

For Approval

Review of Future Arrangements for Language Interpreting and Translation Services for Health and Social Care in Northern Ireland

Analysis of Responses to the Consultation Document and Equality Screening Document

In January 2012 the Health and Social Care Board initiated a review of the provision of language interpreting and written translation services for health and social care in Northern Ireland. The Review concluded in June 2013 and at the Board meeting on 8 August 2013 the recommendation that the Review's findings should be subject to a period of public consultation was approved. The HSCB announced the consultation on 16 September 2013 for a period of 13 weeks until 13 December 2013.

Summary of the Response to the Consultation.

In total 44 submissions were received in response to the consultation document, from a range of sources including HSC Trusts, individual Trust staff, general practitioners and practice staff, interpreters and voluntary organisations. Respondents were asked to consider the nine recommendations of the Review and to indicate agreement or disagreement with each, with the option to provide additional comment.

The majority of those who responded were in broad agreement with the Review recommendations. In addition to highlighting a number of specific issues several general overarching points were common to many responses:

- The Regional Interpreting Service currently provided by Belfast Trust is regarded as a high quality service;
- Equality of access, quality of service and appropriateness of provision are fundamental considerations for language interpreting and written translation services;

- There is a need to improve awareness of the language interpreting service;
- Service users should be actively involved in the proposed process to reshape the service;
- Service users, including parents of children, should have access to effective methods of providing feedback on the quality and availability of interpreting services, including access to a complaints process;
- It is important to ensure that implementation of any of the Review recommendations does not cause disadvantage to any group of service users or staff;
- To ensure value for money appropriate procurement procedures should be employed in reshaping the services and economies of scale should be sought by considering partnership arrangements with other statutory organisations;
- The impact of Transforming your Care should be acknowledged in relation to future needs as home based care, day procedures and ambulatory care will increase;
- There is a need to ensure improved access to English language classes for minority ethnic individuals.

The specific issues raised by consultees were:

Proposal to reprofile face to face and telephone interpreting.

There was a generally held view among respondents that there is a need to achieve a more appropriate balance of face to face and telephone interpreting but many regarded the shift of telephone interpreting from 7% to potentially around 50% of total provision as too ambitious. The view expressed by the majority of those who highlighted this recommendation as a key issue was that clear and unambiguous guidance is needed to ensure appropriate use of the various forms of interpreting.

The development of guidance to ensure the appropriate use of written translation services.

Respondents agreed with this recommendation and several advised that guidance should follow the BSO Accessible Formats Policy and the Plain English Campaign guidelines.

Proposed delivery of interpreting and translation services as a regional shared service provided by the Business Services Organisation.

The majority of consultees supported this proposal and stressed that the chosen model of provision should promote equality of access and consistent service quality across the region.

Proposal that interpreters should be required to pay an annual registration fee.

There was support for this proposal with the caveat that the fee system adopted should be fair and appropriate to the wide range of employment and income levels available to interpreters within the service.

The use of technology to ensure efficient deployment of interpreters.

The exploration of a wider range of options in addition to telephone interpreting was encouraged by consultees, including Skype, Face Time and video conferencing, subject to appropriateness, data security and equipment cost.

The establishment of a regional advisory group to oversee the delivery of interpreting and translation services.

Respondents all agreed with this recommendation and stressed the need to ensure service user representation and the development of effective links with other relevant networks such as the Patient Client Council, the Public Health Agency Minority Ethnic Forum and local Trust minority ethnic groups.

Equality Screening

On the basis of the consultation responses and taking account of the mitigation measures detailed in the published Equality, Good Relations and Human Rights Screening Template, there is nothing to suggest that there would be a major impact for any of the Section 75 groups as a result of implementing the Review recommendations.

Recommendation

Members are asked to consider the content of this analysis of consultation responses and to approve for implementation in full the recommendations of the Review of Future Arrangements for Language Interpreting and Translation Services for Health and Social Care in Northern Ireland.

Dean Sullivan
Director of Commissioning