a meeting time with parents/carers. These can be sent home to offer parents/carers a range of options to choose from and respond to indicate when they can attend. The notes can be accessed from the EAL Service and will be made available in the Microsoft Team 'EAL resources for schools'.

#### *NOTE:*

- *School bilingual staff and EAL team bilingual staff should not be asked to interpret in formal meetings (e.g. child/young person's planning meetings) or to translate lengthy or formal school communications.*
- *It is not appropriate to use other pupils or family members for anything other than basic day-to-day communication. In particular, pupils and family members should not be used to communicate sensitive information or to interpret during meetings, e.g. child/young person's planning meeting*

#### **Text and written communication:**

**Plain English:** All school communications should be written in plain English so that they are fully accessible to as many parents/carers as possible without the need for additional support: <http://www.plainenglish.co.uk/files/howto.pdf>

**School Reports:** The EAL Service advise against the translation of school reports to be sent home as some concepts and vocabulary may be unfamiliar to the family. It is more helpful to offer the parent/carer a meeting with an interpreter where the interpreter can support the parent/carer in understanding the report. This enables the parent/carer to ask questions.

**For any publications:** The Council Language Statement should be included in all publications to allow equality of accessibility. Please see more information on the Language Statement in [Appendix A](#).

**Newsletters/other routine information:** These should be in English with any key information highlighted. The Council Language Statement should be included in all publications to allow equality of accessibility. Please see more information on the Language Statement in [Appendix A](#).

**Previous reports:** Schools should request translations of first language reports from the previous school, medical reports, psychological reports etc. Please follow the guidance at the beginning of this document on [requesting a translation](#).

**Resources/Home school comments:** The EAL Service can share/signpost a range of generic translated materials to support learning and home-school communication. Primary School menus are available in some languages on the council [website](#).

**Automated Translation** Local Authority Guidance is that Google Translate and other automated translation software/applications (except Groupcall) **should not be used** for:

- sending any communication to parents.
- translation of meeting minutes
- translation of reports or any confidential/sensitive information about a pupil
- translation of any assessment materials (The SQA **do not permit** translation of assessment materials.)

Automated translation software is prone to errors, particularly with sentences beyond single word level. Even single words can be prone to errors with synonyms etc. Automated translation **should only be used** to support use of first language in the curriculum where there are no other first language resources available (paper/electronic dual language dictionaries, dual language glossaries etc available from the EAL Service). This includes:

- to produce **glossaries**
- to add first language to **PowerPoints** including live captions
- to produce dual language **labels for diagrams**.
- to translate **simple curricular information** for example information to support translanguaging and understanding of a concept (Wikipedia has information available in different languages. World Books Online is also recommended by the library service)

The potential for errors can be mitigated by translating the translation back into English to check meaning. Parents/carers will likely already be using automated translation as part of everyday life and will likely be aware of potential errors.



They are free to use such software how they wish to, but the school must follow the above guidelines. See **Appendix B** for more information.

**Groupcall:** Groupcall's translated messages function is only appropriate for routine communication as it is also prone to errors (see above). **Please also see specific advice on the use of Groupcall Messenger in [Appendix C](#).** We would advise the use of telephone interpreting services in emergencies; interpreters for parent meetings; translation of important documents such as Educational Psychologist reports, Sensory Support Service reports etc. A set of commonly sent messages is already available from the EAL Service in the most commonly requested languages. These have been translated through the council's contracted supplier and will be accurate.

**Translations:** Any other communication that is likely to be reused should be translated through the '[translation of documents](#)' procedure outlined above. Where the message is unique to the child and unlikely to be reusable, it is good practice to speak with the parent/carer through a telephone interpreter so that the parent/carer can confirm understanding and ask any questions that they may have. Written translations can also be requested where it is felt to be the most appropriate means of communication.

## 2 Working with interpreters

### 2.1 *Interpreter or translator?*

An interpreter conveys the meaning of speech or sign language so that two or more people can understand each other as if they share the same first language. It is not expected that an interpreted sentence will be of the same length as the original one, as each language differs in terms of its grammatical structure and vocabulary. The purpose of interpreting is to convey a meaning and as long as an interpreter is not requested to do the verbatim interpreting, that is what will be delivered. A translator translates written text from one language into another.

