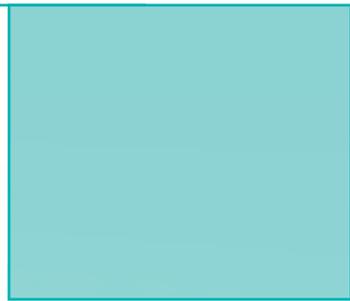


# Interpreting and Translation Policy

Improving Communications in Barnet  
February 2008





## Contents

1.	Introduction	4
2.	Definitions	5
3.	Communicating with Barnet residents	6
4.	Making information accessible	7
5.	Accessing interpreting and translation services	8
6.	Best Practice – Interpreting	9
7.	Confidentiality	10
8.	Training	11
9.	Monitoring	11
10.	Translations	11
11.	The legal duty	13

## Appendices

Appendix 1	Checklist for using an interpreter	15
Appendix 2	Checklist for deciding when to translate a document	17
Appendix 3	Provision of translation and interpretation service process flowchart	18
Appendix 4	Languages spoken in schools in 2006	20
Appendix 5	Summary of language requests	22

# 1. Introduction

- 1.1. This is Barnet Council's corporate Interpreting and Translation Policy. It sets out the council's approach to communicating with our residents and service users in the most accessible and effective way. The policy will support the council in delivering on the 'More Choice, Better Value' priority of the Corporate Plan.
- 1.2. This policy framework sets out a selective approach to delivery based on people's needs and the council's core objectives.
- 1.3. Implementing the Interpreting and Translation Policy relies upon an understanding of the following:
  - Corporate Plan
  - Barnet's Equality Scheme
  - Customer Access Strategy
  - Procurement Strategy
  - Diversity Monitoring Protocol<sup>1</sup>.
- 1.4. The policy also links to other key strategies within the council including:
  - Communications Strategy
  - Consultation and Community Engagement Strategy.
- 1.5. Services will be expected to apply this corporate document to reflect their local priorities which incorporate their customer needs. Adult Social Services already have their own local written policy on translation and interpretation because of its importance in their area. This requirement may also apply for other services.
- 1.6. The policy reflects the guidance recently published by the Department for Communities and Local Government<sup>2</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> [www.barnet.gov.uk/diversity-monitoring-protocol.pdf](http://www.barnet.gov.uk/diversity-monitoring-protocol.pdf)

<sup>2</sup> Guidance for local authorities on translation and publications – DCLG (December 2007)

## 2. Definitions

- 2.1. For the purposes of this document the following distinctions are made between 'translation' and 'interpreting'.
- 2.2. **Translation** refers to the transferring of ideas expressed in writing from one language to another.
- 2.3. **Interpreting** refers to the transfer of ideas expressed orally (or through the use of gestures or signs).
- 2.4. The term 'customer'<sup>3</sup> is used as an inclusive term to embrace any stakeholder or group who interacts with council services. The routes through which a customer will interact with the council and its services will be called 'access channels'. The four main types of access channel are:
  - electronic access to customer services
  - telephone
  - face to face
  - written correspondence.
- 2.5. This policy and procedure refers to the council's customers who:
  - do not have English as their first language
  - have a sensory impairment
  - have a learning difficulty
  - have low levels of literacy.

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<sup>3</sup> Customer Access Strategy June 2006

- 2.6. The Commission on Integration and Cohesion<sup>4</sup> found that there were five main pro-active reasons for provision of translation and interpretation. Although their report is about language translation, the principles also apply for people with low levels of literacy and for disabled people:
- ensure non English speaking residents are able to access essential services, e.g. education, safety campaigns
  - ensure people can take part in the democratic process, for example registering to vote
  - support local community groups, or intermediaries working directly with new migrants or non English speaking communities
  - enable people to function effectively as citizens in society and to be able to get along with others by ensuring that they understand the rules, eg parking controls, rubbish collection
  - ensure compliance with legislation and ensure that no one is disadvantaged because of their inability to communicate verbally, or non verbally.

## 3. Communicating with Barnet residents

- 3.1. The rich diversity of Barnet is reflected in the make up of its 338,000 residents. Just over a quarter of the population belong to a minority ethnic community - the largest of which are Indian and Black African. Barnet is also home to the largest number of Chinese residents of any London borough and the highest proportion of Jewish residents in the country.
- 3.2. In 2006 our primary school children spoke 133 languages at home in addition to English. Somali is the second most popular language spoken in primary schools, but Gujarati is the language most spoken in the borough after English.<sup>5</sup> This illustrates the changing nature of Barnet.

