

## National Police Language Services Procedural Update - June 2021

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Advice regarding Health & Safety of Interpreters during police assignments

### Introduction

Several instances have occurred recently where interpreters have been left in rooms with suspects, witnesses or victims. The most common example is when a detained person who requires an interpreter, requests a consultation with a solicitor. Very often, the solicitor is not present but rather, uses a telephone to converse with the detained person and the interpreter is asked to stay in the room with the non-English speaking person.

There are also examples of interpreters being asked to remain in a room with a witness or victim while the interviewing officer leaves them for some reason. There have even been occasions when the interpreter is asked to take An MG 11 statement themselves rather than assist a police officer to take the statement.

### Guidance

The College of Policing issued guidance in 2020 on the use of interpreters. There are three documents:

Briefing the Interviewee Aide Memoire [Briefing\\_the\\_interviewee\\_aide\\_memoire\\_v1.0.pdf \(college.police.uk\)](#)

Using Language Services [CoP report template safe \(college.police.uk\)](#)

Working with an Interpreter [Working-with-an-interpreter-v1.0.pdf \(college.police.uk\)](#)

Page 8 of the Use of Language Services document clearly states:

**'Make sure that the interpreter is not left alone with the interviewee'**

Even when police are monitoring via CCTV whilst an interpreter is in a room with an Interviewee, serious injury to an interpreter could be inflicted before police may be able to intervene.

The interpreter is also open to all manner of allegations whilst alone with a vulnerable individual, or a detainee with unknown risk of harm to themselves or the interpreter.

### Procedures

If a detained person requires a consultation with a solicitor or any other person who is NOT present

in the same room, the face to face interpreter must not be allowed to interpret in the room with just the non-English speaker present.

For legal consultation, it is best practice to utilise a separate interpreter to the one being assigned to the interview. This is best achieved through telephone interpreting (TI) and can be arranged on demand rather than waiting for a face to face interpreter to attend.

If an officer needs to leave the room for any reason, they must ensure that the interpreter is also taken from the room to a location where they are not at risk.

The interpreter must never be left alone with any interviewee regardless of circumstances. This practice also conflicts with the interpreters code of conduct and safe working conditions as set out by their representative bodies or Language Service provider's terms and conditions.

### **Further Guidance**

Further guidance on this matter may be obtained by contacting Mark Lewis on [pait@leicestershire.pnn.police.uk](mailto:pait@leicestershire.pnn.police.uk)

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