### 2.2 *Interpreting:*

#### 2.2.1 **Planning is important:**

- Allow sufficient time before the meeting when making a booking - one week is advisable.
- Ensure you state any preferences - gender, dialect, experience of working with education, the name of previous interpreter used etc.
- Ensure that office staff know an interpreter will be arriving and that there is adequate space for waiting.



- Also ensure that there is a suitable private space for the meeting/assignment free for the full time.
- Allow at least double the time as you would allow if an interpreter was not required.
- It is good practice to allow 15 minutes before the meeting/assignment to run through the purpose of the meeting with the interpreter.
- Consider the best seating arrangement (if applicable) - the interpreter should be seated next to the parent but also to be able to easily see and hear others too.
- Ensure you cancel the interpreter if the meeting/assignment can no longer go ahead. You can use a telephone interpreter to confirm that the parent/carer is attending. If known, please cancel at least 24 hours in advance.

#### **2.2.2 The meeting/assignment:**

- Confirm that language and dialect are correct.
- Introduce those present and their roles.
- Avoid addressing parents/carers with “mum” or “dad”, rather confirm that you pronounce their names correctly at the beginning of the meeting.
- Remind all that the interpreter is there to interpret and that all information will be treated by the interpreter as confidential.
- Remind those present that they can ask for clarification if needed.
- Try to avoid looking only at the interpreter - look at the person who the comment is directed at or who is speaking.
- Keep sentences short but complete. Speak clearly and correctly but not too quickly. Speak in short blocks - the interpreter will need to remember what you have said and then interpret.
- Avoid jargon and idioms where possible.
- Be aware of potential cultural differences/misunderstandings. What we perceive as normal is based on our personal experiences. For example, in some languages it is not usual to say please when asking for something and so parents may appear to be rude when they are just asking for something in the way they always do. Another example is that parents may have different experiences of education and so may not have knowledge of school routines and concepts that we may take for granted

(school holidays, expectations of how parents will be involved in education, homework, learning through play, the Scottish Curriculum etc.)

- Never have a conversation while discussion is in the other language.
- Ensure you keep control of the meeting and cover all of the points on the agenda - it is important to make sure you make the most of having an interpreter.
- Not everything will translate easily into another language - lengthy explanation may be required for something that does not take many words in English (or vice versa).
- Ask the parent/carer to summarise his/her understanding and ask if she/he has any questions.

### **2.2.3 After the meeting/assignment:**

- Sign paperwork for the interpreter - make a note of the start and finish time. Make sure you keep a copy of the paperwork to confirm that the job took place.
- Give honest feedback.
- Do not ask the interpreter for their opinion - they are there to interpret. (Unless it is a First Language Assessment.)

### **2.3 Translation:**

- Allow at least a week for a translation to be completed.
- Where possible make translations generic so that they can be reused.
- Ensure the document is exactly how you want it prior to translation.
- Ensure unnecessary information is removed. What information does the target audience need to know? How can you make the format more accessible?

### 3 Appendix A – Council Language Statement

Copied from the following [link](#)

## Translation of documents into other languages

#### Translation of documents into other languages

Documents should be translated into a different language when:

- It is specifically targeted at people from an ethnic minority group.
- There is no other alternative to reach to the specific group of service users, for instance, when a request is being made from a sensory impaired person.

Please note that there is no legal requirement for services to translate every document into a variety of languages.

For standard Council publications, it is recommended that services include what is known as a '**language statement**' on key documents. Please note that language statements should be placed at the **front** of your document to allow greater accessibility.

