

## **SECTION 10: SAFEGUARDING CHILDREN IN SPECIFIC CIRCUMSTANCES**

### **SECTION 10.4: USE OF INTERPRETERS, SIGNERS OR OTHERS WITH SPECIAL COMMUNICATION SKILLS**

**All agencies need to ensure they are able to communicate fully with parents and children when they have concerns about child abuse and neglect and ensure that family members and professionals fully understand the exchanges that take place.**

#### **10.4.1 Recognition of communication difficulties**

- a) The use of accredited interpreters, signers or others with special communication skills must be considered whenever undertaking enquiries involving one or more of the following:
- Children and/or family members for whom English is not the first language (even if reasonably fluent in English, the option of an interpreter must be available when dealing with sensitive issues)
  - Those with a hearing impairment
  - Those with a visual impairment
  - Those whose disability impairs their speech
  - Those with learning difficulties
  - Those with specific language or communication disorder
  - Those with severe emotional and behavioural difficulties
  - Those whose primary form of communication is not speech
- b) When taking a referral social workers must establish the communication needs of the child, parents and other significant family members. Relevant specialists may need to be consulted
- c) Family members should not be used as interpreters within the interviews although can be used to arrange appointments and establish communication needs.

#### **10.4.2 Interviewing Children**

- a) The particular needs of a child who is thought to have communication problems should be considered at an early point in the planning of the enquiry (strategy meeting stage). It is important that a child can feel that s/he has been heard and taken seriously.
- b) Professionals should be aware that an interview is possible when a child communicates by means other than speech and should not assume that an interview which meets the standards for purposes of criminal proceedings is not possible.
- c) **All interviews should be tailored to the individual needs of the child and a written explanation included in the plan about any departure from usual standards.**

- d) Every effort should be made to enable such a child to tell her/his story directly to those undertaking enquiries
- e) It may be necessary to seek further advice from professionals who know the child well or are familiar with the type of impairment the child has e.g. paediatrician at the child development centre or the child's school, a social worker from the Children with Disabilities Team.
- f) When the child is interviewed it may be helpful for an appropriate professional to assist the interviewer and the child. Careful planning is required of the role of this advisor and the potential use of specialised communication equipment.
- g) Suitable professionals are likely to be drawn from the following groups:
  - Speech and language therapists
  - Teachers of the hearing impaired
  - Specialist teachers for children with learning difficulties
  - Professional translators (including people conversant with British Sign Language (BSL) for hearing impaired individuals)
  - Staff from CAMHS
  - Specific advocacy/voluntary groups
  - Social workers specialising in working with children with disabilities

#### **10.4.3 Video interviews:**

**Achieving Best Evidence (Home Office 2001) provides guidance on interviewing vulnerable witnesses, including learning disabled and of the use of interpreters and intermediaries (Achieving Best Evidence HO 2001 2.36 – 2.41; 2.77) accessed via the police.**

**Interviews with witnesses with special communication needs, may require the use of an interpreter or an intermediary (Achieving Best Evidence HO 2001 2.36 – 2.41; 2.77), and are generally much slower. The interview may be long and tiring for the witness and might need to be broken into two or three parts, preferably, but not necessarily held on the same day.**

**A witness should be interviewed in the language of their choice and vulnerable or intimidated witnesses, including children, may have a supporter present when being interviewed.**

#### **10.4.4 Using Interpreters with Family Members**

- a) If the family's first language is not English they should be offered an interpreter, even if they appear reasonably fluent, as it is essential that all issues are understood and fully explained.
- b) Interpreters used for child protection work should have been subject to references, CRB checks and a written agreement regarding confidentiality. Wherever possible they should be used to interpret their own first language.
- c) Social workers need to first meet with the interpreter to explain the nature of the investigation, the aim and plan of the interview, and clarify:

- The interpreter's role in translating direct communications between professionals and family members.
  - The need to avoid acting as a representative of the family.
  - When the interpreter is required to translate everything that is said and when to summarise.
  - That the interpreter is prepared to translate the words that are likely to be used - especially critical for sexual abuse.
  - When the interpreter will explain any cultural issues that might be overlooked (usually at the end of the interview, unless any issue is impeding the interview.)
  - The interpreter's availability to interpret at other interviews and meetings and provide written translations of reports (taped versions if literacy an issue).
- d) Family members may choose to bring along their own interpreter as a supporter.
- e) Invitations to child protection conferences and reports must be translated into a language/medium that is understood by the family.

#### 10.4.5 Interpreting services available in Stockport:

**a) Police:**

The Police use language line. They have a website, [www.language.co.uk](http://www.language.co.uk) and can be contacted on 0800 169 2879.

**b) Children's Social Care/Education:**

Stockport Borough Council supports the Ethnic and Diversity Service. This is a team of trained interpreters, bilingual workers and teachers. They have capacity to interpret in over 35 languages, but would help in any situation if possible. The service is free to all local authority employees with charging arrangements for outside organisations.

Contact can be made on: Tel No: 0161 477 9000  
Fax No: 0161 480 1848

Email: [eds.admin@stockport.gov.uk](mailto:eds.admin@stockport.gov.uk)

The address is: Ethnic and Diversity Service  
Bann Street  
Stockport, SK3 0EX.

**c) Probation:**

The Probation Service on an area wide basis utilise the services of Bury Metro translations services. This is our primary source of assistance in work with offenders from non English speaking nationalities. They are not allowed to use ad hoc arrangements as individuals will not be covered for insurance purposes.

Address: Bury Metro  
PO Box 68  
Finance and E Government Division  
Manchester  
M26 2YJ

Tel No. 0161 253 5194

**d) Health:**

Stockport NHS Trust purchases interpreting services from the Ethnic and Diversity Service (details as before)

Stockport PCT also purchases this service for both General Practitioners and other contractors (available 24 hours) and Community Health Staff including Health Visitors and School Nurses. The latter is available only in working hours though an extension of the contract is being sought. In the meantime staff would access the service either through the Children's Social Care Out of Hours Team (if part of an investigation) or Stockport NHS Trust if urgently required.

**e) YOT:**

Youth Offending Team purchases interpreting services from the Ethnic and Diversity Service (details as before)