

## **Housing Services and Futures at Knightstone Team Briefing**

### **Interpreting, translation and other formats policies**

**Priority: General**

**Status: Immediate**

**Date: 31 July 2009**

**Key changes: Policy published to bring together arrangements in place for interpreting, translation and producing documents in other formats for our customers.**

**Key actions: Understand our approach to alternative formats.  
Ensure you know how to access local interpreting and translation services.  
Ensure you know how to use Language Line.**

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**Reference: gn 12\09**

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# Interpreting, translation and other formats

## 1. Introduction

A report detailing a revision of our translation and interpretation policy went to Senior Management Team in December 2008. The policy was reviewed in line with the objective in the Equality and Diversity Service Improvement Plan to make sure information is available in a range of formats and languages to meet customers' needs.

## 2. The Interpreting and translation policy

A copy of the approved policy is included with this briefing. In summary:

**The purpose of the policy** is to reaffirm our intention to provide services that can be accessed by all those who:

- do not have English as their first language;
- have difficulty reading English;
- are deaf or have hearing loss;
- who are blind or partially sighted.

**Interpreting arrangements** are best used:

- when you need to discuss issues that are complex; or
- those of a sensitive or high risk nature;
- when sign language is needed;
  
- in an emergency situation;
- when a simple issue can be a discussed using the telephone; or
- when a customer is contacted by 'phone at their home.

**Translation** is for converting a written report, leaflet or other document into another language.

We only print translated documents in advance when we know there will be an immediate demand. This is because costs are high for small volumes.

## **Tenancy Agreements are not translated.**

This is because:

our tenancy agreements are a United Kingdom legal document;  
legal documents do not translate well into other languages; and  
court hearings are in English.

An interpreter should be used for sign up meetings, court hearings and other relevant occasions to orally translate and discuss tenancy conditions and related matters.

**Clear and Large print** documents are produced for people with poor reading sight. The Royal National Institute for the Blind People (RNIB) recommend that a minimum point size of 12 or 14 with 1.5\2 line spacing is used for the clear print style and sizes 16 to 24 are used for large print documents.

**Braille, tape or CDs** in English or other languages can be created. Please see section 4 below about accessing translation, interpreting services and other information available.

**Hearing loops and posters** promoting interpreting and translations services are in our reception areas, interview and meeting rooms. Contact Facilities Management on 01934 52 4314 or 01934 52 4303 if you need more information on hearing loops or how to use them.

### **3. Who do we use for telephone interpreting?**

We use a company called Language Line who provides us with a telephone interpreting service. Language Line interprets 170 languages 24 hours a day.

Staff working in reception areas and who visit customers should use a language card ID, which can be used for limited English speakers to point at and show which language they need an interpreter for.

Language Line's website ([www.languageline.co.uk](http://www.languageline.co.uk)) has a full list of the languages they are able to translate under the customer service tab and the support tools option.

Language Line posters showing twenty of the most frequently spoken languages should be on display in reception areas and interview rooms. New copies of this poster can be requested from the PR, Marketing and Communications Team on 01934 52 4316.

Language Line's number is a free number from landline telephones: **0800 028 0073**. The operator will ask for our Client ID number and the language required. Their personnel are trained in language identification if you do not know the customer's preferred language.

Details of how to use Language Line can be found on StaffNet/PR, Marketing and Communication/Translation service.

#### **4. What other information do we have for interpreting and translating?**

There is a variety of resources for us and our customers that will help with interpreting and translations services.

**Alternative format request** is shown on the reverse of our letterhead and other corporate documents and leaflets (see universal symbols and statement below).



“We want our services to meet your needs. If you want any help or would like this statement on audio cassette, CD, in large print or in another language please contact your local office.”

This written message is also given on our letterhead in Somali, Polish, Portuguese, Chinese, Arabic and Gujarati. Other than English, these languages are the most frequently used by our customers.

**Audio cassette tapes and CDs** are sent to residents who request KnightLife in a non-written format. We are producing a new Resident's Handbook towards the end of 2009 which will also be available on CD.

**Braille** can be used for translating purposes. Depending on the length of the document and the service used, please allow at least three weeks or more to produce and check a document transcribed into Braille. Producing columns of figures or text in Braille is difficult but not impossible. The RNIB suggest reformatting columns into a paragraph style layout as the first option. We produce a few copies of KnightLife in Braille for those who have requested this as their preferred format.

Contact our PR, Marketing and Communications Team for more information or for help arranging translations. Unless documents are corporate ones, you will need to know your expense code as the cost for this service will be charged back to you.

**Local authorities' translation and interpreting services** are shown in a document located from either:

StaffNet\Manuals\Housing Services Manual\Housing Services Manual July 2009\General Knightstone policies\Equality and Diversity\Interpretation, translation and other formats\What's our policy and access to information

or

StaffNet\Working here\Policies and Procedures, Culture and Values\Equality and Diversity\Best Practice\Translation Services.

This document is currently being checked and will be updated by the end of July 2009. For more information please contact Jackie Murch, Futures Policy and Information Officer.

**Her Majesty's Court Service website ([www.hmcourts-service.gov.uk](http://www.hmcourts-service.gov.uk))** has information about using interpreters and the availability of large print and Braille documents, loop systems and other aids.

**T:\Language Skills\Language Register** holds a list of our staff that have language and signing skills and who are willing to help customers in our receptions with translating. The register is updated quarterly by Sonja Hammond.