<sup>4</sup> 'Our shared futures', Commission for Intergration and Cohesion, June 2007

<sup>5</sup> PLASC 2007 Data – Appendix 4

- 3.3. In addition we have almost 50,000 residents with a long-term illness, health problem or disability that affects their daily activities or the work that they can do<sup>6</sup>. Of these nearly 6,000 people in Barnet are visually impaired, 7,000 are hard of hearing and 7,000 have a learning difficulty.
- 3.4. This picture of Barnet will change as our regeneration and redevelopment programmes increase Barnet's diversity and size.
- 3.5. Although over half of the borough's working age population are educated to first degree level, there are 70,000 who have no qualifications or hold a level 1 qualification (which is the equivalent of GCSE Grade D/E).<sup>7</sup>
- 3.6. The most popular languages requested for interpretation for 2005/06 were Pashto, Farsi, Somali, Arabic and French.<sup>8</sup>
- 3.7. The most popular languages requested for document translation for 2005/06 were Farsi, Pashto, Polish, Arabic, Somali and Turkish.<sup>9</sup>

## 4. Making information accessible

- 4.1. Making information accessible is vital to making people feel that they understand what their council is doing, and that it is relevant and effective. The Office for Disability Issues<sup>10</sup> has suggested the following principles as a guide to making information accessible. Emphasis has been placed on the needs of disabled people, but can be applied across all communities and groups of people:
- ensure disabled people are involved from the start
  - provide information through a range of channels and formats
  - ensure the information meets users' needs
  - clearly signpost other services

6 Barnet Primary Care Trust (2005) Improving Health and Well-being in Barnet update

7 The Labour Market Requirements of growth in the London Borough of Barnet (January 2006)

8 Prime Productions Summary Statement – Appendix 5

9 Prime Productions Summary Statement – Appendix 3

10 Five Principles for producing better information for disabled people - Office for Disability Issues (February 2007)

- always define responsibility for the information provision.

4.2. In addition to these guiding principles there are style layouts which enhance the legibility of printed text with visual impairments or those who lack confidence in reading. The 'See it Right' booklet produced by the Royal National Institute for the Blind provides practical advice on designing, producing and planning accessible information.

## 5. Accessing interpreting and translation services

5.1. The council has an interpreting and translation service contractor which can provide:

- face to face interpretation<sup>11</sup>
- real-time telephone interpretation
- document translation (languages, large print, braille or audio tape)

5.2. A Process Flowchart is available in Appendix 3 explaining how to access the service.

5.3. Adult Social Services Learning Disability Team together with voluntary sector partners can help produce accessible information for people with learning difficulties.

5.4. The corporate Web Team can advise on accessibility guidelines for Barnet Online and Barnet Work.

5.5. Barnet Sign Language Interpreting Service (SLIS) provides communication support to Barnet residents who use British Sign Language as their first language as well as Sign Supported English interpreters, Deaf blind Manual, Lip speakers and Speech to Text Reporters (Palantypists). Services are free to Barnet residents.

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<sup>11</sup> Including BSL/lip reading

- 5.6. Budgetary responsibilities for interpreting and translation have been devolved to service areas since 2005 with costs being met through revenue budgets.

## 6. Best Practice – Interpreting

### Customer's choice

- 6.1. A knowledge of the English language is essential to participating fully in society. However, we recognise that not all our customers will speak English with confidence. To enable them to access the correct service, pictorial information about services will be displayed and supported by a translation card.
- 6.2. If this is not successful, an interpreter will be offered through our approved contractor. Customers must be asked if they have a preferred individual interpreter provided by the contractor. If possible, the contractor will be asked to provide the preferred interpreter.
- 6.3. To assist this process, where possible a customer's need for an interpreter should be arranged in advance. For services including Adults, Children, Housing and Benefits details of preferred communication should be recorded on local data bases.
- 6.4. When it is not possible to pre-arrange an interpreter, services can access real time interpreters by telephone using the Council's approved contractor. However, this is very expensive.
- 6.5. As our customers are helped to learn English, we accept that the need for interpretation services will reduce over time.

