



Report of Scrutiny Board (Transforming Services)

Inquiry into whether the Council and its wholly owned companies provide consistent interpretation and translation facilities

Date of Publication: 23rd March 2006

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Sessional Evidence

Reports and Publications Submitted

- Report from Chief Customer Services Officer dated 22nd October 2005
- Report from Director of Legal and Democratic Services dated 22nd October 2005
- Report from Head of Equalities dated 24th November 2005
- Powerpoint Presentation from Chief Customer Services Officer made on 22nd December 2005
- Written evidence submitted by the following departmental Directors and wholly owned companies by way of pro formas in response to issues raised by the Board:
 - Chief Executive's
 - Corporate Services
 - Education Leeds
 - Leeds ALMOs North East, West, Leeds East and South
 - Neighbourhoods & Housing
 - City Services
 - Development
 - Learning & Leisure
 - Social Services
- Note of a meeting held with representatives of Leeds Society for Deaf and Blind People on 8th November 2005
- Report of Education Leeds to the Executive Board on 14th September 2005 on progress of fundamental reviews of services in 2005 edited for Scrutiny Board to report specifically on their review of the interpretation and translation service
- Central Interpretation and Translation Unit, Staff Handbook "A Guide to Working Across Language and Culture"
- Statement submitted by UNISON on behalf of its members working in Education Leeds as Interpreters and translators

(copies of the written submission is available on request to the Scrutiny Support Unit)

Witnesses Heard

- Mariana Pexton, Chief Customer Services Officer, Chief Executive's Department
- Susan Murray, Head of Face to Face Contact, Chief Executive's Department
- Becky Hill, Service Planning Senior Officer, Chief Executive's Department
- Mark Turnbull, Head of Property & Finance, Legal and Democratic Services, Chief Executive's Department
- Nazakat Hussain, Central Interpreting and Translation Unit (CITU) Co-ordinator, Chief Executive's Department
- Mark Forbes, Head of Support Services, City Services Department
- Paul Broughton, Chief Officer Revenue & Benefits, Corporate Services Department
- Mark Somers, Performance & Improvement Manager, Development Department
- Dee Reid, Acting Team Leader, Communications, Education Leeds
- Ghulam Hussain Organisation and Development Manager Social Services Department
- Simeon Perry, Strategic Landlord Officer, Neighbourhoods & Housing Department
- Sally Threlfall, Head of Early Years Service, Learning & Leisure Department

Witnesses Heard (Continued)

- Ann Day, Neighbourhood Renewal Manager, Leeds Library & Information Service Learning and Leisure Department
- Debra Scott, Head of Service Improvement, Neighbourhoods & Housing Department
- Andy Vincent, Head of Customer Research North East Homes
- Steve Conlon, Manager, Leeds Society for Deaf & Blind People
- Evan Wickremaratne, Community Liaison Officer Leeds Society for Deaf & Blind People

Dates of Scrutiny

- 21st July 2005
- 27th October 2005
- 24th November 2005
- 22nd December 2005

Site Visits

- Visit to Leeds Society for Deaf and Blind People, Centenary House on 8th November 2005

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1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 The driving force for undertaking such an inquiry was our concern that there was a need to ensure that the Council provided consistent interpretation and translation facilities. This was essential for those at risk of social exclusion and disadvantage because English was not their first language or for those who had special needs because of visual and or hearing impairment.
- 1.2 We wanted to highlight the continuing excellent work already undertaken by the Council to improve interpretation and translation services across all Departments and wholly owned companies of the Council. However, we recognised that whilst many initiatives were undertaken by individual departments and Equality Units, they were not necessarily applied consistently across the Council and its wholly owned companies.
- 1.3 We approved terms of reference for this Inquiry at our Board meeting on 21st July 2005. This inquiry would contribute to the Scrutiny Board's remit as set out in the Council's Corporate Plan for 2005/08 which states that the Council will improve the
 - efficiency and effectiveness of services
 - whole customer services experience from beginning to end
- 1.4 We noted that Education Leeds had undertaken a fundamental service improvement review of its translation and interpretation service prior to the commencement of our Inquiry. The focus of that review was to consider the current performance of the service in relation to demand and whether there was scope for economies of scale and improved performance by moving the service to the Central Interpreting and Translation Unit (CITU). It was reported that the Education Leeds Board on 14th September 2005 had concluded that the move to CITU represented the best option and the recommendations were approved.
- 1.5 The Board decided that the decision taken by the Education Leeds Board was not within the scope of its inquiry. The Board noted that the proposed redeployment of in house staff within Education Leeds was therefore a matter for Human Resources.
- 1.6 The Board agreed, however, that whilst this issue was outside its terms of reference it accepted written evidence from UNISON on the general issues of the Interpretation and Translation Service. The statement submitted by UNISON is set out in Appendix 4 to this report.

(A summary of the evidence considered in arriving at our conclusions is presented at Appendix 1).

2.0 The Scope of the Inquiry

- 2.1 The purpose of the inquiry was to make an assessment of and, where appropriate, make recommendations on the following areas:

- ❑ Does the Council and its wholly owned companies offer a consistent service in providing translation and interpretation services to those who require them?
- ❑ What are the current resources available to provide translation and interpretation services and does the Council make the best use of these?
- ❑ How far do budget considerations impact on provision of interpretation and translation services?
- ❑ Does the Council and its wholly owned companies operate known best practice in providing translation and interpretation services?
- ❑ What are the different service delivery options available in order to provide the best translation and interpretation services to those who require them?
- ❑ How can the Council work with other stakeholders in the city to use whatever resources we all have more effectively?

3.0 The Board's Conclusions and Recommendations

3.1 We considered the evidence presented to us on the different ways of providing an interpreting and translation service for the Council and the options available to us. The options are described below and provided in detail in Appendix1 paragraph 2.37.

Option 1

3.2 We agreed that option 1; of skilling up internal staff to provide interpreting and translation services was not a practical one. We noted that the City Centre one stop centre when it first opened gave intensive training to a group of Customer Services Officers (CSOs) in British sign language (BSL). However, as they tended not to sign frequently, the level of skill declined and feedback from customers indicated that staff signing was too slow, and that they would prefer professional BSL interpreting. We also had concerns that it would be impossible to train staff to be able to meet the ever increasing demands of spoken language interpreting, having regard to the fact that CITU last year undertook interpreting in more than 40 languages.

Option 2

3.3 We recognised that option 2; making use of the skills of existing bilingual staff was already being used by some departments. However, we accepted that this approach could not provide a broad enough base of bilingual staff to be able to fully meet customer demand in all areas. We therefore rejected this option. In addition we acknowledged that this practice was not organised consistently across the Council. In some areas, staff were externally assessed for linguistic competence and received additional payment for their language skills, whereas in other areas officers handled customer contact in the customer's own language without receiving extra payment, or having been assessed. We would encourage the use of Council staff wherever possible, to provide interpreting and translation support to their clients. However, this needed to be managed effectively in order to ensure the quality of provision and consistency of approach in rewarding staff for their language skills.

Option 3

3.4 We took the view that option 3; having an in-house team of interpreters and translators was the most expensive and least flexible approach. Education Leeds and the Braille and Large Print Unit employ in-house staff. We noted that the Education Leeds Board on 14th September had taken a decision to redeploy its in-

house team of 4 translators and buy in this service through CITU. We accepted that a review was also needed to be carried out in the Braille and Large Print Unit because of changing technology and demand, in order to deliver a better and more cost-effective service in this area.

Option 4

- 3.5 We rejected option 4; the complete outsourcing of the interpreting and translation service. Whilst we considered this to be an attractive option as the service would only be used to match the demand, there would not be the same provision of management information, monitoring and quality assurance currently provided by CITU. We realised the importance of providing accurate data for the Equality Standard and Charter Mark.

Option 5

- 3.6 We supported therefore option 5; outsourcing the actual interpreting and translation service whilst maintaining a client function through CITU. Interpreters and translators would be freelance, but CITU staff would co-ordinate all requests for interpreting and translation. CITU would commission the work, monitor performance, provide accurate management information, guidance to staff, raise awareness of the service and quality assure the freelance staff that they use. The use of freelance staff would mean that the service could adapt quickly to shifts in demand; in response to the increasing linguistic diversity in Leeds. In our view it would therefore better meet the needs of our customers.

Recommendation 1

That the Chief Customer Services Officer move towards a commissioning model for the actual interpreting and translation service whilst maintaining and extending a client function through CITU.

- 3.7 We realised that as a consequence of supporting option 5 it would be necessary to undertake a review of CITU in order to ensure that it can meet the new demands which will be placed upon it, particularly extending its role to cover sensory impairment.

Recommendation 2

That the Chief Customer Services Officer commission a piece of work to understand what the team size and role of CITU would need to be; and that it be implemented for the start of the new financial year.

- 3.8 We noted that in moving towards this model for the provision of all interpreting and translation facilities there would be HR implications for the Braille and Large Print Unit. The numbers employed seemed to us to be excessive when set against the number of jobs undertaken. (See Appendix 1 paragraphs 2.4 and 2.16).
- 3.9 We were concerned about the predicted shift in demand away from Braille towards audio formats and the Council's ability to meet this demand.

- 3.10 We discussed the benefit of the Braille and Large Print Unit operating in a similar way to that of CITU in that it would undertake a co-ordinating and monitoring role. We agreed that this would be a much more cost effective and efficient approach.

Recommendation 3

That the Chief Customer Services Officer undertake further work to apply this approach to the Braille and Large Print Unit with a view to it taking on a coordinating rather than document based production function.

- 3.11 We noted that technology was now readily available to enable all Council staff with the necessary training to be able to produce large print documents on request. We were therefore surprised at the number of requests departments continue to make to the Unit for large print documents. We considered this to be an inefficient use of resources. We therefore recommend that departments undertake this work themselves.

Recommendation 4

That the Chief Customer Services Officer develop guidance for all departments on how to produce large print documents to enable this type of work to be done direct rather than through the Braille and Large Print Unit.

- 3.12 We took the view that it would be more efficient in terms of administration and staff time for CITU not to have to recharge the ALMOs and Education Leeds for each individual job, but to receive their funding contributions in line with all other Council departments.

Recommendation 5

That an interpretation and translation services budget be established in its own right for CITU, without the requirement to recover their costs through charges to departments and that the Director of Corporate Services implement this with effect from 1st April 2006.

- 3.13 We thought it important for the Braille and Large Print Unit, and other services, to have a policy in place for charging work they undertake for non - Council business. Currently there is no clear guidance on charges to be made to private businesses using the Braille and Large Print Unit. We recommend that this should be addressed quickly.

Recommendation 6

That the Chief Customer Services Officer develop a policy on the charges to be made for non-Council business undertaken by the Braille and Large Print Unit and where there are any other requests.

- 3.14 We are concerned at the clear variations which exist across the Council in providing interpreting and translation facilities to its customers. Examples include the fact that not all departments use CITU and BSL interpreting is only free to the Social Services Department because it gives a grant to the Leeds Society for Deaf and Blind People. All other departments and wholly owned companies have to pay

for this service. This ought to be regarded as a Council grant and should not just benefit Social Services.