Language statement:

*If you need information from this document in an alternative language or in a Large Print, Easy Read, Braille or BSL, please telephone (input your service's number here).*

*Jeigu pageidaujate šio dokumento kita kalba arba atspausdinto stambiu šriftu, supaprastinta kalba, parašyta Brailio raštu arba britų gestų kalba, prašome skambinti (input your service's number here).*

*Dacă aveți nevoie de informații din acest document într-o altă limbă sau într-un format cu scrisul mare, ușor de citit, tipar pentru nevăzători sau în limbajul semnelor, vă rugăm să telefonați la (input your service's number here).*

*Jeśli potrzebowali będą Państwo informacji z niniejszego dokumentu w innym języku, pisanych dużą czcionką, w wersji łatwej do czytania, w alfabecie Braille'a lub w brytyjskim języku migowym, proszę o telefoniczny kontakt na numer (input your service's number here).*

*Ja jums nepieciešama šai dokumentā sniegtā informācija kādā citā valodā vai lielā drukā, viegli lasāmā tekstā, Braila rakstā vai BSL (britu zīmju valodā), lūdzu, zvaniet uz (input your service's number here).*

Prior to submitting a request for a document to be translated, the service should engage with the customer making the request to ensure that they know:

- What information from the document a person wishes to be put in a different format/ translated into a different language? Or,
- A summary of the document can be offered to be translated/put into a different format

## 4 APPENDIX B: Guidance on Automated Translation Tools

### 4.1 Purpose

The purpose of these guidelines is to ensure school staff, children and young people make best use of the wealth of translation tools available to them.

### 4.2 What exists?

There are lots of different translation apps available to use for free, these include:

- Google Translate



- Google Lens



- Immersive Reader



- Microsoft Translate



- Microsoft Lens



- Say Hi Translation



### 4.3 What can they do?

#### 4.3.1 Image to Text/Voice ↔

Google Lens and Microsoft Lens allow you to point the camera at text and the app will translate the text in real time.

- Make sure only relevant text is in shot or you may end up with some unrelated text that will confuse the message.
- Hold the camera over the text for a few seconds to ensure all words captured.
- It can read aloud (again, it is important to ensure no unwanted text is included or it will become confusing).
- Handwriting is sometimes difficult to capture. Very neat handwriting may be okay, but there can be issues with recognising handwritten text.

#### 4.3.2 Text to Text ↔

Google Translate, Microsoft Translate, Immersive Reader, Say Hi Translation app (Not to be confused with the Say Hi Dating app) and many more apps support text to text translation.

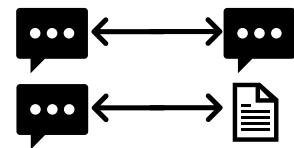
- Keep language in clear unambiguous correct sentences.
- For the young person or parent to type in home language, you can use an on-screen keyboard – the web page for Google Translate can display one, or you can also download one to your device. You can also get keyboard stickers to support the child or parent to type on the keyboard.



- How to change keyboards:
  - ▶ [Windows](#)
  - ▶ [Chromebook](#)
  - ▶ [iPad](#)
- Remember to translate back into English to check accuracy.

#### 4.3.3 Speech to text/Text to speech/Speech to speech

Google Translate, Microsoft Translate, Power Point subtitles, Say Hi app.



- These are not always reliable!
- Speak clearly – unclear pronunciation means inaccurate translation.
- Keep language in clear unambiguous correct sentences.
- Be aware of background noise – the translation may pick this up and translate the conversation of someone else in amongst the intended translation.
- Avoid stopping to speak to someone in the middle of translation where possible – Imagine a class teacher using live subtitles and explaining photosynthesis, then stopping to ask someone to stop swinging on their chair. *'Light comes from the sun and arrives at the leaves of the....Robbie all four legs on the ground please...'* The translation would probably be very confusing.

#### 4.4 *How translation apps are best used to support learning*

##### 4.4.1 **Communication with parents/carers**

For everyday communication these resources can be very helpful. (Remember to use a professional interpreter for important communication – parent meetings, formal conversations about a child’s health, wellbeing, behaviour or progress.)

##### 4.4.2 **Supporting learning**

Translanguaging is helpful: Making links with first language will support both languages and will support learning the concept. This can include:

- Dual language word lists.
- Glossary of key terms.
- Summarising the learning intention and success criteria.
- Translating work that the pupil has done in first language.
- Translating the pupil’s English passage of writing back into L1 can result in a sense of achievement that they managed to write in English.
- Use of live captions for when providing key teacher input.