## Using relatives and friends as interpreters

- 6.6. Relatives and friends should not be used as interpreters to either access council services or to provide information to professionals (such as social workers, teachers, welfare benefit staff).
- 6.7. There may be a conflict of interest between the informal interpreter and the customer. A professional interpreter should be used from the council's approved contractor.

## Use of children

- 6.8. Children under 18 should not be used as interpreters by council staff. This is particularly important for the council to adhere to in its face-to face interactions with the public.
- 6.9. The only exception is to gain basic information during an emergency.

## Use of multilingual staff

- 6.10. The council does not encourage multilingual staff to use these skills as they go about their daily work, unless they have been specifically recruited for their linguistic skills.
- 6.11. However, the council accepts that there are occasions where staff have offered to use their communication skills to assist customers, when they approach the council.

## Documenting use of interpreters

- 6.12. A record must be kept of requests for interpreters and the council's response. This is important in the event of complaints, compliments and comments.

## 7. Confidentiality

- 7.1. All interpreters used are expected to adhere to the confidentiality agreement contained within the terms of the procurement contract.

## 8. Training

### Providers

- 8.1. Training for the professional interpreters is the responsibility of the approved provider.

### Staff

- 8.2. Staff who use interpreters have attended briefing sessions from the approved provider about the new processes. Guidance on using interpreters is included in Appendix 1

## 9. Monitoring

- 9.1. Monitoring arrangements are currently managed through the Strategic Procurement Team.
- 9.2. Half-yearly summaries of the most popular languages requested to the council's approved provider for interpretation and translation will be posted on the council's intranet.

## 10. Translations

- 10.1. Documents will no longer have a language card attached.
- 10.2. Decisions on translation must be linked to an assessment of how and why information is being communicated. In the first instance information should

be set out in an accessible style, as 16% of adults in England cannot read or write with confidence. Public documents, including reports to members can be checked for their readability to ensure the information they contain is easily understood by clicking on the following link:  
[www.literacytrust.org.uk/campaign/SMOG.html](http://www.literacytrust.org.uk/campaign/SMOG.html)<sup>12</sup>.

10.3. The Consultation and Communications Team can also check documents to advise on the use of plain English.

## Commission for Integration and Cohesion

10.4. The Commission for Integration and Cohesion in “Our Shared Futures” sets out four contextual points that local agencies should be encouraged to bear in mind when thinking about translating printed documents into English:

- There is no legal reason for all materials to be translated. The Race Relations Act (1976) says that all parts of the community should have access to services and although that might involve translation, it does not always have to. The Human Rights Act (1998) only requires translation if someone is arrested or charged with a criminal offence.
- Translations can never be a substitute for learning English. The Commission is concerned about undermining a wider drive to improve English skills in all communities.
- Material should only be translated where it is perceived to build integration and cohesion. The Commission state that where settled black and minority ethnic populations are still relying on community languages, then translations from English are likely to extend their reliance on their mother tongue. Where new communities have arrived in a local area then clearly they need initial information in appropriate languages. Local authorities need to judge what is best in their areas.
- Translation should be considered in the context of communications to all communities. The Commission state that it is important to keep communications channels open between community groups living in

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<sup>12</sup> Public document written in English should be aimed at people with a reading age of under 11 years old to enable the widest possible group of readers to be included.

the same area. Materials that are just in one language can be alienating to those who do not speak that language and therefore local partners should consider how they use translated materials to underline their even handed approach to all communities.

- 10.5. A checklist of when to translate documents is available in Appendix 2 and is based on guidance in “Our Shared Futures”.

## Communicating with disabled people

- 10.6. The availability of alternative formats must also be considered for disabled people. For example large print; audiotape/CD transcription, Braille transcription and sign language. In so doing it is necessary to bear in mind the reason for conveying the information and how best to obtain responses. Pictograms are helpful and good examples of their use are adverts for the Choice based lettings scheme and the Learning Disability Partnership Board Strategy – *‘A small plan to make a big difference’*.