Recommendation 7

That the Chief Customer Services Officer take steps to ensure that a consistent and explicit policy is developed covering all aspects of interpreting and translation, including meeting spoken language and sensory impairment needs.

- 3.15 We wanted to ensure that the linguistic skills of staff in Council departments are not lost and are used whenever possible. We recognised that this would require the development of a policy to ensure proper reward and the maintenance of high standards across all Council services.

Recommendation 8

That the Director of Corporate Services ensure that a consistent policy and practice is developed (both in terms of linguistic assessment and rewarding staff) for making use of staff's existing language skills in handling customer contact, both face to face and on the telephone.

- 3.16 We were concerned to hear that Leeds Benefits Service occasionally faced 10 -12 days delay in getting interpretation and translation work carried out by CITU which could have serious consequences for clients seeking benefits. We considered this to be totally unacceptable.

Recommendation 9

That the Chief Customer Services Officer ensure that people are clear when requesting translation services that they specify a deadline for the return of completed documents. This helps CITU to plan their workload.

- 3.17 The Board noted from the meeting with the Society for Deaf and Blind People that the Society was interested in participating in any pilot the Council wished to run that would link the Society's interpreters to the Council's One Stop Centres (See appendix 3 paragraph 4.1) and had offered to contribute to the cost. We feel that this would be an excellent opportunity to further develop our partnership with the Society

Recommendation 10

That the Chief Customer Services Officer discuss with the Leeds Society for Deaf and Blind People the possibility of undertaking a pilot that would link the Society's interpreters with the Council's One Stop Centres and pursue their offer of a contribution towards the cost of such a project.

- 3.18 We were of the view that the Council should explore more closely the opportunities available for closer partnership working with the public and private sector concerning the use and funding of interpreting and translation facilities. We would wish to see further research in this area.

Recommendation 11

That the Co-ordinator for CITU continue with existing ongoing research into best practice with regard to partnership arrangements through networks such as RITAN.

Report Agreed by the Board on 23rd March 2006

Signed by the Chair of Scrutiny Board (Transforming Services)

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Report of Scrutiny Board (Transforming Services)

Summary of written and verbal evidence

Scrutiny Board Meeting – 27th October 2005

1.0 Report of the Director of Legal and Democratic Services

- 1.1 In accordance with the Board's approved terms of reference for this inquiry the Director of Legal and Democratic Services submitted details of the legislation which applies to the provision of translation and interpretation services and the legal position of those who require this service.
- 1.2 The Board was advised that the Race Relation Act 1976 - Part X, Section 7.1 General Statutory Duty states that:
- “Every body (which includes a local authority (Section 1A paragraph 5.12)) or other person specified in Schedule 1 A or of a description falling within that schedule shall, in carrying out it's functions have due regard to the need to
- (a) Eliminate unlawful racial discrimination
 - (b) Promote equality of opportunity and good relations between persons of different racial groups.”
- 1.3 The Board was informed that there are three aspects to the duty to promote Social Equality and that translation / interpretation as specific services can help with all three:
- (a) Tackle unlawful discrimination
 - (b) Promote equality of opportunity
 - (c) Promote good relations between people from different racial groups
- 1.4 The Board noted that the legislation does not prescribe in what circumstances translation / interpretation services must be provided. The Board recognised that they are a means by which equality of opportunity can be promoted and such services would assist in the elimination of unlawful racial discrimination.
- 1.5 The Board was informed that the Commission for Racial Equality suggest that a “common sense” approach should be adopted having due regard to the ethnic make up of the community which the Local Authority serves. So, one local authority with an ethnic make up of predominantly A,B,C,D and E groups should provide appropriate translation services for groups A,B,C,D and E. A different local authority might have an ethnic make up of predominantly DEFGH groups and therefore should provide translation services for D,E,F,G,H but not for A,B and C.
- 1.6 The Board learned that under the Disability Discrimination Act disabled people have a right of access to the service being provided. Reasonable adjustments must be made in order to provide disabled persons with the means to access these services. Reasonable adjustments might include inductions loops, for those with hearing difficulties and having forms available in large print for those with eye sight difficulties. One adjustment might be the provision of British Sign Language facilities

for someone who had both hearing and speech difficulties. Again, there was nothing prescribed by law as to which services should be provided and due regard should be taken of the needs of those which the Local Authority serves.

- 1.7 The Board was advised that it might indeed be the case that a particular local authority department had to provide translation / interpretation services to groups SKLMN because those were the majority ethnic minorities or disabled which used a particular service, but another local authority department may be used by entirely different ethnic minorities or disabled groups, e.g. PQRS and the translation / interpretation services therefore need to be provided for PQRS groups rather than SKLMN groups.
- 1.8 The Board recognised that the legal position of those who feel they are entitled to translation / interpretation services was that they could claim that Leeds City Council had breached duties in relation to Race Relations Act and the Disability Discrimination Act.

2.0 Report of the Chief Customer Services Officer

- 2.1 In accordance with the Board's approved terms of reference the Chief Customer Services Officer submitted a report on interpretation and translation facilities as the Council's champion for improving access to services and the corporate provider of the Council's Central Interpreting and Translation Unit (CITU).

(i) Central Interpreting and Translation Unit (CITU)

(a) Current Usage of CITU

- 2.2 The Board learned that CITU was established in 2002 to provide interpreting and translation services for departments of the Council. The Unit consists of three staff: a Co-ordinator, and two support assistants. Prior to this, there was no co-ordinated central provision of interpreting and translation services. Departments bought in interpreting and translation as required, from various agencies and for varying prices. There were no guidelines for staff working with interpreters and translators, and the use of different agencies meant that there was no consistent quality assurance of the interpreters and translators used.
- 2.3 The Board was advised that CITU provided face to face interpreting, telephone interpreting and translation services. CITU only uses freelance interpreters and translators, meaning that the service can be very flexible in adapting to changes in demand. Linguistic diversity had increased greatly in Leeds within the last few years, owing in some part to the dispersal of asylum seekers within the city. Initiatives to promote Leeds as an internationally competitive city (through for example Marketing Leeds) was also likely to contribute to this trend of broadening the range of languages spoken within the city.
- 2.4 The Board noted that in October 2004, the Braille and Large Print Unit transferred from Learning and Leisure (Libraries and Information Service) to Customer Services, under the line management of the CITU Co-ordinator. The Braille and Large Print Unit employs a small team (7-8 staff) on permanent contracts who undertake transcription into Braille, large print and audio formats.

2.5 The Board noted that CITU does not provide British Sign Language (BSL) interpreting; this was provided by the Leeds Sign Language Interpreting Service (LSLIS). This service was part of the Leeds Society for Deaf and Blind People and part-funded by the Council's Social Services department.

2.6 The Board considered the following tables below which gave information on CITU usage levels for 2004/05. During 2004/05, CITU met requests for 8,342 interpreting and translation jobs (4.64%). Of this, 6,046 were face to face interpretations (4.83%*), 1,124 were telephone interpretations (4.27%*) and 1,172 were translations (15.46%*).

* figure in brackets is the % increase in the number of jobs against those in 2003/2004.

Table 1 below shows the number of face to face and telephone interpretations undertaken by language over the last 12 months:

Language	Number of interpretations	Language	Number of interpretations	Language	Number of interpretations
Albanian	100	Italian	1	Romanian	25
Amharic	294	Japanese	3	Russian	105
Arabic	591	Kikuyu	2	Serbo- Croat	18
Bengali	165	Kiryawanda	3	Shona	4
Bosnian	3	Kurdish	1314	Slovak	16
Cantonese	72	Kurundi	8	Somalian	336
Czech	187	Lingala	161	Spanish	39
Dari	60	Luganda	4	Swahili	157
Farsi	813	Mandarin	156	Tamil	84
French	701	Moldovian	2	Thai	1
German	14	Pahari	150	Tigrian	434
Greek	2	Polish	74	Turkish	49
Gujerati	12	Portuguese	444	Urdu	328
Hindi	17	Punjabi	114	Vietnamese	14
Hungarian	1	Pushto	92		

Table 2 below shows the number of translations undertaken, by language, in the last 12 months:

Language	Number of translations	Language	Number of translations	Language	Number of translations
Albanian	9	Italian	8	Slovak	2
Amharic	6	Japanese	3	Somalian	59
Arabic	50	Kiryawanda	1	Spanish	14
Bengali	101	Kurdish	88	Swahili	4
Bosnian	3	Kurundi	1	Tamil	3
Cantonese	74	Lingala	3	Thai	2
Czech	32	Mandarin	46	Tigrian	7
Dari	7	Pahari	2	Turkish	3
Farsi	58	Polish	15	Ukrainian	4
French	52	Portuguese	55	Urdu	183
German	20	Punjabi	99	Vietnamese	19
Greek	1	Pushto	8	Standard Statements (in five languages)	4
Gujerati	49	Romanian	4		
Hindi	60	Russian	4		
Hungarian	6	Serbo- Croat	1		
Indonesian	1	Shona	1		

Table 3 below shows the breakdown of usage of CITU by department, in the last 12 months

Client department	Translations	Face to face interpreting	Telephone interpreting
Chief Executive's Department	124	137	309
Corporate Services	115	52	0
City Services	6	1	0
Development	8	1	3
Learning and Leisure	117	263	22
Neighbourhoods and Housing	168	2955	686
Social Services	154	1272	64
Education Leeds	0	7	1
ALMOs	389	110	21
External	91	1248	18
TOTALS	1172	6046	1124

- 2.7 It was reported to the Board that the increased demand for interpreting and translation services could be attributed to greater promotion of the service by CITU and also to an increasing awareness among service managers of the need to meet customers' needs and improve access to our services. Initiatives such as the Equality Standard also help with this raised awareness and service improvement.
- 2.8 The Board learned that the figures for **Neighbourhoods and Housing** were very high for interpreting because the refugee and asylum service was based in this department. Leeds City Council was one of the lead authorities in the Yorkshire and Humberside Asylum Consortium that administers the Home Office's NASS scheme (National Asylum Seeker Support Service). CITU therefore undertakes a large amount of interpreting for Neighbourhoods and Housing that was then recharged to the Home Office.
- 2.9 The Board acknowledged that the figures for **Education Leeds** were low for use of CITU as the service has its own Translation and Interpreting Service for use by schools and Education Leeds services. Translation and interpreting was not provided for pupils in the classroom, but was used when communicating with parents. There was an in-house team of four professional translators / interpreters (3 full time equivalent posts). They specialised in Urdu, Bengali (and Syleti dialect), Punjabi and Chinese (Cantonese and Mandarin).
- 2.10 The Board learned that recently demand had grown within schools for interpreting in a wider range of languages than those listed above, as a reflection of the linguistic diversity in the wider city. Due to this demand for work in other languages, the team managed a budget (£13,430) used to access a pool of freelance translators and interpreters who offer services in the range of community languages.
- 2.11 Education Leeds it was reported to the Board was in the process of undertaking a fundamental service improvement review of its translation and interpretation service. The focus of the review was to consider the current performance of the service in relation to demand and whether there was scope for economies of scale and improved performance by moving the service to CITU. A progress report went to Education Leeds Board on 14th September 2005 which concluded that the move to CITU represented the best option and the recommendations were approved. The Scrutiny Board received a copy of this report.
- 2.12 The Board was advised that in-house staff currently employed by Education Leeds would be subject to a redeployment process.