#### A good approach

Remember that translation is only one of a number of strategies to support learning. A good approach is to ensure the child has access to a device with a translation app within easy reach whenever they need it. If something is happening that they don’t understand, then they can go to the app to support them, but they do not have it open all of the time. If there is a slight distance to get it, they will be more likely to try without it first. This helps the child to be included in the class and encourages them to watch the teacher while listening to the English in context. It is also helpful to have someone next to the pupil who can provide a good model of English.

Consulting with the EAL teacher, look at the needs of the child to establish what level of use is appropriate. The initial interactions with the pupil set up their behaviours and habits. Try looking for other ways to communicate from the beginning including using visuals first and using English.

#### When not to use

##### *Social settings and routine communication*

We want to discourage a habit where the child is not trying to communicate in English but immediately goes to the device to communicate. Technology can become a barrier and prevent the pupil from forming relationships. Some children would ask their friend to help them rather than using an app. Using technology can break down the relationship. Pupils need to build face-to-face

relationships to promote language acquisition and mental wellbeing. When you first meet the child, you establish the relationship and want to be face-to-face.

### When to use translation tools in the classroom:

#### General

- Always encourage the pupils to try in English first.
- Translation can't be used for everything, there need to be limits and they will change over time as the child's level of English develops. Translation might be used more in the initial period but after weeks pupils should be encouraged to use it only for confirming understanding and finding vocabulary.
- If pupils continue to use translation all of the time, there is a risk they will become too dependent on it.

#### Secondary

- In Secondary all exams will be in English and translation apps will not be available. Paper or offline electronic dual language word-to-word dictionaries may be used if the pupil is allowed the use of a bilingual dictionary ([See SQA guidance on Assessment Arrangements](#)).
- Many pupils arriving in Secondary have some level of English already so should be less reliant on translation. If pupils do require translation of key vocabulary, it is better that they become used to using the dual language dictionary that they would have in exams through assessment arrangements.

## 4.5 Problems

Although translation apps have improved and continue to improve, they will still be prone to errors and should not be used to communicate important information. Use an interpreter or a message that has been translated by a professional translator if the message is important.

Some issues include:

- Tone/mood/emotions: Apps will not pick up subtle nuances of language and may not convey the message in the intended tone.
- Homonyms: Words that are spelled and pronounced in the same way but have different meanings can cause problems. For example, 'light' can mean 'not heavy' or 'not dark'. The google translate web page does allow you to select which version of a word you mean but many apps do not,



and it is important to bear in mind that messages may not translate as intended if they have any level of ambiguity.

- Complex sentences: The more complex the sentence and more subtle the language, the more likely it is there may be an error.
- Children might become over reliant on translation apps which could slow down the language acquisition process.
- Children bringing phones – stick to the normal school policy on phones. Using an iPad tends to be better than a phone because there are less distractions on it, e.g. messages. The pupil should use whichever devices are available to children, e.g. iPads or Chromebooks. Most apps should be available on the Google Play Store or Apple App Store.
- Cultural differences on use of phones: It may be that pupils are used to using phones in school. Family and school should be aware of the differences in approaches to learning and use of phones in school.
- Making sure the children know how to use the technology if they have not experienced using it either at home or in school.
- Access at home: Families may not have access to broadband or devices at home.

## 5 APPENDIX C: USE OF GROUPCALL/SEEMiS MESSENGER TO SEND TRANSLATED MESSAGES

Groupcall Messenger includes a translation facility that automatically translates a given message into a wide range of languages, which are linked to the home language of the message recipient(s), as recorded within SEEMiS.

Messenger uses Google Translate to complete the translation and, as discussed this can be prone to errors. Groupcall's translate feature should only be used for routine communication. The user should copy and paste the following message, including the council's language statement.