# 11. The legal duty

- 11.1. The Race Relations Amendment Act 2000 and the Disability Discrimination Act 2005 place a duty on the Council to promote race equality and disability equality respectively.
- 11.2. The Race Relations Amendment Act states that it is unlawful for a provider of services to discriminate racially against people using those services. The Act also states that councils have a specific duty to promote equality of opportunity and good relations between people of different groups.
- 11.3. The Disability Discrimination Act places similar obligations upon the Council. In addition the Disability Discrimination Act (part 3) 1995 requires any organisation providing goods and services to the public to make reasonable adjustments in the delivery of goods and services so that disabled people have equal right of access.



## Appendix 1 Checklist for using an interpreter

The guidance listed is similar for using a community language interpreter or a sign language interpreter.

### Before the interview

1. Using an interpreter lengthens the interview time – remember to book the interpreter for a longer time – usually a 1 hour interview will take 1 ½ hours with an interpreter.
2. Check the preferred language, dialect and gender of the interpreter being booked.
3. Anticipate if you require the Interpreter to have specialist knowledge.
4. Brief the interviewer before the interview.
5. Use the interpreter's cultural knowledge to guide you on etiquette.

### During the interview

1. Introduce yourself and the interpreter. Ask the interpreter to explain their role.
2. Explain to the customer that all information shared will be confidential to everyone in the room.
3. Place the customer at the centre of the interview, keeping eye contact with them.
4. Use plain English, avoid jargon and speak in short sentences.
5. Recap if anything is not clearly understood.
6. If you are concerned about what is taking place between the interpreter and the customer, stop the conversation and ask the interpreter to explain what is going on.
7. Make sure the interview finishes on time.

## After the Interview

1. Debrief the interpreter. Give positive feedback on what went well. Ask for clarification for any difficulties you experienced.
2. Do not ask the interpreter for their opinion of the case.
3. Sign the interpreter's time sheet. Make a note of the time.

## Appendix 2 Checklist for deciding when to translate a document<sup>1</sup>

### 4. Is it essential to translate this document?

Who is the target audience? What is the evidence of need or that people would otherwise be disadvantaged? Does it include people for whom English is not their first language? Which languages do they speak? Could the information be more effectively shared by visiting community organisations or using community advocates? Is there a statutory duty for providing written information in translated format?

### 5. If you need to translate, does it need to be the whole document?

Are you confident that people across communities have the literacy skills to understand the document? Would it be better to translate an easy-read version of the document? Would it be better to wait until you receive requests for translations rather than translate proactively? Should you produce a summary for translation?

### 6. How accurate is the data you have on the languages needed for translation?

Do you know the language needs of your customers? Are they different to the borough's language profile? Are the translation needs of your customers different to the interpreting needs?

### 7. What is the cost/benefit analysis for this translation?

What will happen to this material once translated? What is the potential impact to the council of not translating documents? Will there be a change in resident satisfaction ratings? Are there any anticipated risks to the council such as reputation, quality of service delivery by not translating documents?

### 8. Have you explored whether other local agencies might already have these materials in translated form?

Have you networked with other local authorities to find out if they have already translated this material? Are other partners such as the Police or the Primary Care Trust translating similar documents?

<sup>1</sup> Commission for Integration and Cohesion Our Shared Values' Annex E 92007)

## Appendix 3 Provision of translation and interpretation service process flowchart

	Telephone interpreting	Face to face interpretation	Document translation
1	<p>Whether the customer is with you or you intend to call the customer in the near future the first step is to contact: Prime Productions on 0870 811 0161</p>	<p>When you need to book a face to face interpreter, contact <b>Prime Productions</b> to enquire about availability* this should then be followed by a booking form which can be sent electronically or by fax</p> <p><b>*Remember to clarify the minimum cancellation period.</b></p>	<p>When you need a letter or document translated contact <b>Prime Productions</b>. You will be provided with a forwarding email address for submission of the work to be translated.</p>
2	<p><b>The operator will ask you for your:</b></p> <p>Organisation name</p> <p>Your name (initial and surname) Please also provide your position.</p> <p>The language you require.</p> <p>The location of your customer (including name and telephone number if you intend to call them)</p>	<p>The booking form should include details of the appointment including date and time, anticipated duration; the required language; venue of the appointment; council official order reference number; your name, title and telephone number; interpreter's name (if known – particularly important in continuity circumstances), hourly cost and travel cost if not included. The booking form should be forwarded to the contractor. Without an official SAP order number the service may not be delivered</p>	<p>Forward in electronic format the letter or document to be translated, together with an official order number; the title of the document; language(s) required; your name, title and telephone number; whether you require the document to be held on file for future work; and cost.</p> <p>It is important to be clear of translation requirements at the point of order. Make sure you state number of words or size of document paper i.e. A4 /A5/ leaflet. Urgent work must have authorised service area officer concurrence as this will incur higher costs.</p> <p>Without an official order / number the service may not be delivered</p>
3	<p>You will be put on hold. Approx 2 - 3 minutes later the operator will connect you to an interpreter. Make sure you take a note of the interpreter's ID number and / or name. (This may prove beneficial in follow up calls providing continuity with the same interpreter)</p>	<p>The interpreter will arrive 10 minutes before the start of the interview. Please note - interpreters are not permitted to conduct interviews and/ or enter interview venue without service representative accompanying them.</p>	<p>The electronic copy of the letter or document will be returned within the timescale specified at point of order.</p> <p>It should be noted that certain documents/ layouts may require extended timescales, these should be clarified at point of order.</p>