- 2.13 The Board was informed that the **ALMOs** and **Education Leeds** had different funding models for paying for CITU services than those used by Council departments. Council departments make an annual contribution to the cost of funding CITU. Education Leeds and the ALMOs are recharged every time they use CITU but only pay for the cost price paid to the interpreter or translator. External customers (such as Jobcentre plus, West Yorkshire Probation Service, the Immigration Appellate Authority and Citizens' Advice Bureau) are charged at the cost price plus 50%, to reflect the administrative and staffing costs of providing the service.
- 2.14 It was noted by the Board that discussions were ongoing between the ALMO Chief Officers and Neighbourhoods and Housing to look at amending this arrangement, to pay for CITU interpreting and translation through a top-slice of their budgets.
- 2.15 The Braille and Large Print Unit are located at the Shire View centre in Headingley, a city-wide resource centre run by and for blind and partially-sighted people. It comes under the umbrella of the Leeds Society for Deaf and Blind People and the Braille and Large Print Unit was one of a number of public and voluntary-sector agencies based at Shire View.
- 2.16 The Unit received 580 requests for jobs in 2004/05. A breakdown of the type of jobs undertaken is shown below (The individual totals add up to more than 580, as some jobs can be for transcription in more than one format.)

Table 4 Number of Jobs for the Braille and Large Print Unit 2004/2005

Type	LCC	Non-LCC
Braille	147	152
Large Print	79	24
Disc	0	0
Audio tape	182	122

- 2.17 In terms of demand for Braille within the visually impaired community, the Board was told that the number of Braille users was estimated to be about 3% of the visually impaired population nationally, with 1% having this as their preferred format.¹ At 31 March 2003, the most recent date for which data was available, 2,740 people were registered as blind and 2350 were registered as partially sighted in Leeds.² This would equate to about 50 people in Leeds having Braille as their preferred communication format. On the council tax database there are 38 customers who have asked to receive council tax correspondence in Braille.
- 2.18 Teaching of Braille remains fairly stable, whereas demand for audio formats is a growth area, particularly as technology has advanced to include the production of audio material in digital formats.

(b) Guidance on Use of CITU Across Council Departments and Wholly Owned Companies

- 2.19 The Board noted that guidance for staff, for CITU had been delivered through:

¹ Source: National Library for the Blind

² Source: The Department of Health; triennial data return for year ending 31 March 2003

- Staff briefings. Since the team was formed in 2002, CITU staff had delivered briefings about their work to more than 40 teams throughout the Council, including one stop centres; neighbourhood housing offices; ALMOs; libraries; social services offices; the housing advice centre; and DMTs.
- The Staff Handbook: “A Guide to Working Across Language and Culture”. The Board received a copy of this Staff Handbook which was available on the intranet and distributed to managers at briefings. Managers were also given point cards that staff can use with customers to help them identify the customer’s language.

2.20 The Board noted that Council officers can use Language Line if they require a telephone interpreter out of hours, or if CITU are unable to meet the request for a telephone interpreter. Language Line is a national company that provides interpreting and translation services. In 2004/05, Leeds City Council spent £2,584.05 on using Language Line. The unit costs for using Language Line are between £2.25 and £2.50 per minute, depending on the time of day.

(c) Guidance on Use of CITU Across Council Departments and Wholly Owned Companies

2.21 The Board was advised that the reasons for providing spoken language interpreting and translation were detailed in the CITU Staff Handbook. It was also a service standard of many customer-facing Council services to offer interpreting and translation, and initiatives such as the Equality Standard or Charter Mark to encourage this sort of provision. However, there was no stand-alone policy document covering Leeds City Council’s position on interpreting and translation, across all aspects of this, from spoken language work to sensory impairment provision.

2.22 The Board was apprised however, that many services had developed and embedded some very good practice that contributed to making access to services easier and more effective. Within Customer Services, good practice had in part been driven by the process of undergoing Charter Mark accreditation. This process ensured that the service focused strongly on designing their services around customers’ individual needs. So, as Members noted making their services accessible to all customers and removing any barriers, such as those faced by people who do not speak English, or who have a sensory impairment, was an important aspect. In Council Tax, there was a database of customers’ communication requirements, which meant that individuals’ needs could be met on an ongoing basis.

2.23 However, the Board noted that practice is varied throughout the Council, as not all customer-facing services had, to date, developed this systematic focus on putting the customer first. If policy was to be developed, existing good practice could inform this and implementation could ensure compliance and the provision of a consistent service to its customers, whichever service they dealt with.

(d) Guidance on Use of Braille and Large Print Unit Across Council Departments and Wholly Owned Companies

2.24 The Board was advised that the Braille and Large Print Unit had a document on

their intranet page containing guidance on what kind of documents could be converted to Braille, Large Print or audio formats. This explained the procedure for submitting documents for transcription. Council departments are recharged the cost for each individual job.

- 2.25 However, the Board noted that guidance on using the Unit was not as widely communicated as for CITU. Whereas CITU had undertaken a proactive approach to informing staff about their services, through the production of the staff handbook and the briefings delivered to teams, this had not yet happened in the case of the Braille and Large Print Unit.
- 2.26 It was reported to the Board that members of the public could also submit documents to the Braille and Large Print Unit for transcription, such as utility bills and bank statements. Currently there is no policy regarding what documents would or would not be transcribed. This service is free for members of the public and community groups, although companies are charged.
- 2.27 The Board noted however, following Part III of the Disability and Discrimination Act coming into force, Leeds City Council's Braille and Large Print Unit should not need to routinely transcribe documents from other agencies, e.g., banks and hospitals, brought in by visually impaired service users. The DDA places the requirement on each organisation to ensure that their communication is accessible, not on the recipient to seek out means of transcription.
- 2.28 Guidance could be developed for departments on providing documents in Large Print, as the format for this just needs to be in 18 point bold text on yellow paper. Council officers could therefore provide documents in Large Print for customers who request this, simply by using their own PCs.

(e) Summary of Issues Identified that Affect the Central Interpreting and Translation Unit (CITU) and those on Policy and Guidance

- 2.29 The Board noted in summary that there were a number of issues that affect current provision:

CITU

- Wholly owned companies pay for CITU services by a different model in comparison to LCC departments. It would be more efficient in terms of administration and staff time for CITU not to have to recharge the ALMOs and Education Leeds for each individual job, but to receive their funding contributions in line with all other council departments.
- The predicted shift in demand away from Braille towards audio formats and the Council's ability to meet this demand.
- The ongoing increase in linguistic diversity within the city and the Council's continuing ability to meet this demand, and therefore the need to ensure easy access to council services for those who need them most.

Policy and Guidance

- The lack of consistent and explicit policy covering all aspects of interpreting and translation, including spoken language work and sensory impairment provision.
- The need to develop clear policy on what charges are made for non-council business undertaken, particularly in the current situation with the Braille and Large Print Unit.
- There was no longer a need for a separate unit to produce large print documents, because of changes in technology and the widespread use of PCs and printers.

(ii) Approach Adopted by One Stop Centres and the Corporate Contact Centre to Providing Interpretation on Request

- 2.30 The Board learned that part of the service standards for One Stop Centres included providing interpreting on request and providing leaflets in alternative languages. This was driven by the desire to meet the individual needs of customers and to make services as accessible as possible – especially in terms of those who sometimes need our services the most, and with our wider contribution to narrowing the gap in mind. The Board was pleased to hear that this works well and compliments are received from members of the public.
- 2.31 The Board was advised that if a Customer Services Officer (CSO) had a customer who needed an interpreter, they would identify the customer’s language (for example, by using a point card) and ring CITU. CITU would call back with the name and telephone number of an interpreter who could undertake telephone interpreting. The CSO would call the interpreter and pass the phone between the customer and themselves. If the customer’s query was a very complex one, a face to face interpreter would be booked for a separate appointment. If the customer required BSL interpreting, the CSO would contact LSILS direct, but bookings required prior notice and there was usually a two week³ waiting time. This meant that officers had to communicate with the customer as best they could, usually by using written notes.
- 2.32 CSOs in the Corporate Contact Centre would put the customer on hold while they contacted CITU or Language Line for an interpreter. When an interpreter was on the line, the call would be handled by a conference call.
- 2.33 It was noted that across most of Customer Services (One Stop Centres and at the Corporate Contact Centre), if staff could meet the language needs of customers as part of their day to day role, then this was also done. However, it was not the main way and the service was not designed around it. Because of this, staff did this as part of their CSO role, rather than being paid an extra increment for doing so.
- 2.34 The Board learned that within Revenues and Benefits, staff had been identified who could speak community languages such as Punjabi, Urdu, Hindi and Cantonese, who could handle phone calls from customers in those languages. If a customer needed to speak in a language not spoken by a staff member, the CSO would use Language Line⁴.

³ It was noted that following a meeting with the Leeds Society for Deaf and Blind People (See Appendix 3) this waiting time for BSL interpreters had been reduced to a maximum of 4 days.

⁴ See paragraph 2.20 for information on Language Line

2.35 Now that some Revenues and Benefits staff are part of Customer Services (as part of the corporate contact centre programme, since 1 August 2005), there were different circumstances within a service and certainly different practices within the Council.

(f) Summary of Issues Identified that Affect the One Stop Centres and Corporate Contact centre

2.36 The Board noted in summary that there were a number of issues that affect the approach to providing interpreting and translation on request, these were:

- Some CSOs who deal with customers in the customer's language are assessed for their linguistic competence and paid extra for this, others are not.
- Waiting times for BSL interpreters are too long to be useful for customers who need their queries to be dealt with at the time they visit a council office.

(g) Options for Service delivery

2.37 The Board was advised that there were a number of different ways of providing this service, some of which had been tried before within the authority. These were described to the Board as follows:-

Option 1: Skilling up internal staff to provide interpreting and translation

- When the City Centre one stop centre first opened in 1995, a group of CSOs were given intensive training in BSL. However, as they tended not to sign frequently, the level of skill declined and feedback from customers indicated that staff signing was too slow, and that they would prefer professional BSL interpreting.
- It would be impossible to train internal staff to be able to meet the ever increasing demands of spoken language interpreting, as last year CITU undertook interpreting in more than 40 languages.

Option 2 Making use of the skills of existing bilingual staff

- This already happens in some parts of the Council. This was an effective means of meeting customer demand, but there was not a broad enough base of bilingual staff to be able to fully meet customer demand in all areas. There were also issues about ensuring consistent service provision and quality assurance, if it becomes something that was actually designed into the service and made a very formal arrangement.
- This practice was not organised consistently across the Council. In some areas, staff are externally assessed for linguistic competence and receive additional payment for their language skills, whereas in other areas officers handle customer contact in the customer's own language without receiving extra payment, or having been assessed.

