

## Professional public service interpreters and the health crisis

Delivering vaccinations, and information about their benefits at a community level to address problems with their take up in deprived and ethnically diverse areas, demands effective communication to overcome any hindrance for people to access such vital health services. Working with community leaders, training them to speak informatively about the benefit of vaccination has been covered in a recent news story ( <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/health-56162075> ), but there was no mention of enlisting and engaging with professionally trained, qualified and experienced public service interpreters.

Sadly, the government's historical under-investment in professional public sector language services, and continuing failure to acknowledge the importance of statutory recognition for highly qualified and experienced practitioners, is not helping the health service to deal with the current situation and the equitable distribution of the vaccine. Professional, qualified and experienced public service interpreters are instrumental in facilitating communication and understanding of the enormous health issues being faced by communities where English is not the first language, as has been pointed out regularly to the government and the health services.

When engaging with a public service interpreter, be it in the courts, a doctor's consulting room or in a vaccination centre, ensure they are regulated, comply with the Code of Professional Conduct and are registered on the National Register, a not-for-profit organisation operating for 27 years with the aim of protecting the public and the public purse. Ask to see their NRPSI badge then you can be assured they have the right qualifications, have done the hard miles and gained over 400 hours of public service interpreting experience and abide by the Code of Professional Conduct.

Remember – NHS England guidelines stipulate: *Spoken language interpreters should be registered with the National Register of Public Service Interpreters (NRPSI) and hold a Diploma in Public Sector Interpreting (Health).*

For more information on the National Register of Public Service Interpreters (NRPSI) see [www.nrpsi.org.uk](http://www.nrpsi.org.uk) or contact [mike@nrpsi.org.uk](mailto:mike@nrpsi.org.uk)

1<sup>st</sup> March 2021