<p>Brief the interpreter (e.g. explain background who, where and what).  <b>If the customer has called you:</b> advise the interpreter what phone set up you have – single handset/speaker phone/two handsets. Ask them to introduce you and themselves. Follow this with your lead question.</p>	<p><b>If you are calling the customer</b> brief the interpreter by explaining who, where and what. Advise them that Language Line is setting up a conference call for you. Ask them to introduce you and themselves when the client is connected.</p>	<p>On completion of the interview, you will be provided with a copy of the time sheet which the service representative has to sign. This acts as confirmation of receipt of the interpretation service.</p>	<p>Payment for the service will be processed through the usual billing process. The service will be quality checked with the commissioning officer before payment</p>
<p>5</p> <p>The operator will connect the customer.</p>	<p>Payment for the service will be processed through the usual billing process.</p>	<p>Please note – translation of material subject to corporate brand will require input from the Marketing Design and Print Service. This should be incorporated into the preparation time of the document before releasing to contractor. A decision may be appropriate to commission the translation then set this within the corporate brand through the Print Service.  Contact Rachel Tansley on 020 8359 7795</p>	<p>Payment for the service will be processed through the usual billing process. The service will be quality checked with the commissioning officer before payment</p>
<p>6</p> <p>Proceed with the conversation. The interpreter will relay the information between you.</p>	<p>Prime Productions  Tel: 020 8571 1466  Fax: 020 8571 4691  Email: <a href="mailto:info@primeproductions.org.uk">info@primeproductions.org.uk</a></p>	<p><b>Prime Productions</b>  Tel: 020 8571 1466  Fax: 020 8571 4691  Email: <a href="mailto:info@primeproductions.org.uk">info@primeproductions.org.uk</a></p>	<p>Barnet Service Area  Budget holder:  Prime Productions  Accounts Manager  Ms Bhavna Parmar</p>
<p>7</p> <p>End the call by saying: "I have all the information I need. Is there anything else you would like to ask me?" Should you consider there will be a need for a further interpreted call you should indicate this rather than state you have all the information you require.</p>	<p>Telephone translation is expensive!  When required it should be used to identify the problem prior to making an appointment for a face-to-face interview.  Calls should last no longer than 10 minutes</p>	<p>Telephone translation is expensive!  When required it should be used to identify the problem prior to making an appointment for a face-to-face interview.  Calls should last no longer than 10 minutes</p>	<p>Prime Productions  Accounts Manager  Ms Bhavna Parmar</p>
<p>8</p> <p>Payment for the service will be processed through the usual billing process. Quality check reports will be made available to your manager with responsibility for monitoring the translation and interpretation contract</p>			

## Appendix 4 Languages spoken in schools in 2006

PLASC 2007 – primary and nursery pupils attending schools maintained by Barnet Council. There are 133 first languages other than English spoken in their homes.

