

Interpreters for clients with communication difficulties



ASSESSING COMMUNICATION NEEDS VIA AN INTERPRETER

It's often challenging to establish whether a client who does not speak English as a first language also has underlying communication difficulties.

A language barrier and cultural differences (such as unfamiliarity with British legal system) may impact your client's ability to understand proceedings and communicate effectively. For this reason, it is often helpful to request an [intermediary assessment](#), if you have concerns about your client's understanding.

Intermediary assessments should be conducted with the assistance of a skilled interpreter, in your client's first language, to allow the intermediary to determine the presence of underlying communication needs and the likely effectiveness of intermediary strategies during legal proceedings. It is recommended that the interpreter and intermediary have a short time to discuss their working approach prior to meeting your client at an assessment.



INTERMEDIARIES AND INTERPRETERS IN COURT

Every client who has a communication need is different. As such, a flexible approach to intermediary-interpreter working is recommended. The intermediary and interpreter should discuss your client's strengths and difficulties in advance and agree an approach, which can be adapted as needed throughout proceedings. Some common approaches include:

Interpreted simplifications

Rather than asking the interpreter to translate proceedings verbatim, asking them to translate the intermediary's simplifications may be more effective, particularly for clients with limited auditory working memory capacities, who may be overwhelmed by large volumes of verbal information.

Simultaneous interpretation

This approach may be more effective for clients who are better able to process large volumes of verbal information. After your client has listened to simultaneous interpretation in the courtroom, the intermediary can recap key points and check understanding during breaks. If simultaneous verbatim translation is provided, it may also be helpful to:

- **Pause after each key point** in hearings to allow the intermediary to check understanding and provide a simple summary via the interpreter
- **Allow longer explanation breaks** to accommodate the need for comprehension checking and simplification via an interpreter
- **Provide a 'break' or 'question' card** which your client can point to, to indicate they require a break or have not understood

Communicourt is the largest Managed and Approved Service Provider of intermediaries for defendants and respondents, in criminal and family courts. We passionately believe that everyone has a right to a fair trial.

Communicourt
communication matters in the courts

How we can help you



TIPS FOR WORKING WITH AN INTERMEDIARY AND INTERPRETER IN COURT

- **Allow ample time for discussion between the intermediary and interpreter** before any hearing. This will allow the intermediary to share key information about your client's communication needs and agree a working method
- **Provide information in short chunks** during conferences, to allow the interpreter and intermediary to deliver the information clearly and simply
- **Speak at a slower rate** to allow the interpreter to translate and intermediary to simplify, as necessary
- **Consider seating your client, interpreter and intermediary in a separate room.** They can then attend the hearing together, via video-link. This approach may be more effective for service users with attention difficulties or limited auditory working memory capacity

Further reading: *Learn more about working with a client who has communication difficulties in [immigration hearings](#).*

REQUESTING AN INTERMEDIARY ASSESSMENT

Before an intermediary can be approved to assist your client at any stage of proceedings, an intermediary assessment must be conducted.

An intermediary assessment can provide professionals and the court with more insight into your client's communication strengths and difficulties, and how these may impact them at all stages of proceedings, including their pre-sentencing interview.

We compile comprehensive communication reports which identify issues and make bespoke recommendations to help you and your client, even in cases where an intermediary is *not* recommended.

If an intermediary is recommended, one of our highly trained intermediaries can attend proceedings to facilitate those recommendations, meaning you can focus on your job.

Our experience means we can recommend solutions that make a tangible difference and support the justice system in getting a fair result.

HOW TO GET SUPPORT



BOOK ONLINE

Refer your client for an assessment through our online booking system communicourt.co.uk

5 minutes

FUNDING

We will send you a quote that you need to send to HMCTS and Legal Aid for them to approve funding

24 Hours

BOOK THE ASSESSMENT

Once you have funding in place, please let us know. We will then arrange an assessment

4-6 weeks

ASSESSMENT

The 3 hour assessment can be carried out in person or remotely. You will then receive a report

7 days

BOOK COURT DATES

We will send booking forms which must be signed by the court. Once received we will then book your intermediary

Throughout the trial