**Writing style guidelines** has general hints and tips on layout and use of grammar. This can be found on StaffNet\PR Marketing and Communication\Corporate Communication\Writing Style guidelines.

**Our websites** have links to Babelfish translation services. They also contain links to Browsealoud which reads web pages to users who have speakers on their PCs.

The Residents Panel and other residents who told us that they would be interested in helping us to develop our policies were contacted to review this policy in draft.

We received some extensive replies, which included comments on how our website could be improved for those who have literacy and English reading problems. These comments were used by the Resident Communications Group working with PR, Marketing and Communications on re-designing the Knightstone website.

## **5. Review of the Interpreting, translation and other formats policy**

We will have more information on customers' needs for interpreting and translation services when the customer profiling project is completed. This policy will then be reviewed.

## **6. Further information**

Please direct any queries relating to the briefing to:

Carol Baker, Housing Services Policy Manager: 01934 52 4398

Susan Sellars, Policy and Information Officer T: 01934 52 4453

Jane Edmonds, Assistant Director (Supported Housing): 01934 52 4411

To arrange translation of documents please contact:

Lucy Dicks, PR, Marketing and Communications Manager: 01934 52 4316

Nicol Binns, PR, Marketing and Communications Coordinator: 01934 52 4317



## **Policy          Interpreting, translation and other formats**

Version number:        1  
Issue (date):         16 December 2009  
Authorised by:        Senior Management Team

### **1          Purpose and scope of policy**

#### 1.1      Purpose

Knightstone Housing Association (Knightstone) is committed to securing excellent services for customers. A central element of this relates to providing services that can be accessed by all those customers, including those that do not have English as their first language, those who may have difficulty reading English and people who are deaf, blind or who are partially sighted.

#### 1.2      Scope

This policy covers all communication by Knightstone and other companies within the Arcadia Housing Group.

### **2          Service standards and review**

#### 2.1      Service standards

These are set out within relevant procedures and are subject to review by customers.

#### 2.2      Review

We will keep our policy under review in the light of the changing nature of our applicant and customer profile and will make changes so that we provide a relevant service and one that does not discriminate against any particular group.

### **3          Policy statement**

#### 3.1      Interpreting Services

Appropriate interpreting arrangements (including sign language) will be provided to enable all Knightstone customers to have effective access to its services.

Interpreting will be delivered in person or over the telephone. Face-to-face interpreting is preferred when the issue being discussed is complex, highly detailed, and/or is seen as high risk or sensitive in nature. Interpreting over the telephone is appropriate where the discussion is relatively straightforward or in circumstances that cannot be planned for, such as when someone calls in to an office.

Care will be taken to find an interpreter that best meets the needs of the customer. Issues that may need to be considered include:

- Gender
- Specific dialect
- Country of origin
- Specialist knowledge (for example, knowledge of Housing Benefits)
- Specialist language (for example, legal or medical terminology)

Face-to-face interpreting normally involves a minimum of three people (you, the customer and the interpreter) meeting at a prearranged place and time. It is best used for:

- More complicated procedures and form filling.
- Longer interviews.
- Interviews/situations involving more than one customer.

Telephone interpreting is normally three people (you, the customer and the interpreter) on a 'phone call at the same time. It should be restricted to:

- Unplanned and emergency situations.
- When the face-to-face interpreter fails to attend.
- Resolving relatively simple issues (it's not a good medium for complex and lengthy interviews)
- Contacting the customer at home.

### 3.2 Translation services

Translation is the conversion of written documents into another language either as text or audio\*\*\*. It is used for reports, leaflets or other documents when the benefits can be proven and effective communication can't be achieved without it.

All published\* Knightstone documents may be offered\*\* in languages spoken by the main ethnic groups identified by Knightstone from time to time but will not be translated in advance. This may change if a clear demand has been demonstrated and the benefits of translating the information, rather than interpreting the information, can be proven.

We will continue to work in partnership with local agencies to address communication barriers more efficiently, for example by talking to community representatives who can help us get our key messages across effectively.

We will also produce documents in large print, Braille or audio in English or other languages where these formats help understanding.

For larger documents (those bigger than a short leaflet), this offer will be made on the back cover.

In most cases the most effective way of responding to a request is **not** to translate the document but instead, to arrange for an interpreter to talk/sign through the original document with the customer and to answer any questions.

### **3.3 General principles**

All written correspondence is conducted in English, with interpretation provided as necessary. If a homeowner requests translation, the cost of translation would be a direct cost payable by the homeowner.

All legal documents, such as tenancy agreements, are provided in English.

All reception areas will have standard posters promoting the availability of interpreting and translation services in English and other identified languages.

Our alternative format request statement and recognised symbols will be included on the back of our letterhead.

We reserve the right to refuse an application for interpretation or translation where the subject of the request is mischievous or frivolous.

## **4. Other references/documents**

A staff guide to communication  
Using Language Line  
Leaflets available in other languages/formats

### **Notes:**

\* “Published” means publication on Knightstone’s website or printed for wide distribution.

\*\* “Offered” means that we will respond positively to any request we receive and consider the best way for the person’s language needs to be catered for. The person’s needs may be better met by the use of a face-to-face or telephone interpreting or by translating relevant sections of the document etc

\*\*\* “Audio” refers to CD/DVD or cassette tape.