Option 3 Having an in-house team of interpreters and translators

- Currently happens with the Braille and Large Print Unit and Education Leeds' Interpreting and Translation Service are in house services. Education Leeds

has found that as demand has changed, their internal provision is no longer sufficient, and therefore review work has been undertaken on making changes to the service. If changes were implemented to deliver a better and more cost-effective service in this area, then there would be HR implications.

Option 4 Complete outsourcing of interpreting and translation

- This would mean all parts of the Council going directly to an external supplier for all interpreting and translation, including spoken language, Braille and audio work. While this would mean that the service would only be used to match demand, there wouldn't be the same provision of management information, monitoring and quality assurance as CITU provide (which helps to predict demand and plan the costs of running the service). The Council would also find it harder to evidence meeting standards such as the Equality Standard and Charter Mark.
- In addition, work would need to be undertaken to establish whether or not there was another language agency within Leeds that would have the capacity to meet the demand that CITU experiences, for example, more than 8,000 requests for interpreting and translation in 2004/05. If service standards could not be delivered, then the impact would be on the people who are often our most vulnerable customers.

Option 5 Outsourcing actual interpreting and translation but maintaining a client function within LCC

- This is the model that CITU currently works to for spoken language work. Interpreters and translators are freelance, but CITU staff co-ordinate all requests for interpreting and translation. This means that CITU can provide accurate management information, provide guidance to staff, raise awareness of the service and quality assure the freelance staff that they use. The use of freelance staff also means that the service can adapt quickly to shifts in demand in response to the increasing linguistic diversity in Leeds. It would therefore better meet the needs of our customers.
- A wider client function for meeting the needs of those with sensory impairment would also ensure that requests would be met swiftly, unlike with the current position for BSL interpreting. The Council does not have priority over any other customer for the lengthy waiting times for BSL interpreting.

2.38 The Board noted that if the Council was to move to the model under option 5 for the provision of all interpreting and translation, to improve service levels and the effective use of resources, there would be HR implications for the Braille and Large Print Unit. Further work would be required to determine the right size of team and to detail the role of the team, with regards to a coordinating function rather than actual document production.

3.0 Summary of Departmental Evidence

3.1 The Board raised a number of specific questions which all departments, Education Leeds and ALMOs were invited to respond to on a standard pro forma. The individual responses received were submitted and considered by the Board. A

general summary of the responses received to the questions raised are set out in Appendix 2.

- 3.2 The Board at this point agreed to defer further consideration of this matter pending Clarification of the review being undertaken by Education Leeds on its in house interpretation and translation service and the recommendations approved by Education Leeds on 14th September 2005.
- 3.3 The Board was also concerned about the future of the Leeds Society for Deaf and Blind People based at Centenary House under this review and requested that a meeting be arranged with the Society.

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4.0 Education Leeds

- 4.1 It was reported to the Board at the previous meeting that Education Leeds had undertaken a fundamental review of their interpretation and translation service. The Education Leeds Board on 14th September 2005 had agreed to negotiate for Leeds City Council to administer, manage, promote and develop translation and interpretation services for schools from April 2006. Their in house staff would be subject to a redeployment process. The Board had asked for clarification of this matter.
- 4.2 The Scrutiny Board was advised that the decision by Education Leeds Board was not within the scope of its inquiry. The issue of in house staff within Education Leeds was therefore a matter for Human Resources.
- 4.3 The Board agreed that this issue was outside its terms of reference but accepted the written evidence submitted by UNISON on the general issues of the Interpretation and Translation Service. The statement submitted by UNISON is set out in Appendix 4.

5.0 Powerpoint Presentation

- 5.1 The Board received a powerpoint presentation from the Chief Customer Services Officer summarising the main points and options available to the Board. These were set out in detail in her report to the Board at its previous meeting.

6.0 Witnesses

- 6.1 The Board asked further questions of the witnesses who attended on behalf of Council departments, Education Leeds and ALMOs concerning their written evidence which had been presented to the previous Board meeting and summarised in Appendix 2.
- 6.2 The Board heard from Steve Conlon, Manager and Evan Wickremaratne, Community Liaison Officer of Leeds Society for Deaf & Blind People. Members referred to the informal meeting held with the Society on 8th November 2005. A note of that meeting is attached as Appendix 3.
- 6.3 The Board was pleased that a misunderstanding had been resolved early in the

discussion with the Leeds Society for Deaf and Blind People and that there were no proposals under this Inquiry that would affect the future of the Society.

- 6.4 Members were delighted to note that the Society was now able to provide BSL interpreters within a maximum of 4 days of a Council officer contacting them and often much quicker than this. (See appendix 3 paragraphs 3.4 & 3.5)
- 6.5 The Board noted that the Society was interested in participating in any pilot the Council wished to run that would link the Society's interpreters to the Council's One Stop Shops (See appendix s paragraph 4.1) and had offered to contribute to the cost. The Board recommended that officers pursue this.

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7.0 Witnesses

7.1 Members heard from the following witnesses who used the services of the Central Information and Translation Unit for their clients and asked questions of the representatives attending:-

- Pauline Harrowell, Crown Prosecution Service
- Peter Wade, Leeds Ridings Association
- Sukvinder Singh, Leeds Benefits Service

7.2 It became apparent during the discussion that the Crown Prosecution Service and Leeds Ridings Association had work carried out speedily by CITU and within agreed deadlines. However, the Benefits Agency often faced 10 -12 days delay in getting interpretation and translation work carried out which could have serious consequences for clients seeking benefits. The Board agreed to pursue this further.

7.3 The Board received details of the 'in-house' interpreters who were available in the Leeds Benefits Service department.

8.0 Provision of Interpretation and Translation Services by Core Cities and West Yorkshire Councils

8.1 The Board considered a report by the Head of Equalities on the provision of interpretation and translation services provided by Core Cities, West Yorkshire Councils and other specific local partner organisations i.e. Universities, National Health Service and Primary Care Trusts and whether facilities can be used more effectively. The Board at the last meeting had requested that commercial and industrial firms in the city be invited to join in the provision and financing of such a service and this had been included in the report.

(a) Core Cities and West Yorkshire Councils

8.2 The Board received the following outline of interpretation and translation provision provided by six local authorities who had responded to a request for information with an indication of costs:

◇ Bradford City Council

- The Council Interpretation and Translation Unit was disbanded in 2000

- Current interpretation and translation provision was co-ordinated in an ad-hoc way by the Equality Team and within other Council Departments
- Interpretation and translation was provided by bi-lingual staff and community networks and contacts

◇ Kirklees Metropolitan Council

- Service was established in the late 1980's
- Reviewed in the late 1990's and established as a business unit which was self-financing within the Customer Relations Unit
- Services provided include – translation, face to face interpretation, interpretation sign language, audio tape/CD, Braille
- Internal and external customers were charged for services
- There were set guidelines for services
- Translation costs started at between £15.00 to £20.00 for fewer than 50 words. The cost reduced as the number of words increased
- For face to face interpretation the costs were £22.00 for the first hour. The subsequent charge after the 1st hour was £7.00 plus 15% on the total amount payable to the interpreter. There were also travelling expenses and travel time costs

◇ Wakefield District Council

- The interpretation and translation service was based within Social Services and Health
- The service was also available to other local statutory and community and voluntary sector organisations
- Internal customers were not charged for services
- Face to face interpretation charges were £28.25 for the first hour followed by £20 per hour for any further hours plus VAT
- Travel time for interpreting sessions was also charged
- Translation charges were dependant on the length, style and language required
- The service did not provide alternative formats

◇ Manchester City Council

- Services provide by a communications agency which was partly funded by Manchester City Council
- They provide interpretation, translation, Braille, sign language, lip speakers and audio tape production
- They also provided printing, advertising, copywriting and photographic services
- Internal departments received a 50% discount
- External customers paid the full rate
- Spoken word interpretation charges were £44.00 for the first two hours (minimum charge). Subsequent charges to the nearest half hour and upwards were £22.00 per hour
- Translation charges were £150.00 per 1000 English words per language
- Travel time and car mileage were also charged

◇ Liverpool City Council

- The Liverpool Translation and Interpretation Service joined the Novas Group on 1st May 2005
- The service transferred over from Liverpool City Council as a social enterprise
- The Novas Group was a Registered Social Landlord who also developed opportunities for individuals and communities through housing and support, education, training, employment, art, culture and regeneration
- Liverpool City Council invited organisations to tender to take over the service
- The service costs were met from income generation
- The staff were transferred under TUPE arrangements from Liverpool City Council
- As part of the transfer arrangements there was a tapering grant provision for three years to meet any shortfalls
- For Public sector and voluntary organisations (excluding legal work) interpretation costs were £40 for the first hour and £25 per hour for subsequent hours
- For Telephone interpreting the costs were £12.50 for the first 15 minutes and £5 for each additional 15 minutes
- Translation costs were under 200 English words £45. The cost reduced as the number of words increased

◇ Calderdale

- There was a central unit which provided British Sign Language (BSL) Interpreters and transcribes into alternative formats
- The Human Resources Department had a member of staff who co-ordinated all requests for interpretation and translation requests. These were all outsourced to external individuals and agencies
- All costs for this service were re-charged to internal departments
- A review of Interpretation and Translation services was currently taking place to improve more consistent services

(b) Providers of Interpreting and Translation Services Outside of Leeds City Council

8.3 The Board received information on the interpreting and translation services provided outside of the Council as follows.

◇ Universities

- Leeds two Universities (University of Leeds and Leeds Metropolitan University) run a range of interpreting and translation courses but there was little demand within the institutions for interpreting and translation services, since, students are required to have a good level of proficiency in English
- The Universities do not provide specific public service interpreting and translation services to other organisations in the Leeds District. On occasions they get requests for services from external organisations which they referred onto appropriate approved agencies
- The Universities have a valuable resource for freelance interpreters and translators. CITU regularly advertises for interpreters in the Universities and have some interpreters from the Universities on their freelance register
- Both Universities provide interpreting and transcription services for students with a sensory impairment. Leeds Metropolitan University has a Disability Support team that can arrange for texts to be provided in Braille or provide British Sign Language interpreters (they do not undertake Braille transcription in-house)

- The University of Leeds' Equality Unit provides BSL interpreters or lipspeakers for hearing impaired students. The Equality Unit also contains the Transcription Centre, which was a partnership between the University of Leeds and the Royal National Institute for the Blind. The Transcription Centre undertakes transcription of materials into Braille, large print, tape or tactile diagrams, both for visually impaired students and for individuals and organisations throughout Yorkshire. It also undertakes academic transcription work for partner universities in the north of England. The centre was one of the few providers of foreign language Braille and tapes, and can also provide maths and music Braille

◇ Health Services

- Leeds Language Link (LLL) was a provider of Face to Face interpreting services to the 5 Primary Care Trusts in Leeds, The Leeds Teaching Hospital Trust, and the Leeds Mental Health Trust. They do not provide services to any other external organisations. Doctor's surgeries within the 5 primary care trusts are not provided with services, since they do not have funding for these services. The surgeries rely on using telephone interpreting services through Language Line, although this was not considered an ideal solution by many G.P's
- LLL based in the Leeds Teaching Hospital Trust and part of the Patient and Public Support Service, under the Nursing Directorate
- The Unit provides Interpreting (Face to Face) and Staff training on working with interpreters. The team does not, however, provide telephone interpreting or Translation services
- Interpreting services provided by the Unit were charged to the requesting trusts
- LLL are members of RITAN (Regional Interpreting and Translation Agencies Network) and work in co-operation with CITU. CITU provide Face to Face interpreting services to LLL when they were unable to acquire interpreters from their own register

◇ Leeds Interpreting and Translation Service (LITS)

- LITS provide interpreting and translation services in a range of languages using a sessional register of interpreters and translators. Among their customers are courts, solicitors and West Yorkshire Police
- LITS was a company limited by guarantee
- LITS was partly funded by Leeds City Council (Neighbourhoods and Housing Department) and the funding for year 05/06 is £10,000. The service also charge organisations for the services they provide to generate additional income.
- CITU and LLL have no arrangements in place for any kind of co-operative working with LITS

◇ Leeds Sign Language Interpreting Service

- The Leeds Sign Language Interpreting Service was based at Centenary house and provides a range of services including, sign language interpreters, note takers, lip speakers etc. for the deaf and hard of hearing community.
- The Social Services Department of Leeds City Council partly fund the Leeds Sign Language Interpreting Service. BSL interpreting was free for Social Services casework appointments, but a charge was made for non-casework bookings and bookings from all other council departments. Leeds Sign Language Interpreting Service also provides services to a range of other public service agencies, including the health service and charges accordingly for these services.

