

Interpreting

Working with an interpreter: aide-memoire for interpreter-assisted interviews

Accurate interpreting is the result of good preparation. Your interpreter needs to be briefed properly before the interview. The briefing should be done away from the interviewee or their legal adviser to avoid unwanted pre-interview disclosure. See **Pre-interview briefings**.

The interpreter needs to know:

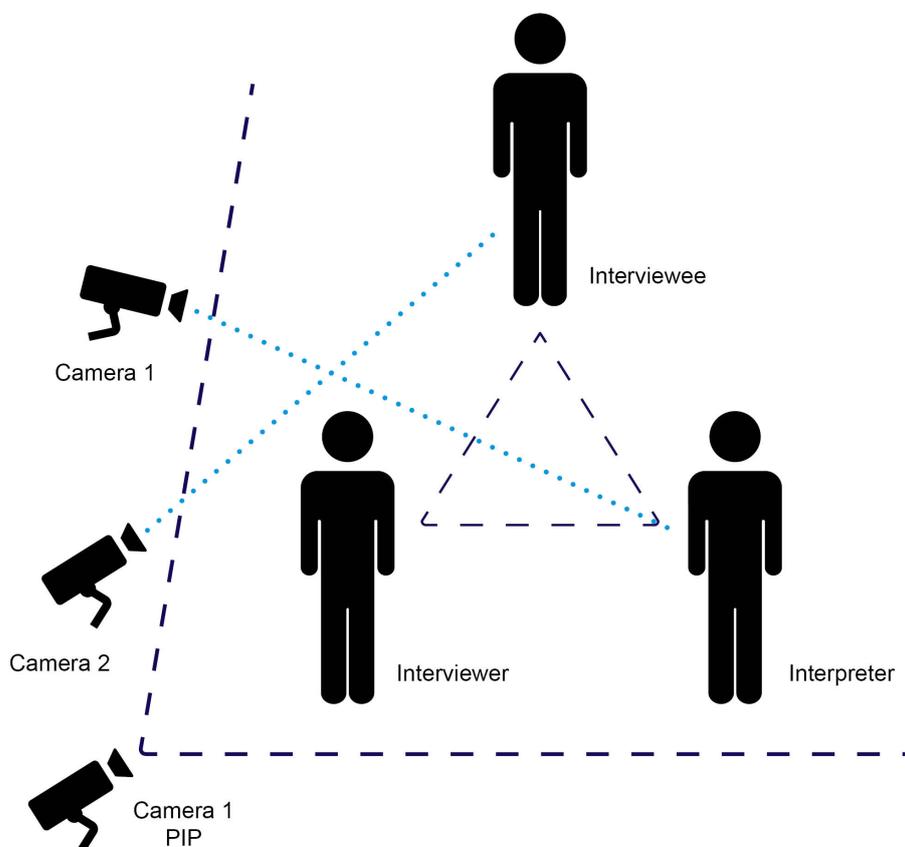
- what is likely to be discussed, including the nature of the offending and the context
- the terminology that is likely to be used, such as medical or legal terminology
- details about the individual for whom they will be interpreting, including their name and any other relevant information
- relevant place names and the names of any other people, including you, who may be referred to during the interview
- any exhibits, images or CCTV that may be referred to during the interview, particularly if they include disturbing images
- whether specific procedures are to be used, such as special warnings – these must be explained if required and any terminology or abbreviations must be clarified prior to the interview

In addition, it is necessary to carry out the following.

- Agree breaks and a signal that the interpreter can use if an unscheduled break is needed, for example, because they are losing concentration.
- Agree seating arrangements. The interpreter will need to see and hear all parties present in the interview equally well. The best seating arrangement for interpreter-assisted interviews may well be a triangular formation.
- Where there is a remote input into the interview, ensure that the interpreter can see all parties equally well. If the interview is being video recorded and British Sign Language (BSL) is being used, all parties must be clearly visible on the recording.

- Encourage the interpreter to identify any language or cultural barriers to achieving effective communication and understanding between you and the interviewee. You may need to consider what additional support is needed to achieve this. Any intervention needs to be transparent and explained in both languages.
- Remind the interpreter that they need to interpret everything they discuss with the interviewee, whether in the interview room or not. If they need to clarify a point, they must provide an accurate interpretation of their conversation.
- Remind the interpreter that they should not try to clear up apparent misunderstandings on their own initiative. They should interpret the actual words spoken or signed, and then allow you to assess what has been said and clarify anything that is not clear.

Note: the interpreter may need to consult a dictionary and glossaries to aid preparation or to assist during the interview. Many professional interpreters work on their own glossaries throughout their career, which they update after each assignment.



The diagram above shows a suggested seating arrangement and camera positions for an interpreter-assisted interview. This will ensure that all parties can clearly see each other and that the camera can clearly record all verbal and non-verbal communication between

the interpreter and interviewee. For BSL interpretation, ensure that there is sufficient signing space to allow a BSL interpreter to sign effectively. Ensure that the camera can clearly see the interpreter's and the interviewee's facial expressions, as well as the interviewee's signing.

Conducting an interpreter-assisted interview

You should:

- address the interviewee as though you are having a direct conversation (for example, ask the interviewee 'where were you', rather than asking the interpreter 'where was he/she')
- make eye contact with the interviewee to note any body language or non-verbal reactions (always clarify non-verbal reactions with the interpreter to ensure that they are correctly understood)
- ensure that only one person speaks at a time during a recorded interview (overlap can lead to inaudible fragments in the interview transcript)
- take a brief pause after one or two sentences to allow the interpreter time to interpret
- speak in short and unambiguous sentences to avoid confusion and unnecessary clarifications
- rephrase questions, if necessary, to ensure that the interviewee fully understands what is being asked and that you fully understand their answer (it is particularly important to make sure the interviewee understands the caution)
- if you need information or clarification about cultural differences that arise during the interview, ask the interviewee to clarify these via the interpreter
- if you think that the interpreter is having a protracted conversation with the interviewee at any point, ask them to stop and clarify what is being said

Interpreters' notes

Interpreters are usually trained to take notes to aid their memory during interviews. Any notes must be taken in hard copy.

The interpreter must hand their notes to you at the end of the interview, except where the notes are subject to legal privilege, and these notes must be referenced in the interpreter's

witness statement. Interpreters' notes should be included in the disclosure schedule of unused material.

To comply with data protection regulations, interpreters cannot retain a copy of their notes, since they may contain names, addresses or other personal information relevant to the case. Interpreters can make a separate note of any terminology of linguistic value for their professional glossary.