

## Consultation findings

### 1. Introduction

- 1.1 This report sets out findings from Barking and Dagenham Council's consultation with key stakeholders to get their views to inform the retender of translating and interpreting services.

### 2. Background information

- 2.1 The Council currently commissions a range of translating and interpreting services from Newham Language Shop including telephone interpreting, face-to-face interpreting, translation, large print, Braille, and proofing and editing translated documents.
- 2.2 The service is used predominantly to support residents to get information and to access services.
- 2.3 It is planned that the new contract will allow all council departments to access high quality cost effective translation and interpreting services over the next five years.

### 3. Consultation methods

- 3.1 A four week online consultation was undertaken in September 2014.
- 3.2 Surveys were sent electronically to voluntary and community organisations and council managers asking for their:
  - perceptions of existing translating and interpreting services over the last 12 months
  - views about how they would like translating and interpreting services to operate in the future
- 3.3 Other voluntary/ community sector and service user feedback was gathered through meetings with the voluntary and community organisations.
- 3.4 During September – October:
  - Council officers attended scheduled voluntary and community group meetings to discuss the forthcoming re-tender and to hear their views
  - Council managers who have used the existing translating and interpreting services in the last year, were invited to attend a workshop to give their views on the draft specification
- 3.5 In addition in order to provide further relevant information for consideration when developing the tender specification, this report summarises a survey carried out in October 2010 by an independent researcher for the current provider Newham Language Shop, into the impact of being employed locally as a translator or interpreter.

## 4. Key findings

### Service users' views

4.1 The Independent Living Agency (ILA) collated feedback from 18 service users; six with language translation needs and 12 service users needing sensory support. All of the service users had accessed support through Newham Language Shop.

#### Summary of key findings from service users

##### **Difficulty accessing the translating and interpreting service**

Service users felt it was difficult to access support and were dissatisfied with the service they received. Three way meetings with (service user, professional and translator) - were difficult to set up as translators were not available when service user and professionals were available, leading service users give up and not request support i.e. Service user felt their availability took the least priority.

##### **Unreliability of translators and interpreters**

Face to face interpreting seen as unreliable; some translators for both language and sensory support needs do not turn up for the appointment.

**Difficult for service users with sensory support needs to access papers** on time and in a format they need.

##### **Suggestions for future**

- Would like a note out on service users files indicating that they need translation and interpreting services
- Would like council to consider use of new technology to support people with sensory impairment: suggestions include:
  - Using JAWS - software that reads forms for visually impaired people. Forms need to be sent by professionals and partners at least three days in advance so service user has the opportunity to read them prior to meeting.
  - Support with reading texts
  - Using Facetime and Skype for hearing impaired people

### Voluntary and community groups' views

4.2 An online questionnaire was sent to voluntary and community groups on the council's database which have contact with service users who might need translating and interpreting services. To get as many completed questionnaires as possible groups were asked to circulate it to the voluntary and community groups in their networks. A reminder was sent to encourage as many organisations as possible to complete the questionnaire. A total of nine questionnaires were completed.

## Summary of key issues from voluntary and community groups' consultation

### Access to interpreters and translators

- *'Lack of translating and interpreting services availability negatively affects LBBB's service delivery.'*
- *'Front line LBBB staff either don't seem to know that customers can require translating and interpreting services or perhaps they may know but don't actively facilitate access to them to support service delivery.'*
- *'Independent advice agencies find that LBBB customer service is quite poor vis a vis secondary English language speakers. They have asked for translating and interpreting services particularly re: Revenues and Benefits and it has not been available (or offered).'*
- *'A drain on the resources of independent Advice services to have to intervene because of poor translating and interpreting services accessibility'*
- *'If it can be as appropriate about more efficient and effective to provide e.g. telephone translating and interpreting services than face to face then that would be acceptable.'*
- *'We have speakers of 24 community languages. The problem is that they are not all available all the time we need them. Professional translating and interpreting services resources are expensive and there is no professional free resource available except that VCS organisations often try to help where they can. On any given day therefore requests for translating and interpreting services can be difficult to accommodate.'*
- *'Only with using council service providers/Newham language shops. Using local Barking and Dagenham interpreting charities or other similar orgs was much better they provided more in house interpreting or found rare languages'*
- *'BSL difficult to accommodate due to cost'*
- *'Would like MEPS programme which translates any language online even signing translation app'*
- *'Our clients would like telephone interpreting in areas of the council services as it is good for them to make the initial contact and communication and if the officers feel they need to use interpreter to clarify things they can use them over the phone.'*
- Future need likely to be face to face, telephone interpreting, and translation services (including video interpreting)

### Importance of English as a second language classes raised

- *'We have a lot of Volunteers who need help with form filling because they are not fluent with reading or writing English.'*
- *'More free classes that teach ESOL such as run by small local interpreting charities. Advertise these free opportunities better'*

### Too much reliance on family and friends

- *'Are often told to bring a friend or someone who speaks English'*
- *'We do not like to use family members due to confidentiality and the freedom for the individual to speak freely'*
- *'We have been told that they do not know if the friend or relative has interpreted properly as they are not professionals and also it is not confidential'*
- *'Inappropriate for customers to rely on their family members particularly minor children for translating and interpreting services for many reasons including lack of privacy, trust, particularly as regards financial, family and health issues. It can affect the quality of information if a family member or friend or an untrained voluntary and community sector worker translates and therefore the quality of service delivery.'*

### Possible future languages

- The most commonly mentioned were: Lithuanian, Romanian, Urdu, Arabic, Polish
- Other languages mentioned included: Bengali, Russian, Panjabi, Portugese, Turkish, Tamil, Somali, Albanian, Swahili, Turkish, Hungarian and Bulgarian

4.3 Verbal feedback received from voluntary and community groups at the Black, Asian, Minority Ethnic and Refugee (BAMER) Forum on 10/9/14 is presented below. (N.B. Not all voluntary and community groups present used the existing provider for translating and interpreting services.)