Count of Children's Service	Total
<b>Language Name</b>	
English	15409
Information not obtained	1111
Somali	835
Gujarati	785
Other Language	711
Arabic	646
Farsi/Persian (Any Other)	526
Urdu	501
Portuguese	446
Polish	420
French	398
Greek	382
Turkish	372
Albanian/Shqip	342
Chinese	333
Japanese	294
Tamil	281
Hebrew	262
Bengali	237
Spanish	192
Pashto/Pakhto	184
Yoruba	135
Panjabi	129
Hindi	117
Italian	113
Russian	113
Persian/Farsi	83
Tagalog	77
German	70
Kurdish	54

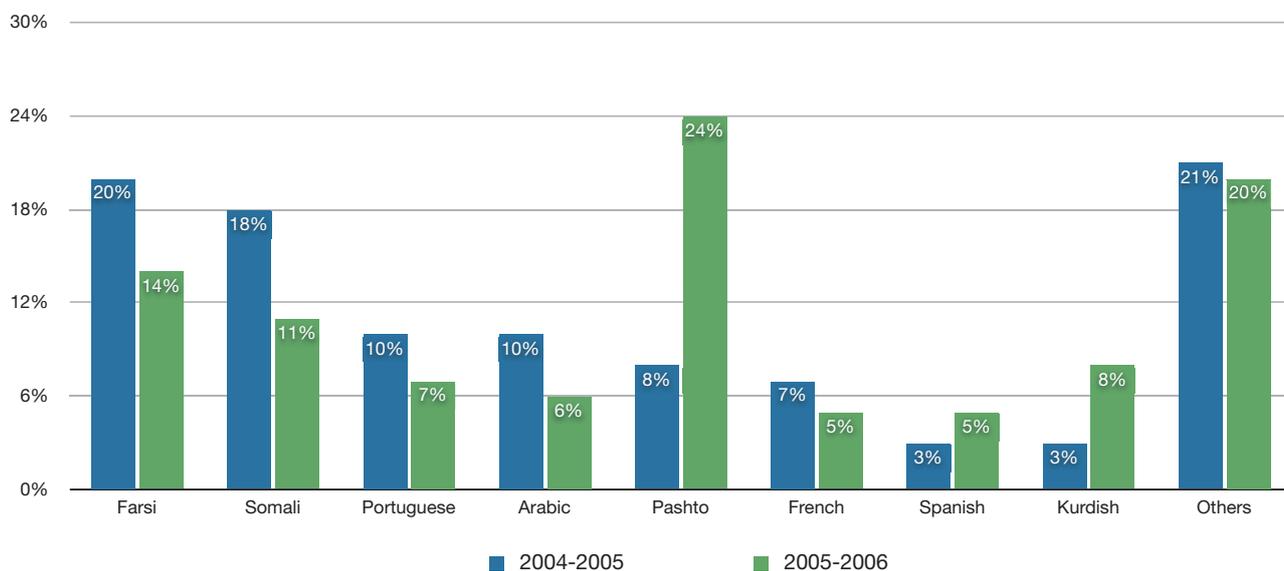
Count of Children's Service	Total
Sinhala	43
Igbo	42
Lingala	40
Dutch/Flemish	30
Korean	27
Bulgarian	26
Caribbean Creole English	26
Lithuanian	26
Serbian/Croatian/Bosnian	26
Romanian	25
Chinese (Cantonese)	24
Dari Persian	22
Akan (Twi/Asante)	20
Filipino	20
Indonesian/Bahasa Indonesia	18
Shona	18
Slovak	18
Akan/Twi-Fante	15
Akan (Fante)	14
Luganda	14
Nepali	14
Swahili/Kiswahili	13
Hungarian	12
Swedish	12
Amharic	11
Croatian	11
Malay (Any Other)	10
Serbian	10
Swahili (Brava/Mwiini)	10
Tigrinya	10
Ukrainian	10

Count of Children's Service	Total
Refused	9
Caribbean Creole French	8
Danish	8
Vietnamese	8
Chinese (Mandarin/Putonghua)	7
Ga	7
Kikuyu/Gikuyu	7
Konkani	7
Latvian	7
Romanian (Romania)	7
Thai	7
Arabic (Any Other)	6
Bemba	6
Greek (Cyprus)	6
Malayalam	6
Armenian	5
Bosnian	5
Krio	5
Tagalog/Filipino	5
Wolof	5
Arabic (Morocco)	4
Czech	4
Macedonian	4
Malay/Indonesian	4
Marathi	4
Norwegian	4
Portuguese (Any Other)	4
Afrikaans	3
Arabic (Iraq)	3
Gaelic/Irish	3
Hausa	3
Kinyarwanda	3
Mauritian/Seychelles Creole	3
Sindhi	3
Swazi/Siswati	3
Arabic (Algeria)	2
Catalan	2

