



---

## Report of the Chief Officer Customer Services

### SCRUTINY BOARD: (Resources and Council Services)

Date: 7 April 2014

### Subject: Interpreting and Translation Services

---

#### Electoral Wards Affected: ALL

Ward Members consulted  
(referred to in report)

#### Specific Implications For:

Equality and Diversity

Community Cohesion

Narrowing the Gap

---

## 1 Purpose Of This Report

1.1 Following previous Scrutiny Board inquiries this report provides an update on progress of a draft policy for interpreting and translation services.

## 2 Background Information

2.1 The Interpreting and Translation Team Co-ordinator and Head of Face to Face Services attended Scrutiny Board in November 2013 with an update of costs on interpreting and translation services for April – Sep 2013. It was proposed that we implement a policy for the use of interpreting and translation services across Leeds City Council with a view of reducing costs.

## 3 Main Issues

3.1 There is a need to reduce the costs for interpreting and translation services.

3.2 We must give due regard to equality for residents accessing council services.

3.3 A draft policy has been written and guidance sought from Legal, Children and Adult Social Care.

3.4 The document is set out in three sections:

- Introduction – outlines why there is a need for a policy, Legal framework etc.
- Policy - outlines when we should and should not use an interpreter.
- Contract and forms – contains terms and conditions of use, forms and guidance.

- 3.5 There are concerns with the use of children as interpreters. Although it is not usual practice to use children under 18 years as interpreters, it is recognised professional discretion can be used to ensure immediate safety and welfare.
- 3.6 Following discussions with Customer Services staff, children are currently being used in some areas to interpret. Some areas of concern are:
- Adults get frustrated with the children who are interpreting.
  - There is a lot of pressure on the children who interpret.
  - Children are being used to interpret during school hours.
  - Adults will often come into the One Stop Centre alone and recognise a child in the library, who may not even be a relative, and will get them to interpret for them.
  - Front line staff estimates there are approximately three instances per week where children interpret for adults.
  - In mental health assessments, there could be potential conflicts and power balance if family members are used for interpreting.
- 3.7 Legal advice is that it comes down to a question of risk. Ultimately, it is a matter for the client (whether officer, member or member body) as decision maker to decide whether, on balance and all relevant things considered, it is a risk the council should accept or not.
- 3.8 Advice from Social Care Management (Emergency Duty Team), state it should not be viewed as usual practice but recognition that emergency situations may allow professional discretion to ensure immediate safety and welfare.
- 3.9 Discussions have taken place with other Local Authorities in the Yorkshire and Humberside region and although they don't have a policy stating whether children should be used as interpreters, the general rule is children are not used as interpreters apart from passing on short messages.

#### **4 Recommendations**

- 4.1 To provide guidance on whether children should be used as interpreters.
- 4.2 To support and recommend approval of a formal policy.
- 4.3 To support the decision making in that the Interpreting and Translation Team has the final decision on whether an interpreter is to be provided.
- 4.4 Authorise the Interpreting and Translation Team Co-ordinator to take appropriate action if interpreting services are used by service areas directly "off contract".
- 4.5 The Interpreting and Translation Team Co-ordinator to be responsible for implementing any new policy recommended by Scrutiny Board within the timescales set.