#### **Key issues raised at BAMER Forum**

- Would have been more beneficial to look at random survey with end users\*
- Many individuals are currently being asked to bring along their own private interpreter notably within Public health and CCGs
- Elevate – one stop shops are not using the interpreting services to support customer care and equal access to services
- Satisfaction levels with the end users should be worked into the specification
- Use of local interpreter – should be build into the specification

\* This was not possible due to the logistics of interviewing service users in their own languages without using the interpreters they would be asked about. Instead voluntary and community groups were asked to gather service users' views (see section 4.1) and these were fed into the tender specification.

#### **Council managers' views**

4.4 A total of 18 questionnaires were sent to council managers using Translating and Interpreting services who have used the existing translating and interpreting service in the last 12 months. Seven questionnaires were returned from a range of services including: Children's Services, Adult and Community Services, Housing, Community Safety and Environmental Health.

#### **Summary of key findings from council managers consultation**

##### **Council managers were broadly happy with the existing service.**

- Easy to book face to face, telephone interpreting and translation services
- No problems with accessing translating and interpreting services
- No problems with availability of interpreters '*Easily accessible with wide choice of languages and people arrive on time*' (Environmental Health services).
- No requests for common languages that existing service was unable to meet; where the language has been outside of the pool of the established interpreters getting an interpreter has been challenging
- Future need likely to be face to face, telephone interpreting, and translation services
- No sense of future volume of need  
Most popular languages were: Urdu, Lithuanian, Punjabi, Romanian, Bengali
- Possible future most popular languages: Punjabi, Urdu, Turkish, East European; French was added to the list by two services
- Community Safety and Children's services had used the telephone service – quite satisfied; two other services would in future
- Satisfied with invoicing system

## **Employment Impact Study commissioned by Newham Language Shop**

4.5 This survey carried out by an independent provider for Newham Language Shop in October 2010, was sent to 603 interpreters/translators. 243 replies were received giving a high response rate for postal surveys of 40%. Two thirds of those who responded were female, three quarters were aged 25-54; respondents had a range of ethnic group backgrounds reflecting the language offered.

### **Key highlights from the employment impact survey**

- **A significant proportion of the income generated from interpreting is retained within the local economy.** (72% of respondents said that they spent over 70% of their earned income on local purchases.)
- **The Language Shop created and provided a pathway into employment for interpreters.** (The majority of interpreters (70%, n 170) worked for other agencies and many interpreters/translators felt The Language Shop was important in securing this additional employment. (28% (n.64) of people stated that the Language Shop provided them with the skills or experience to be able to work for other agencies; 12% (n. 29) stated the Language Shop provided them with a reference to work with other agencies.)
- **Interpreters and translators gave overwhelmingly positive feedback about working for the Language Shop.** (85% of interpreters/translators either agreed or strongly agreed that they would recommend the Language Shop as a good provider of translation and interpreting services. 89% either agreed or strongly agreed with the statement 'I would still like to be working for the Language Shop in three years time'. 81% agreed that working for the Language Shop had helped them to develop skills as an interpreter. 79% either agreed or strongly agreed that the Language Shop provides a useful income.)
- **Respondents felt that the household income from work was important to them.** Freelance staff stated: 32% (n. 75) that it was a welcome extra; 28% (n. 65) that they could afford things they wouldn't otherwise have and 26% (n. 61) that this was the only household income and couldn't manage without it.
- **Interpreters/translators were positive about working for Newham Language Shop.** They were asked '*How does your experience of working for The Language Shop differ from that with other organisations?*'

*'More training sessions with Language Shop and a touch of humanity.'*

*'It has given me the opportunity to become a Translator and Interpreter. Through the agency I have obtained lots of experience and techniques of interpreting in the field of NHS and Mental Health including public services.'*

*'Language Shop has given me the chance to interpret in different settings and of course for different people. Unlike other organisations, Language Shop is very good at payment i.e.: pay you on time and I would also stress here Language Shop sends the invoices(working hours) by post which is very important to keep the working hours in your record and such, most organisations don't. I seriously consider The Language Shop as one of the best organisations so far.'*

## 5. Main findings and implications for the retender of translating and interpreting services

5.1 There was widespread acknowledgment of the need for translating and interpreting services to enable some residents to access council services.

5.2 There were a range of views expressed about the current translating and interpreting service with council managers broadly finding it effective, and mixed views amongst voluntary and community groups and service users.

5.3 Looking ahead there was broad agreement between the voluntary and community groups' and council managers' surveys about:

- The languages likely to be requested
- The services most need likely to be needed - translation, face to face, and telephone interpreting services (N.B. this could include video and Skype calls)

5.4 In addition to providing a *high quality cost effective translation and interpreting service*, **the retender specification should include:**

- Producing publicity for frontline staff about clients' needs and how they can to **access translating and interpreting services including by telephone**
- **Avoiding using family members and children** as translators/interpreters wherever possible
- Obtaining **regular service user feedback**
- Encouraging **employment of local people**

5.5 Other feedback suggests that **the Council should consider the following:**

- Recording clients' translating and interpreting needs on their council records so that they only have to 'tell it once '
- Using new technology to support people with sensory impairment needs (as per suggestions in section 4.1)
- The role of English as a second language classes