*“Aberdeenshire Council will not be responsible for any errors or omissions as this translation was automatically generated by computer.”*

*If you need information from this document in an alternative language or in a Large Print, Easy Read, Braille or BSL, please telephone (input you service's number here).*

*Jeigu pageidaujate šio dokumento kita kalba arba atspausdinto stambiu šriftu, supaprastinta kalba, parašyta Brailio raštu arba britų gestų kalba, prašome skambinti (input you service's number here).*

*Dacă aveți nevoie de informații din acest document într-o altă limbă sau într-un format cu scrisul mare, ușor de citit, tipar pentru nevăzători sau în limbajul semnelor, vă rugăm să telefonați la (input you service's number here).*

*Jeśli potrzebowali będą Państwo informacji z niniejszego dokumentu w innym języku, pisanych dużą czcionką, w wersji łatwej do czytania, w alfabecie Braille'a lub w brytyjskim języku migowym, proszę o telefoniczny kontakt na numer (input you service's number here).*

*Ja jums nepieciešama šai dokumentā sniegtā informācija kādā citā valodā vai lielā drukā, viegli lasāmā tekstā, Braila rakstā vai BSL (britu zīmju valodā), lūdzu, zvaniet uz (input you service's number here).*

Within Messenger, in order to affect automatic translation of the message, the user needs to intervene to tick the “Translate Message” box when it appears. This box should only therefore be ticked should the user wish to use the translation feature, i.e.

The screenshot shows the Messenger interface with a message from 'Aisley Demo'. The message content is: 'Dear parent, Your child has not registered at school this morning. Please contact the school as soon as possible with the reason. Thanks Office Manager'. Below the message, it states 'Message contains approx. 160 characters.' The 'Translate Message' section is visible, featuring a checkbox (currently unchecked) and an information icon. Below this, a message states: '12 of the recipients do not have English as their home language. Click Translate above if you would like the message translated for them.' A dropdown menu is open, showing language options: Arabic (1), Chinese (4), Hindi (2), Spanish (3), and Urdu (2). To the right of the dropdown, the text 'Header not translated' and 'Message not translated' is displayed. A blue arrow points from the text 'Tick/Do not tick this box as appropriate' to the 'Translate Message' checkbox.

Tick/Do not tick this box as appropriate

A bank of short common message types, already translated into the most commonly required languages has been developed, in order that these can be used to message families where the home language is not English, rather than via an original English text that has been “Google translated”. A number of these message types have been developed by the EAL service, but it is recognised that further work is required in order to further develop this and make them “Groupcall Messenger” usable.

In the above example, the “View translated content” option has been selected for the Spanish translation of the message. The message in this box can be reviewed and edited (as appropriate) before clicking on the “Update Translation” button.

In an emergency situation – for example an emergency snow closure due to rapidly deterioration weather conditions, or a health emergency where it is essential that the school contacts the parents/carers, a telephone interpreter should always be used. However if this proves unsuccessful, a suitable translated message may be available from the bank of translated comments. **Where all other options for contacting the parents/carers have been exhausted** and it is judged that a Groupcall message in the home language is more likely to convey the required message than one in English the message should be composed in straight forward and short sentences, to minimise the possibility of erroneous translation by Google translate.

Date	Version	Status	Reason
2018	1.0	Guidelines	New draft
October 2018		Guidelines	Amended guidance on Google Translate
November 2018		Guidelines	Addition of Appendix on Groupcall
April 2019		Guidelines	Amended advice on Groupcall
July 2019		Guidelines	Amended telephone number for telephone interpreting.
September 2019		Guidelines	Amended info on context and legislative background. Amended headers.
June 2020	1.1	Guidelines	Amended and added information on telephone interpreters.
January 2021	1.2	Guidelines	Amended and added information on telephone interpreters.
June 2021	1.3	Guidelines	Amend p1 reasons for jobs to be coordinated by EAL. Updated info on tel interpreting for new session – simpler process for booking
August 2022	1.4	Guidelines	Updated contact for telephone interpreting
March 2023	1.5	Guidelines	Added note to encourage use of telephone/video interpreters over face-to-face unless there is an exception. Added note about adding a parent to the call.
June 2023	1.6	Guidelines	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Updated procedures and links</li> <li>- Updated guidance on automated translation and added Appendix C</li> <li>- Updated formatting</li> </ul>
June 2023	1.6	Guidelines	Amended error in interpreting link