8.4 The Board noted that there were other public sector services who accessed interpretation and translation services, such as, West Yorkshire Police, Immigration and Nationality Directorate. Due to the particular needs of these services they only used accredited interpreters often through the National Register of Public Service Interpreters.

Glossary of Terms

ALMOs	Arms Length Management Organisations
BSL	British Sign Language
BME	Black Minority Ethnic
BUPIS	Best Value Performance Indicators
CITU	Central Interpreting and Translation Unit
CSO	Customer Services Officer
DDA	Disability Discrimination Act
DMTs	Departmental Management Teams
ESOL	English for Speakers of Other Languages
FSIR	Fundamental Service Improvement Review
GPs	General Practitioners
HR	Human Resources
I & T	Interpreting and Translation
LEODIS	Leeds Employment Opportunities Disability
LITS	Leeds Interpreting and Translation Service
LLL	Leeds Language Link
LSLIS	Leeds Sign Language and Interpreting Service
NASS	National Asylum Seekers Support Service
PCs	Personal Computers
NHS	National Health Service
RITAN	Regional Interpreting and Translation Agency Network

Inquiry into whether the Council and its wholly owned companies provide consistent interpretation and translation services

Summary of Departmental Evidence

DEPARTMENT	EVIDENCE TOPIC			
	<p>Q1) Groups most at risk of social exclusion and support provided</p>	<p>Q2) Process to make translation and interpretation service available and monitoring arrangements</p>	<p>Q3) Demand and costs of the interpretation and translation services from internal and external sources</p>	<p>Q4) Opportunities to establish partnerships with external organisations to increase the choice and support available</p>
<p>Chief Executive's department</p>	<p>Those whose first language is not English.</p> <p>Those who have a sensory impairment and require British Sign Language (BSL) interpreting or transcription into braille, large print, audiotape and disc.</p> <p>The Central Interpretation and Translation Unit (CITU) can provide a face to face interpreter, a telephone interpreter or a translator when requested to do so by Council</p>	<p>The CITU processes for providing a translator, face to face interpreter or telephone interpreter are used.</p> <p>Revenues and Benefits section are an example of good practice for translation and transcription in flagging up customers' requirements.</p> <p>Language Line is also available for telephone interpretation when a CITU interpreter is not available.</p>	<p>During 2004/05 CITU carried out 124 translations for Chief Executive's Department staff, 309 telephone interpreting jobs and 137 face to face interpreting jobs; a total of 570 jobs.</p> <p>For external clients, CITU carried out 1357 jobs.</p> <p>For all council staff and external clients, CITU carried out a total of 8342 jobs (across 40+ world languages), an increase of 4.64% from 2003/04.</p>	<p>CITU has a network of interpreters and translators that operate on a freelance basis – staff are employed to match demand. They advertise in the universities for interpreters and translators.</p> <p>The University of Leeds' Centre for Translation Studies delivers teaching, research and consultancy in</p>

	<p>officers.</p> <p>BSL interpreting is provided by the Leeds Sign Language Interpreting Service (LSLIS). LSILS can also provide lip speakers, speech-to-text transcription, notetakers and deaf-blind communicators. This service is part of the Leeds Society for Deaf and Blind People and is part-funded by the council's Social Services department.</p> <p>In public facing offices there are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Portable induction loops. - Posters and Welcome signs in different languages - Talking Signs system in the city centre one stop centre. -The Elections office also have a leaflet written in Makatron © explaining how to vote. 	<p>Bilingual staff are sometimes accredited and used within the department, in accordance with the CITU staff handbook.</p> <p><u>Monitoring</u></p> <p>CITU keep records of the number of interpretations and translations undertaken. CITU also ask clients to complete feedback forms, but currently few of these are returned as the form is in English. The feedback mechanism will be developed.</p> <p>Work is also quality assured through membership of the Regional Interpreting and Translation Agency Network (RITAN). If one member organisation assesses an interpreter or translator and awards him or her the RITAN certificate, the same interpreter or translator can also register with other member organisations, without needing to be re-assessed.</p>	<p>All departments make an annual contribution to the cost of running CITU, and are not charged for individual interpreting and translation jobs. Education Leeds and the ALMOs are instead charged for individual jobs at the same cost price as CITU pay interpreters and translators, although this does not reflect the actual cost of providing the service. This may be changed in the future.</p> <p>External clients are charged cost price plus 50%, to cover the administrative and staffing costs of providing the service.</p> <p>The costs of Language Line vary according to the time of day, between £2.25 and £2.50 per minute. In 2004/05, the Chief Executive's Department spent £1,186.40 on usage of Language Line.</p>	<p>interpreting and translation. The School of Languages at Leeds Metropolitan University does not deliver taught courses in interpreting or translation.</p> <p>Both universities provide interpreting and transcription services for students with sensory impairment, plus BSL in Leeds University.</p> <p>The Leeds University Equality Unit also contains the Transcription Centre - a partnership between the University of Leeds and the RNIB which transcribes materials into Braille, large print, tape or tactile diagrams, for visually impaired students, individuals and organisations throughout Yorkshire.</p>
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		<p>RITAN members share good practice, as well as having a shared pool of interpreters and translators and a shared booking mechanism.</p>	<p>In 2004/05 the Braille and Large Print Unit received 580 requests. Officers are recharged per individual job, and charges are 60p per sheet of Braille for the first copy and 10p per sheet for extra copies. For audio tapes, the charges are £5 per recorded hour and 50p per cassette.</p> <p>Until 2005/06, one of the funding streams for the Braille and Large Print Unit was a Workstep Grant of £20,000, paid directly to the Chief Executive's Department, to help offset the costs of making adjustments in the workplace. From the current financial year onwards, this funding is administered by LEODIS (Leeds Employment Opportunities: Disability).</p> <p>BSL interpreters booked through the LSLIS cost a minimum fee of £70 for 2 hours, plus travel costs. BSL interpreting is only free for council officers</p>	<p>It may be worthwhile investigating partnership opportunities with the RNIB / University of Leeds' Transcription Centre.</p> <p>CITU promotes its services throughout the city and has provided interpreting and translation services to the police, West Yorkshire Probation Service, the Immigration Appellate Authority, Jobcentreplus, the Benefits Agency, the Citizens' Advice Bureau, housing associations and voluntary and charitable organisations.</p> <p>There are around 40 commercial interpreting and translating agencies in Leeds, so there is much choice for external purchasers</p>
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			when this is for a Social Services casework appointment.	<p>of interpreting and translation. Many of the individuals in these organisations work freelance for CITU.</p> <p>Other provision within the city includes Leeds Language Link, the local NHS face-to-face interpreting service provider.</p> <p>Bradford Talking Magazine can provide audio transcription facilities to a high standard. LCC's Braille and Large Print Unit currently only have the technology to manually record onto cassette tapes.</p>
City Services department	Work being undertaken as part of departmental equality action plan to identify groups at risk of inequalities of service delivery.	Language identification cards are carried by operatives in some divisions and available in all council buildings managed by Facilities Management.	Very low. 15-20 occasions when I&T services have been used in the least year. Mostly this is translation of documents rather than face to face interpretation.	As engagement with socially excluded and disadvantaged groups' increases, demand for services may increase. Guidance on

	<p>Currently little face to face contact with customers and demand for I&T</p>	<p>All public documents carry the standard LCC statement offering the documents in other languages.</p> <p>Some legal notices, eg for environmental enforcement, are published in community languages in areas of high BME populations</p> <p>Most translation work carried out for the dept is managed through the environmental call centres and customer services.</p> <p><u>Monitoring</u></p> <p>Take up and use of I&T is not routinely monitored.</p>	<p>Translation is also used to issue work instructions in other languages – very rarely needed.</p>	<p>engaging and communication with these groups would be welcome.</p>
<p>Corporate Services department</p>	<p>The department has 2 equal access officers and promotes take up of its services from customers of all backgrounds and requirements, including: those whose first language is not English, people with disabilities and people with learning difficulties.</p> <p>The department offers</p>	<p>Publicity for I&T services takes place in various ways – consultation, surgeries, welfare forum, benefit take-up campaigns, publications, council tax DVD, internet, adverts, staff, new staff induction.</p> <p><u>Monitoring</u></p> <p>The department records all interpretation and</p>	<p>CITU has provided 115 translations (9.8% of the total), no telephone translations and 52 face to face translations.</p> <p>In addition, the department's own staff have provided the following services: 3673 translations, 184 interpretation (plus 4 via Language Line), and 36</p>	<p>The department works closely with local organisations representing disadvantaged groups.</p> <p>The department has recently set up an Equal Access Special Interest Group. All local authorities are invited to attend to</p>

