Use of Interpreters

01 Why use interpreters?

If a family's first language is not English, eve if they are fluent an interpreter should be offered.

All agencies need to ensure that they are able to communicate fully with parents and children when they have concerns about abuse and neglect. This ensures that family members and professionals fully understand the discussion and information being shared.

02 Who might need an interpreter?

The use of accredited interpreters, signers or others with special communication skills must be considered whenever undertaking enquiries involving children and/or family:

- For whom English is not the first language (even if reasonably fluent in English, the option of an interpreter must be available when dealing with sensitive issues);
- With a hearing or visual impairment;
- Whose disability impairs speech;
- With learning difficulties;
- With a specific language or communication disorder;
- With severe emotional and behavioural difficulties;
- Whose primary form of communication is not speech.

03 Always remember

Family, friends or involved professionals should NOT be used as interpreters within the interviews although can be used to arrange appointments and establish communication needs.

Children should never be used as interpreters.

04 Key considerations

It is vital to establish dialect as it might have significant outcomes for the translation.

Cultural issues might have a bearing on the translation or disclosure. When planning using an interpreter consideration should always be given to gender and religious and cultural beliefs.

Invitations to Child Protection Conferences should be translated into a language/medium that the family understands

05 Interviewing Children

The needs of a child who is thought to have communication difficulties should be considered at an early point in the planning.

Professionals should be aware that interviewing children is possible when a child communicates by other means than speech

Every effort should be made to enable a child to tell his/her story directly

Professionals should remember to speak more slowly when using an interpreter to ensure that information is translated accurately

Professionals should be aware that some children will be fluent in English but will use the family language to describe body parts.

06 How to work with an interpreter

Interpreters used for interviewing children should be DBS checked, subject to references and a confidentiality agreement.

Professionals should explain to the interpreter:

- Nature of the investigation
- Aims and plan for the interview
- The need to avoid acting as a representative of the family
- The need to translate everything that is said unless directed otherwise
- The need to translate exact words such as abuse

07 What next?

- Identify what your agency's translation policy is
- Cascade the information in this brefing to your teams.
- Consider your current use of interpreters and whether this can be improved.

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