

Ref. No: 1213
Date: 19/09/24
Subject: Hospital Translation Policy

REQUEST

1. Please could you state if your hospital Trust has a specific written policy/guidelines on what should happen when a translator/interpreter is accompanying a patient and they are in a queue for a clinic; specifically in relation to whether the patient and the translator/interpreter are moved forward in the queue? If so, could you provide me with a copy of that policy/guidelines.

NOTE: My understanding is that Trusts have a policy to move the translator/interpreter and their patient to the top of the queue, because the translator/interpreter is being paid for their time and the longer they have to wait the more expensive the process becomes. This question is seeking to see if that is the case at your Trust and whether you have a formal policy/guideline on the issue to save NHS money.

RESPONSE

MWL does have a policy on the use of interpreting and translation services but does not include the specific statement regarding moving patients accompanied by an interpreter to the front of a queue.

The Trust is charged a minimum of one hour per interpreter visit, regardless of whether the interpreter is actually only needed for 10 mins.

We have recently done some work on the length of time routine interpreters are needed for and have calculated they are used for approximately 20 minutes per patient, so the vast majority of interpreters will not exceed that first hour that we are charged for.

We also promote the use of telephone and video interpreting services which do cost less than a face to face interpreter and also free's up face to face interpreters to accompany patients who it would not be appropriate to use the telephone or video due to the sensitive nature of the information to be interpreted.