	<p>customers the opportunity to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Make and receive telephone calls in their chosen language and by using minicom or typetalk - Speak to an interpreter in their own home if they are unable to attend any of the department's offices - Contact the service using email <p>Send and receive correspondence in their chosen language</p> <p>Receive correspondence in Braille, large print and on tape.</p>	<p>translation needs on a central database. The database allows staff to record a customers particular needs on either their benefit claim or council tax account. The customer need only make one request for either interpretation or translation. Once it has been recorded any member of staff accessing a customers records will be able to identify a customers needs and take the appropriate action.</p> <p>System produced reports are used (particularly in relation to benefit customers) which identify changes in demand for interpretation & translation services.</p> <p>Complaints are routinely monitored to highlight equality issues including those relating to the provision of interpretation and translation services.</p>	<p>minicom / typetalk communications.</p> <p>Costs are as follows: Braille and large print – 54p per sheet if sent electronically, 60p for hard copy requests</p> <p>Tape – 50p per tape, £5 per hour recording time</p> <p>Typetalk – cost of BT local call</p> <p>Language line - £2.25 to £2.50 per minute depending on time of call</p>	<p>discuss issues around equality of access to services, including interpretations and translations.</p> <p>The department invites local agencies to attend a twice-yearly Welfare Forum where they are given an opportunity to provide comment and feedback on the departments performance, including the provision of interpretation and translation services</p> <p>A new initiative being introduced, the Equality Task Group, is a mechanism where individuals representing the BME community and also the disabled, will be invited to meet the Equal Access Officers and discuss in detail any</p>
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				<p>comments and feedback they may have on the departments current approach to providing interpretation and translation services.</p> <p>It is recognised that there is always scope to improve our services further and thus discussions with organisations such as the universities may well provide valuable information / advice / understanding to assist us in the process. It is suggested that at least initially, a corporate approach to the local universities may be the best way forward.</p>
Development department	<p>Many of the department's plans and forms are produced in large print, Braille, on tape and in community languages.</p> <p>The Development Inquiry</p>	<p>Written and verbal translation as described in 1). In City Centre Management, customers provide their own interpreters from their local community. The</p>	<p>Demand is rare and inconsistent. Internal provision is not monitored formally across the department.</p> <p>There are costs for using</p>	<p>Currently no partnerships with external organisations.</p> <p>Graphics, communication and</p>

	<p>centre (DEC) can arrange an interpreter through the LCC Corporate Interpretation and Translation Unit (CITU).</p> <p>Multilingual staff also occasionally verbally translate, in Planning, DEC and business support.</p> <p>Leeds Translation Services (external agency) are also used.</p> <p>Requests for I&T are rare, except for at specific events in the city with high BME populations.</p>	<p>International Relations team provided an interpreter for a Chinese representation visit.</p> <p><u>Monitoring</u></p> <p>Monitoring arrangements are inconsistent. Monitoring has been completed in 3 sections out of 13, including the following areas: property advertising, exhibitions and information production.</p>	<p>LCC CITU translation helpline, Education Leeds Translations and Interpretations service, Leeds Interpretation and Translation service.</p> <p>The department contributed £390 to the CITU budget for 2005/06.</p>	<p>mapping have considered alternative options but existing suppliers meet their needs.</p>
<p>Learning and Leisure department</p> <p>Early Years</p>	<p>Children living in temporary accommodation have been identified as 'at risk' of social exclusion.</p> <p>Service users use a variety of languages and some staff are multilingual.</p>	<p>CITU provides the I&T service for Early Years. Service users can point to the language they use.</p> <p>CITU monitors service usage.</p>	<p>CITU has been used for the following language so far this municipal year (number of times):</p> <p>Czech (9), Arabic (4), Tigrinya (3), Lingala (2), Kurdish (2), Bengali (2), French (2), Serbo-Croat (1), Polish (1).</p>	<p>Partnerships have not been investigated as the CITU service provides value for money.</p>

<p>Jobs and Skills</p>	<p>Individual centres through the city access CITU services as necessary. Centres in Harehills and South Leeds have promotional materials in Urdu and Bengali. Central Leeds Learning centre offers an ESOL for Work programme aimed specifically at improving people's English skills. Refugees are referred by Job centre plus to attend this New Deal programme. Interpretation and translation support are used within this programme.</p>	<p>When Customers are invited for interview they are asked if Interpreters are required. Interpreters are then booked in advance to meet language requirements. Interpretation services are offered and made available throughout a customers attendance on site to offer support and to help review ongoing development.</p> <p>Staff use the Telephone Interpreting Service to deal with immediate communication needs on site.</p> <p>With regard to monitoring, staff complete Internal Feedback Sheets for CITU if they have any issues or concerns.</p> <p>There have been issues regarding the availability of Interpreters in certain languages, mainly due to the ongoing growth of the</p>	<p>This in house service is not paid for directly.</p> <p>At Central Leeds Learning Centre, four or five Interpreters are regularly used each week.</p> <p>In the past the Service found the translating and printing of promotional materials into several languages quite time consuming and costly and therefore these were kept to a minimum</p> <p>Only essential documents are translated and these are then copied as required. Many of our customers also have problems with reading their first language and therefore the use of Interpreters has been found to be more appropriate.</p> <p>External users are the Mentoring Service and Jobcentre Plus.</p>	<p>CITU meets current requirements.</p>
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<p>Library and Information Service</p>	<p>Groups at risk have been identified as the visually impaired, deaf people, refugees and asylum seekers, minority ethnic communities, and migrant workers from the EU.</p> <p>Staff are trained and given information through the staff information pack at each branch. Access to services in other languages is highlighted and promoted to service users. All major public learning packages are translated and available on the internet. Large print documents and audiotapes are available.</p>	<p>customer base.</p> <p>Services are made available as specified in 1).</p> <p>CITU is used.</p> <p>Regarding monitoring, this is done through new joining forms, partnership working, learning session evaluations, events feedback, frontline staff and logging inquiries.</p>	<p>Language needs are met through CITU. Language Line is used when CITU is closed, so all hours of open library service are covered for interpretation services.</p> <p>Key documents are translated by CITU into 30 languages spoken in Leeds.</p>	<p>None identified.</p>
<p>Social Services department</p>	<p>Service users and service providers must understand each other. Anyone who does not understand or is not understood is at risk of social exclusion. People from certain linguistic or ethnic minorities may use services more than others, and in numerical terms</p>	<p>CITU provides interpretation and translation facilities for Social Services.</p> <p><i>Monitoring</i></p> <p>CITU monitors the quality of the interpreting service. The department presents regular monitoring information from</p>	<p>CITU measures demand for the service. Social Services one of the biggest users of CITU services, with 154 translation, 1272 face to face translation and 64 telephone interpreting assignments between 1st April 2004 and 31st March 2005.</p>	<p>Social Services initially provided interpretation and translation through a partnership with the Leeds Mental Health Teaching NHS Trust and the Leeds Teaching Hospitals NHS Trust, a number</p>

	<p>communities with greater numbers of service users and potential service users may be at greater risk.</p> <p>Feedback from service users and the Community Forum has indicated that face to face contact is very important, particularly where language is a difficulty.</p>	<p>CITU to the Council's Race Equality Advisory Forum., and the Social Services Community forum for Race Equality and the Departmental Equality Board.</p> <p>The department is required to collect monitoring data for I&T as part of BVPIs.</p> <p>Social Services deliver services within the national standard framework for fair access to services, which includes communication.</p>	<p>BSL interpreting is provided by the Leeds Society for Deaf and Blind People through a service level agreement. The annual expenditure for this service is around £100,000. Social Services does not have to pay for any interpreting which is provided for ongoing casework with service users, but does have to pay for one-off interpreting assignments.</p> <p>It may be appropriate to review this service to see if it should be provided in-house.</p>	<p>of years ago. However, it was found that the department was better off working through CITU.</p>
<p>Neighbourhoods and Housing department</p>	<p>Groups at risk have been identified as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Black and minority ethnic communities Refugee and asylum seekers Young people (age 9 – 19) Older people People with disabilities Certain groups living in poverty <p>Support provided to these</p>	<p>Customers are provided the services described in 1) directly at source, or are given contact details for further advice and assistance. CITU co-ordinates the response in most cases.</p> <p>In Environmental Health, the nurses sometimes use the I&T services of the Primary Care Trust. The</p>	<p>CITU figures show that Neighbourhoods and Housing department is one of the main users of the service, with 686 cases of telephone interpreting, 168 translation requests and 2955 face to face requests.</p> <p>An example of internal costs is as follows in the South Area Management Team:</p>	<p>The Regeneration Division recognises that there is a need to explore use of local groups, so that money goes back into local economy/community. There is scope for voluntary and community organisations to deliver translation/</p>

	<p>groups includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Documents and publications are translated into other languages, Braille, on tape and large print - Icon posters - Translation of document on request - The assistance of an interpreter is proactively offered / provided - advice on how to obtain a translation into another language is provided - compliance with contractual and legal requirements is actively promoted - website links to specialist site are publicised - customer feedback service - contact information is obtained from customers - Focus groups - targeted events - awareness and assistance are provided to staff - general occupational qualified posts are include in relevant staffing structures. 	<p>Food team sometimes use leaflets in community languages from the Food Standards Authority.</p> <p>A company called Large Print and Braille in Headingley provided the Community Safety section with large print documents.</p> <p>ALMO staff and contractors respond to tenants needs using contacts in the local community where possible.</p> <p><u>Monitoring</u></p> <p>Monitoring is limited and inconsistent.</p> <p>Monitoring will be improved.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - £50 to transfer newsletter onto tape - £12 per language for post bombings community letter - one sentence (27 words), translated into 6 languages - £12 per language for Beeston Hill residents letter – two sentences, translated into 6 languages - £25 per language for A5 flyer, translated into 3 languages (advised min £25 per language) - 3 Translators for post-bombings event provided at short notice at no cost. <p>Information regarding the use and cost of external provision is limited. The East Leeds Neighbourhood Renewal Team uses a private company to translate the St James Partnership newsletter (a local newsletter for Harehills) – at a cost of £471 instead of £700 per language charged by CITU.</p>	<p>interpreting functions under local contract arrangements — and commissioning frameworks via area management teams or district Partnerships.</p> <p>The North East Area Management Team is aware of the potential to establish partnerships with Leeds University and Leeds Metropolitan University but currently there is no demand. The North West District Partnership (which includes both Universities) has identified a need to consider improved communication with BME and not yet reached groups through the translation of materials or other methods in a common way, which all partners can</p>
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				<p>contribute to and utilise.</p> <p>The Dispersed Team in the Accommodation Service uses the Centre for the deaf when a signer is used.</p>
<p>ALMOs</p> <p>Leeds Homes</p> <p>West</p>	<p>The ALMO uses various methods to identify groups at risk of social exclusion. The 8 most common languages in popular use have been identified and key information in these languages is produced and included on the website. Information is also available on audio tape, in large print and Braille, and face to face translation is available.</p>	<p>As described in 1) information is available to many groups. Staff have been trained in how to access translation services, including through the call centre. All the ALMO public offices are accessible for disabled people and have induction loops.</p> <p>With regard to monitoring, the ALMO will be monitoring ethnicity, gender, disability and age of customers who need translation and interpretation service. The ALMO also liaises with the Asylum Seekers /Refugee Team to find out about languages spoken.</p>	<p>CITU provides most I&T services for the ALMO. Language line is used for out of hours telephone interpretation.</p> <p>In 2004 -5 the translation service was accessed 22 times by LWH. Total cost: £444.36</p> <p>In 2004 – 5 the face to face translation and interpretation service was accessed 15 times by LWH. Total cost: £564.15</p> <p>Market testing of other service providers has been done recently, resulting in significant cost savings.</p>	<p>The ALMO has a relationship with a commercially provided web-based provider of translation services. The company proactively explores ways to make the service bespoke for the ALMOs needs to reduce costs, e.g. offering a repeat word discount and waiving project management fees.</p> <p>The ALMO would like to explore opportunities for partnerships further.</p>