Count of Children's Service	Total
Chechen	2
Dinka/Jieng	2
Fijian	2
Romani (International)	3
Romany/English Romanes	3
Finnish	2
Herero	2
Kirundi	2
Welsh/Cymraeg	2
Zulu	2
Assyrian/Aramaic	1
Bengali (Sylheti)	1
Burmese/Myanma	1
Cebuano/Sugbuanon	1
Chinese (Any Other)	1
Dyula/Jula	1
Efik-Ibibio	1
Fula/Fulfulde-Pulaar	1
Georgian	1
Greek (Any Other)	1
Guarani	1
Ilokano	1
Kanuri	1
Kashmiri	1
Lozi/Silozi	1
Maltese	1
Maya (Any)	1
Mongolian (Khalkha)	1
Nzema	1
Rajasthani/Marwari	1
Slovenian	1
Telugu	1
Tibetan	1
Tulu	1
Yiddish	1
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>26426</b>

# Appendix 5 Summary of language requests

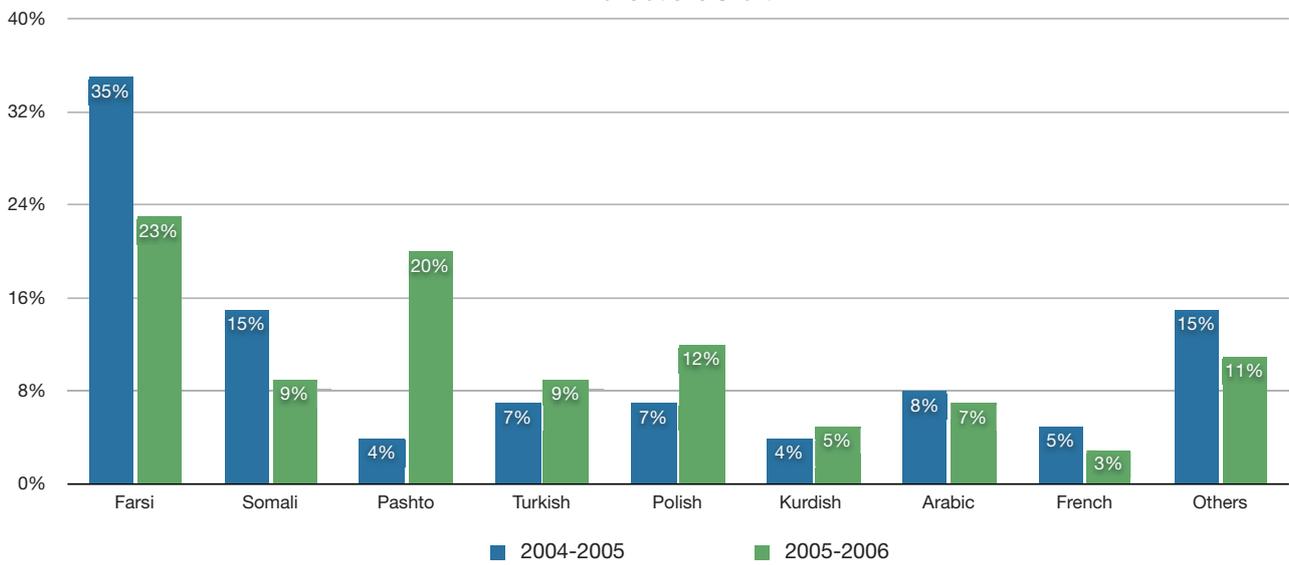
## Interpreting



Language	2004-2005	2005-2006
Farsi	20%	14%
Somali	18%	11%
Portuguese	10%	7%
Arabic	10%	6%
Pashto	8%	24%
French	7%	5%
Spanish	3%	5%
Kurdish	3%	8%
Others	21%	20%

Source: Prime Productions June 2007

## Translation



Language	2004-2005	2005-2006
Farsi	35%	23%
Somali	15%	9%
Pashto	4%	20%
Turkish	7%	9%
Polish	7%	12%
Kurdish	4%	5%
Arabic	8%	7%
French	5%	3%
Others	15%	11%

Source: Prime Productions June 2007

