

Helpful tips when working with translators in parenting groups /workshops

Consideration in the pre-planning

Be mindful of issues of confidentiality and trust when working with someone from a small language community as the parent may be anxious about being identifiable and may be mistrustful of a professional translator. Also, to be mindful that a non-professional translator i.e. a family member; may not be as skilled in English, or indeed in their native tongue and they may have little or no experience of, or training in translating. They may be unclear about such issues as confidentiality, boundaries and the use of good interpreting skills. They may also have their own agenda about the parent and wish to tell the group leaders more or less about the parent than the parent themselves would wish

If employing a professional translator to check with own service manager on the services written guidelines and if there is a contract that the translator should adhere to and sign. The guidelines should cover such aspects as confidentiality, roles, responsibilities, ethics and boundaries. However, these guidelines may not include some of the challenging situations that can occur in mental healthcare situations.

Group leaders should be aware that it can become easy for all the group members to lose concentration or to lose the thread of the session as the pace becomes slower and perhaps disjointed, given the space needed for translation

Pre-group

- ✓ Have a meeting with translator before the group starts to go over main topics and to check if there are any issues re understanding of the language content. To be mindful not all English words translate in other language (for example there is no word for "logic" in Chinese).
- ✓ To make the translator aware of the possibility that they may be translating stories/experiences and situations which they themselves may find upsetting. To consider together what support they may need.
- ✓ For parent and translator to have an agreed hand sign that they can give the group leader if they need anything repeated or for group leader to slow down.
- ✓ For translator to be very clear on their role (i.e. they don't feedback or refer to their own issues but are there to translate for the parent - this especially important if translator is related to the parent)
- ✓ Give translator copies of handouts in advance of the group
- ✓ To have an agreement on where the translator sits in the group. It is recommended that the translator to sit behind the parent so they whisper into the parent's ear, literally become their voice, taking a lower profile in the session - this also prevents the translator becoming part of the 'group'. This is a matter of personal preference, and it may need reviewing once the sessions have started. In sign language interpreting, it is good practice for the group leader to sit next to the sign language interpreter, and opposite the parent so that eye contact from the deaf person is easily shifted between the group leader and the interpreter. The room should be well lit with few visual distractions or bright lights that can make watching signed communication (e.g. face, eyes, hands and upper body) a strain.
- ✓ Agree how the translator refers to the parent when translating. Some translators use the first person when translating for example saying 'I' when responding with the parent's words while others feels more comfortable to use the third person. It is recommended that

it is preferable to use the first person, giving a more accurate rendition of the words and emotions being expressed and conveying a better sense of immediacy. In practice, most translators move between the first and third person. If a group leader has a preference, they need to discuss this in advance.

During the group session

- ✓ Allocate 10–15 minutes in advance of the session to brief the interpreter about the session topic and to enable them to brief group leader about any cultural issues which may have bearing on the session.
- ✓ Give the translator the programme manual during the session so they can refer to the written text (this aids the flow of translation)
- ✓ Look at the parent as much as feels natural, rather than at the translator unless speaking specifically to the translator. In general, we tend to move our eyes in a natural way between speakers, but it is important to be aware of the three-way relationship and make sure that the parent does not feel excluded.
- ✓ If the parent has hearing difficulties, it is best to maintain eye-contact with them so that communication is visually self-explanatory, although if eye contact is maintained for too long, especially during a 'silence', the deaf parent may feel that they are expected to talk. Appropriate eye contact is essential from the group leader and signer. Try to resist any temptation to talk to the translator, unless explicitly addressing them. When the translator is signing, try to maintain eye-contact with the parent rather than the translator. It often helps to speak only when signing has stopped so that everybody to be clear about who is communicating, lessening the demands on the sign language translator.
- ✓ For group leaders to slow their voice pace down and break speech into shorter segments, because the translator has to remember what the group leader has said, translate it and then convey it to the parent
- ✓ For group leaders to be expressional with facial expressions, gestures and body movements to aid understanding
- ✓ Sit co leader next to parent
- ✓ For group leaders to be mindful of the general use of local slang terms in group discussions and to be prepared to translate local slang terms to both the parent and the translator
- ✓ Be wary of using proverbs and sayings. If something does not make literal sense, it is usually best avoided.
- ✓ Put in lots of pair discussion breaks, for example instead of open question to the group ask the group to think about the question in pairs and then feedback back to the large group. In the pair's discussion the parent can talk to translator in own language.
- ✓ Parent to be aware they don't need to do any of the reading or home task writing but they do need to the time with young person.

After the session

- ✓ For group leader or co leader to ask the parent and translator if they have any questions or if they need any information given in the session clarified
- ✓ Mid-week phone calls or text may be difficult for the parent, so it is recommended that extra one to one session's are provided so the parent has space and time to explore how the parenting strategies are working in their family