<p>Leeds North East Homes</p>	<p>The group most at risk are those household which have left National Asylum Support Service properties and are rehoused within the community.</p> <p>Established communities tend to have existing support networks.</p> <p>Households from some backgrounds may not understand the culture / procedure for applying for accommodation.</p> <p>Customers are required to contact the ALMO to request a service before I&T are provided. Officers are being encouraged to be proactive and increase take up of services.</p>	<p>Budget holders in the LWH 4 public offices monitor volumes of requests.</p> <p>CITU procedures are followed and work well in practice.</p> <p>The ALMO monitors the take up of translation facilities quarterly as part of the organisation's commitment to equality of access to services.</p>	<p>Demand for CITU services is relatively low. relatives, friends and community members are often used to translate or interpret.</p> <p>Leeds North East homes are increasingly utilising the translation service on existing documentation to ensure that minority communities are aware and therefore able to access services.</p>	<p>Leeds North East homes have established a number of informal partnerships within the community to assist with providing interpreting services (for example: from the Harehills Law Centre).</p>
<p>Education Leeds</p>	<p>Approximately 10,000 pupils have English as an</p>	<p>The Education Leeds in house team responds to</p>	<p>The total cost of the Education Leeds</p>	<p>Through the implementation of the</p>

	<p>additional language.</p> <p>Education Leeds has an in-house team of four professional translators / interpreters (3 fulltime equivalent posts).</p> <p>They specialise in Urdu, Bengali (and Syleti dialect), Punjabi and Chinese (Cantonese and Mandarin). The main services offered are the translation of documents, face to face interpretation and the preparation of audio recordings. There is also a budget (£13,430) used to access a pool of freelance translators and interpreters who offer services in a wider range of community languages.</p> <p>Education Leeds is carrying out a fundamental service improvement review (FSIR) of the translation and interpretation service. Recommendations were approved by Education Leeds Board on 14/09/05.</p>	<p>requests for work from schools and Educations Leeds. Some schools make alternative arrangements, including informal ones such as the use of parents and community members to provide translation and interpretation work. The ability to meet demand for services in community languages that the team does not specialise in is limited by the budget for accessing freelance services.</p> <p>Schools with significant proportions of pupils who have English as an additional language report increasing demand for work in the newer community languages that cannot be met by Education Leeds.</p> <p>There is limited promotion and development of the service. A poster and brochure were produced in 2003/04. Higher profile promotional and development work targeted at key schools may lead to</p>	<p>translation and interpretation service including all overheads using 2005/06 figures is £114,897. Direct staffing costs account for approximately £75,000; fees for translation and interpretation work for £14,000 and indirect costs for £25,000. The service does not receive any income.</p> <p>Usage of the service for the full financial year 2004-05 amounted to 456 jobs. However, schools procure an unknown amount of work from other providers, including informal community networks. Consequently, it is unlikely that real need or demand is reflected in the current usage figures. Representatives of the Education Leeds and Leeds City Council translation and interpretation services caution against the use of informal providers.</p>	<p>Fundamental service improvement review of its translation and interpretation service Education Leeds is seeking to increase the choice and support available by negotiating with Leeds City Council to service the administration, management, promotion and development of translation and interpretation needs of schools and Education Leeds with effect from April 2006.</p> <p>The benchmarking carried out during the FSIR suggests that Leeds City Council can offer significant improvements to the range, quality, efficiency and effectiveness of translation and interpretation services. Subject to</p>
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	<p>It concludes that subject to the outcomes of this Inquiry, improvements to the range, quality, efficiency and effectiveness of services can be gained by negotiating with Leeds City Council (LCC) to administer, manage, promote and develop translation and interpretation services for schools and Education Leeds with effect from April 2006.</p> <p>The report concluded that this move is the best option. However, this means that the Education Leeds in house staff Leeds will be subject to a redeployment process with the potential for them to be made redundant. More work is needed on the financial arrangements.</p> <p>Communication support workers working in specialist educational settings provide translation</p>	<p>significant increases in customer demand. As noted some schools currently make alternative arrangements for translation and interpretation work.</p> <p>Monitoring of need and demand and quality assurance are also limited.</p> <p>The full detail of need and demand are largely unknowns. It is expected that improvements to the promotion and development of the service will increase demand. It is assumed that current usage is not the same as demand or need.</p> <p>It is anticipated that these areas will be addressed as part of the negotiations with LCC. Subject to the completion of the negotiations and the outcomes of this Inquiry, it is envisaged that significant improvements to the range and quality of services can be achieved. It is not anticipated that these improvements will lead to</p>	<p>Education Leeds standard rates paid to freelance translators and interpreters are £15.00 per hour for interpretation work plus travelling time and expenses, and £12 per 100 words for translation. However, the cost of the service is as stated in the first paragraph.</p> <p>Consequently, using current budget figures, each of the 456 jobs carried out in 2004-05 has a total cost of £114,897 divided by 456 = £251.96. It is anticipated that one of the advantages of switching provision of the service to LCC will be significant reductions in cost and/or the ability to fund more work with the same budget. However, these efficiencies revolve to a significant extent around LCC's use of block recharges to clients rather than issuing individual invoices for individual pieces of work. The financial regulations governing the relationship</p>	<p>negotiations with LCC and the outcomes of this Inquiry, switching the service to the Council is currently the preferred option for increasing the choice and support available.</p> <p>(Some of the specialist support used to support the teaching of visually and hearing impaired pupils and young people is currently procured from the Leeds Society for Deaf and Blind People).</p>
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	<p>and interpretation services for visually and hearing impaired pupils and young people. These services which include the procurement of some specialist services from the Leeds Society for Deaf and Blind People are not included in the FSIR.</p>	<p>increased costs or budgetary problems because of the economies of scale available from being part of the LCC service and because of the method of service delivery used by LCC.</p>	<p>between LCC, Education Leeds and schools are complex. Negotiations between Education Leeds and LCC will need to strike a balance between complying with these regulations, making appropriate distinctions between different types of work done for schools and Education Leeds, and arriving at appropriate costing and charging mechanisms that avoids increases in administrative costs.</p>	
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Note of an Informal Meeting of Members of Scrutiny Board (Transforming Services) and Representatives of the Leeds Society for Deaf and Blind People held on 8th November 2005 at Centenary House, North Street

Present:

Councillor Pauleen Grahame - Chair Scrutiny Board (Transforming Services)
Councillor Judith Elliott - Member of Scrutiny Board (Transforming Services)
Mr Martin Dodgson - Director, Leeds Society for Deaf and Blind People
Mr Steven Conlon - Manager, Interpreting Service, Leeds Society for Deaf and Blind People
Mr Jonathan Bentley - Director (Designate), Leeds Society for Deaf and Blind People
Mr Evan Wickremaratne - Community Liaison Officer, Leeds Society for Deaf and Blind People
Ms Susan Murray - Head of Face to Face Contact, Customer Services, Leeds City Council
Mr Richard Mills - Scrutiny Support, Leeds City Council

1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Martin Dodgson welcomed everyone to the meeting and thanked Members of the Scrutiny Board (Transforming Services) for attending this informal meeting to discuss the work of the Leeds Society for Deaf and Blind People and the inquiry into whether the Council and its wholly owned companies provide consistent interpretation and translation facilities.

2.0 THE LEEDS SOCIETY FOR DEAF AND BLIND PEOPLE

2.1 Members of Scrutiny Board (Transforming Services) were informed that the Leeds Sign Language Interpreting Services has been in Centenary House (Deaf Centre) for 10 years and its location was chosen by its clients. It commenced with 2 Interpreters and 1 part time Administrator and now employs 8 Interpreters, 2 Communication Support Workers and 2 Administrative Staff.

2.2 The Society currently receives a grant from the Social Services Department and Centenary House (Deaf Centre) is widely recognised as a centre for excellence and one stop centre for services for hearing impaired people. The Society works very much in partnership with the Council. The grant has remained the same for 10 years the only increases being to allow for inflation.

2.3 It was stated that it is essential that the Society provides face to face support for its clients and remains in its present building. It was also pointed out that the demand for interpreters far exceeds supply but the Interpreting Service is constantly pro-active in reducing waiting times.

2.4 The Director of the Society stated that any proposals to change the location of the Society or the way it delivered its services would be against the wishes of its clients.

3.0 CLARIFICATION OF THE BOARD'S INQUIRY AND REPORT OF THE CHIEF CUSTOMER SERVICES OFFICER

3.1 At this point Sue Murray stated that there was clearly a misunderstanding by the

Society in respect to the report of the Chief Customer Services Officer and the inquiry being undertaken by the Scrutiny Board. There was no intention to change the location or way in which the Society currently operates.

- 3.2 It was reported that the Scrutiny Board Inquiry is looking at the current usage of the Central Interpreting and Translation Unit (CITU), guidance on policy on the use of CITU across Council departments and the approach adopted in one stop centres and in the corporate centre to providing interpretation on request. A number of options have been submitted to the Scrutiny Board but any changes would be internal within the Council. It is being suggested in the report of the Chief Customers Services Officer for example that departments in future could be asked to make all requests for interpreters and translators through the Central Interpreting and Translation Unit. As the Central Interpreting and Translation Unit do not provide British Sign Language (BSL) interpreting they would continue to make bookings through the Leeds Society for the Deaf and Blind People on behalf of all Council departments.
- 3.3 Martin Dodson responded by stating that he was pleased to hear that there was no proposal to change the current arrangements and regretted the misunderstanding.
- 3.4 Sue Murray stated that there had been issues about using the services of the Society when Council staff were being advised that they would have to wait for up to 2 weeks for an interpreter and be charged for this service. It was reported that the Council had therefore trained a number of staff to level 1 in British Sign Language. Whilst this effort had been welcomed the translators were too slow for clients. As a consequence, Council staff were now reluctant to call the Society and often chose to try and deal with deaf client enquiries themselves in order to avoid delays in dealing with what are often very urgent issues.
- 3.4 Steve Conlon responded that waiting times had now been very much reduced from 2 Weeks and that there were often days when an interpreter could be sent within 10 minutes of a request being made. This was because they had more interpreters available. Sue Murray stated this was excellent news and she would report this back to the centre. The Society confirmed that a BSL interpreter should now be available within a maximum of 4 working days due to the increase number of interpreters they now employ.
- 3.5 In respect to the grant referred to in paragraph 2.2 Sue Murray asked why the Council was being charged for interpreters when a substantial grant was being paid by the Council? It was clarified that the Society has a Service Level Agreement with the Social Services department. The Society under this agreement is required to provide a free service when requested to do so by the Social Services department but all other departments are required to pay for this service. This and other income has been used entirely to develop the Interpreting Service for Deaf People, the Guide Communication for Deafblind People and Lip Speakers and Pallenotypists for Hard of Hearing People: No Deaf, Deafblind or Hard of Hearing Person is ever charged for the service.

