



Institute of Translation and Interpreting

Suite 141, Milton Keynes Business Centre, Foxhunter Drive,
Linford Wood, Milton Keynes, Buckinghamshire MK14 6GD UK
Tel: 01908 325250 Fax: 01908 325259
Email: info@iti.org.uk Web: www.iti.org.uk

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Dear Mr Bolt

Thank you for the opportunity to contribute to the call for evidence on the Home Office's use of interpreters in the asylum process.

In view of the criticality of getting the facts right in these circumstances, and the potential miscarriages of justice that could occur if the interpreting service falls down, the Institute of Translation and Interpreting (ITI) would like to highlight the importance of the following:

- Interpreters should be able to speak in the asylum seeker's language as competently as a native speaker, which usually means they originate from the same country. In relation to geographical areas that have many different dialects between and within countries – for example, the Arab World – it may not invariably be possible to achieve this. In such cases, the interpreter's language knowledge should originate from as close to the asylum seeker's country as possible.
- Interpreters should be properly briefed about the case and what is going to be expected of them before a meeting – errors are more likely to occur if participants do not feel well-prepared.
- Interpreting should only be conducted by professional interpreters – use of family members and other staff should be avoided. Interpreters should also meet recognised industry standards in terms of their qualifications and experience. In addition to language expertise, professional interpreters have finely-tuned cultural understanding, fully appreciate the parameters of their role and responsibilities, and are comfortable dealing with interview dynamics as these unfold.
- The requirements for interpreters involved in telephone and online interviews (in terms of qualifications, experience and briefings) should be the same as for those involved in face-to-face interviews.¹
- Technology used for such remote interviewing should be of a standard that promotes and does not hinder (e.g. through poor sound or interruptions) good communication.
- Remote interpreting should not be used as a replacement for or exact alternative to in-person interpreting; rather it should be viewed as a complementary service for those occasions where the location of participants or the lack of local interpreters with relevant qualifications precludes the use of in-person interpreters.¹

¹ [ITI Position Statement on Remote Interpreting \(2019\)](#)

The Institute has been unable to provide more detailed evidence on this occasion due to the shortness of the deadline for evidence. However, as the only dedicated professional body for interpreters and translators in the UK, we have a significant resource of industry knowledge and expertise amongst our Board and entire membership; we would be pleased to provide additional assistance should you wish to explore any of the issues in more detail.

Yours sincerely

Paul Appleyard
ITI Chair