4.0 OTHER ISSUES

- 4.1 Martin Dodgson reported that the Leeds Society would be pleased to take part in any Pilot the Council would like to run that would link the Society's interpreters to the Council's One Stop Shops. Reference was made to Newcastle Council's pilot due to end in December 2005 and the pilot in Leicester. Steve Conlon stated that the quality of the pictures had improved considerably using broadband technology which stops the

jerkiness of the picture thus making it easier for translators and deaf clients to use. The cost of this technology was referred to and the difficulties of funding. Steve Conlon said the Society was able to fund as part of the proposed pilot scheme. Sue Murray agreed to report back on the offer made by the Society.

4.2 Members visited the newly created cyber café on the top floor of Centenary House for use by the Society's clients.

5.0 CLOSING REMARKS

5.1 Councillor Grahame thanked the Society for inviting all Members of the Scrutiny Board to attend this informal meeting and for being given the opportunity to explain the purpose of the Board's inquiry and clarify the misunderstanding which had arisen.

Inquiry into whether the Council and its wholly-owned companies provide consistent interpretation and translation facilities.

A statement to the Scrutiny Board (Transforming Services) by Education Leeds Translation and Interpretation Service.

This is a statement made by the members of the Education Leeds Translation and Interpretation (T&I) Services in response to the separate report from Education Leeds. After further discussion with senior managers in Education Leeds, it was agreed that we submit our own statement to the Board.

We feel that it is crucial for the Scrutiny Board to hear our views. It is important to stress that our comments are not made out of pure self-interest. We feel strongly about the quality of the service that our schools, families and children should receive.

We know that there is always room for improvement but feel, with all our expertise, experience, contacts and understanding built up over a combined total of 68 years in the business, that we can be part of the solution.

We recognise that a key reason for changes proposed in the Education Leeds report is the cost of the service. But the report also suggests that the service could be much better provided by using the City Council's Central Interpreting and Translation Unit (CITU). We do not always believe this to be the case and we ask the Scrutiny Board to bear in mind the following points:

- That while there is now demand for a wide range of 'new' languages, the actual size of these communities is still quite small by comparison. In the case of new languages, demand constantly fluctuates because of the unsettled nature of the communities and peoples' mobility. But the demand for the main established communities (Bengali, Urdu, Panjabi and Chinese) is still high in comparison.
- The Education Leeds report concludes that negotiating with LCC CITU to deliver and promote services for schools and Education Leeds will lead to improvements in the range, quality and effectiveness.

While this solution is probably the most cost-effective, we would question whether real improvements in the range, quality and effectiveness would be achieved. Our reasons are as follows:

- a) **Range** - Our team operates a freelance service, in the same way as LCC CITU, to meet demand for other, newer community languages. However, CITU face exactly the same difficulties as we do in being able to find good quality, reliable and professional translators/interpreters in some of the newer community languages. This can be the same for even some of the more established languages like Bengali, Cantonese or Panjabi. For certain languages (eg. Kurdish, Somali, Xhosiha, Zulu, Kirundi, Bandaley), the community is very small in number, so both Education Leeds and LCC CITU can struggle to find translators and often use the same people. We work in partnership with the CITU to find translators in the rarer languages.
- b) **Quality** - By having four in-house, professionally qualified translators/interpreters, Education Leeds' service can guarantee a quality-assured service in at least the

four mainstream community languages. Any translation and interpretation service which relies on freelance staff, particularly in the newer minority languages which has fewer trained people, will always have difficulty in guaranteeing quality. In fact, we have been asked to check the quality of some of the LCC freelance work. Also, we provide an expert service which has an understanding of educational matters and terminology which freelance staff do not have. We can also more readily check back with the clients to clarify any uncertainties and suggest alternatives. Where this has happened, clients have been grateful for the extra help as it has made their information more comprehensible. A freelance service on the other hand, would only do the minimum of what it was asked to do.

- c) **Effectiveness** - The Education Leeds report notes that some schools currently make alternative arrangements to meet their needs rather than use the Education Leeds T&I service.

This is not in the main because we are ineffective and are failing to meet demand. Often schools need someone to be immediately available to help them translate for parents. Neither our service nor any other translation and interpretation service, including LCC CITU, would be able to meet this immediate demand. Schools therefore turn to other people who may be on hand, other parents or staff. But these people are not always best qualified to do this.

We can provide access – arranged through LCC CITU – to ‘Language Line’ which is a telephone service that schools can access through the team. This service can be costly, which means that it is most appropriate for emergency uses.

Due to limits being set on our freelance budget from December 2004 to April 2005, we did not actively promote our service to schools as we would have liked. We have continued to promote our service through word of mouth and by visiting the schools that are most in need.

It must be remembered that while the LCC CITU services different council departments who deal directly with people, Education Leeds on the other hand has fewer direct contacts with the public. Much of the demand is expressed through schools who can choose whether or not to use the Education Leeds T&I services.

Whilst we may not be able to compete with the economies of scale that the LCC CITU offer, in the interests of providing an effective service across the city, we wanted to bring to the attention of the Scrutiny Board the important issues they need to bear in mind. (These issues have been discussed separately and attached to this statement as **A and B.**)

Our Team currently provides a dedicated, high-quality, professional service with many years of experience which could form the core of a highly effective central in-house service fulfilling the needs of many departments.

At the end, on behalf of our communities, we should like to request the Scrutiny Board to consider very seriously the tremendous impact that a decision to outsource the translation and interpretation service will have on the mainstream minority communities and on the image of the City Council and whether it is worth losing a skilled, professional specialist service which will be very difficult to replace.

Mahbub Choudhury
Bengali translator & interpreter

Surinder Singh Bansal
Panjabi translator & interpreter

Jawaid Ahmed
Urdu translator & interpreter

Chee Loong
Chinese Translator & interpreter

ADVANTAGES OF HAVING A TEAM OF IN-HOUSE TRANSLATORS/INTERPRETERS

1. **Reliability** - Clients will be able to rely more on in-house translators / interpreters. In-house staff, as long as they are in the office, must not refuse to undertake any given task. They are obliged to carry out their duty. Freelance workers on the other hand may give priority to some other personal engagement and simply refuse to do the job. If a client is unhappy about the quality of a job done by in-house staff, they can always directly question or challenge him/her but, they can not do so if the job is done by a freelance worker.
2. **Availability** - In-house staff may be approached during office hours five days a week, unless they are on leave. Freelance workers, however, are not always available when clients need their service.
3. **Dedication and commitment** - In-house staff develop a true sense of dedication and professional commitment to their job. They take pride in their work. Freelance workers are mostly unknown and unseen persons; consequently there is little chance of development of such pride stemming from professional commitment.
4. **Knowledge** - In-house staff develop a thorough understanding of various relevant issues, jargon and terminology which freelance workers do not have.
5. **Access to information** - In-house staff can readily refer back to original authors and experienced colleagues working in other areas to clarify any ambiguities and uncertainties. They may also discuss among themselves to clarify any thing which may not be readily intelligible. A freelance service does not have access to any such facilities and would rely only on the understanding of the individual.
6. **Qualification and experience** - In-house staff have the opportunity to gain relevant training, appropriate professional qualifications and valuable experience. There is only a very small pool of freelance workers with the right training and qualifications in the current in-house languages, and not one of them has the same amount of valuable experience.
7. **Motivation** - In-house staff are motivated by the notion of creating a good image about the organisation and about themselves and the quality of their work. They feel that they represent the organisation. Free lance workers have no such commitments. They represent only themselves and their motivation is purely financial.
8. **I T support** - In-house staff have readily available I.T support. If any of their I.T equipment develops a fault, it can be sorted out quickly and efficiently but in case of freelance workers, any such fault might take weeks to repair and consequently, work can not be delivered on time.
9. **Consistency** - In the case of in-house staff, the same person always performs the task - hence there is consistency in the work produced. In case of freelance workers, different persons are used on different occasions, so there is no consistency in the work done by a freelance service.
10. **Quality of work** – owing to the points mentioned in paragraphs 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8 and 9, quality of work done by an in-house team can be guaranteed. On the other hand, because of the lack of most of the aforementioned conditions, quality of translation/interpretation work, when done by a freelance team, can not be assured.

11. **Trust** - In-house staff are trusted links with and for schools/Education Leeds/council departments/members of the main minority ethnic communities/parents/carers/children. A freelance service can not create such links.
12. **Personal touch** - In case of an in-house service, clients see the same person on each occasion. In this way, in-house staff can offer a personal service to the customers/parents/children/members of the BME communities and clients feel comfortable and reassured by the presence of a familiar face.
13. **Flexibility** - In-house staff are flexible resource and support other services within a bigger team. Freelance worker can not be asked to provide extra help and support.
14. **Connection to other services** - In-house staff can provide connection to other services, as they perform their specific role as an integral part of the whole organisation. The same can not be expected from a freelance service.

B

JUSTIFICATION OF AN IN-HOUSE TEAM OF TRANSLATORS / INTERPRETERS SPECIALISING ONLY IN PARTICULAR LANGUAGES

Admitting the fact that there are many benefits of having a team of in-house translators/interpreters, one might quite reasonably raise a question as to the justification of keeping a team who specialise only in certain languages. Instead of having Bengali, Chinese, Panjabi and Urdu translators and interpreters, why does Leeds City Council not employ translators and interpreters in some other 'new' languages?

Ideally we should have in-house translators/interpreters in all the minority community languages spoken in Leeds, but unfortunately, this is not practical. However, deleting the existing post is not a fair solution for the following reasons:

1. These four posts (Bengali, Chinese, Panjabi and Urdu) were created because these were the main community languages. The fact still remains - these are still the main community languages. Whilst there is now demand for a wide range of 'new' languages, the actual size of these communities is quite small by comparison. The aforementioned four languages are by far the biggest groups of community languages.
2. Demand for these main established community languages is steady, as these communities are permanently settled and established in Leeds. In the case of 'new' languages, demand constantly fluctuates owing to the unsettled nature of these communities, failed cases of applications for asylum and peoples' mobility.
3. In the main established languages, for historic reasons, a considerable number of people with good educational / professional qualification are not available. Whereas in the case of many of the languages that we provide through freelance workers, there are many people with high educational qualifications. For example, in Farsi, we have one freelance translator who has two PhD degrees and is retired from the foreign service of his own country. Another one was a university lecturer in Iran and has written text books which are studied in secondary schools in Iran. Similarly, in Arabic, we have one freelance worker who has an MA in Translation Studies from the University of Leeds. Another retired person, registered with us as Arabic freelance translator, had worked for many years with the UNO (United Nations Organization). Many such examples can be cited.

4. The main established linguistic minority communities (Urdu, Panjabi, Bengali and Chinese languages speakers) are, on the other hand, very vulnerable. Large sections of these communities have very little education and rely on translators and interpreters to provide access to important information, whereas in the case of speakers of many 'new' languages, the general members of the community are highly literate at least in their own language and many of them also speak reasonably good English.
5. Although some very new community language speakers are desperately in need of translation and interpretation service, these communities are very small and many of them have only recently arrived in the UK, so it is not possible to find professional, qualified translators/interpreters in these languages who can be appointed as in-house staff.

Owing to the non-availability of qualified and experienced translators/interpreters in these 'new' languages, even if an in-house team of translators/interpreters are appointed in these languages, the quality of work done by them may not be any better than the work done by freelance translators/interpreters.