

How to calculate the costs of involving interpreters and translators in health and social care research



This is the first part of our two-part guide for researchers. Part two is ‘How to conduct health and social care research involving interpreters and translators.’

This part covers

The basics

Who can you approach for a quote?

What influences the cost?

What you need to provide to get a quote from an agency

Realistic time expectations

Summary

Part two covers

Be vigilant about standards.

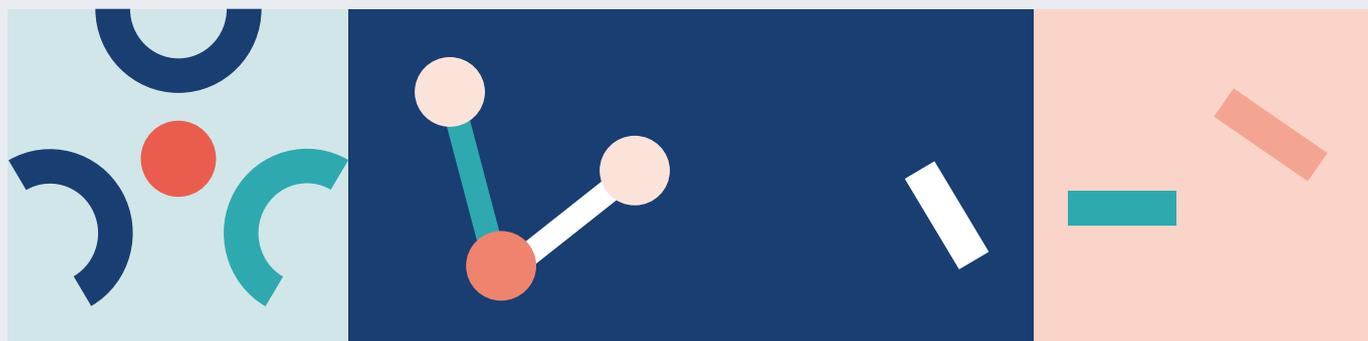
Which qualifications?

The National Register of Public Service Interpreters (what they check and what they don't)

Don't be caught out

Things you can do to save time/ money

Please note that this guide refers to spoken word interpreters (not British Sign Language). This guide is aimed at researchers who need to commission interpretation or translational support as part of their research work, or who might need to include estimated costs in a research funding bid.



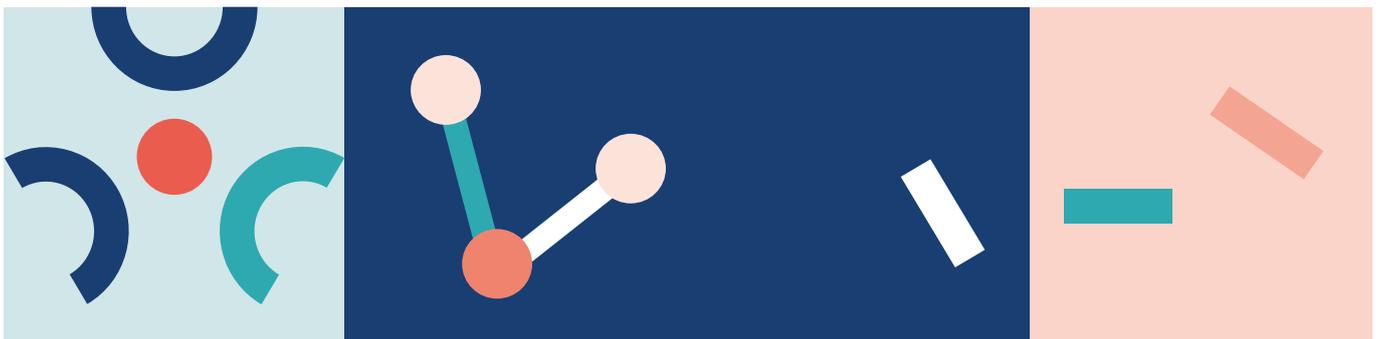
The basics

Interpreting and translation are not the same

- Interpreters are for the spoken word, translators are for the written word.
- Translators are paid by the word, interpreters by the hour (or by the minute if on the phone.) Face to face interpreters may have a minimum charge of one hour.
- **Not all** language professionals provide both services, even if qualified to do so.
- Translation tends to cost more than interpreting.

Agencies are not obliged to send you someone qualified. Interpreting and translation are not protected professions and quality control within agencies varies. It is up to you to understand standards (explained below), request qualifications (ideally Diploma in Public Service Interpreting (DPSI) Level 6) and check them.

Telephone interpreting is convenient, but accuracy is harder to attain. Face to face is preferable. We strongly recommend you **do not use machine translation** instead of interpreters and translators, for the reasons outlined in [this short video](#).



Who can you approach for a quote?

(Please note we cannot vouch for the quality of any particular service. Make your own checks.)

	For profit agencies (This is not an exhaustive list)	Non-profit agencies	Individual interpreters or translators
<p>Examples (You might prefer to support local language service provision in order to build capacity in your region)</p>	<p>AccuEast (Newcastle. Just East Asian languages)</p> <p>There are also several private sector national companies such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cintra • Language Line • Language Empire • The Big Word 	<p>Clear Voice Interpreting (National)</p> <p>The Other Perspective (Teesside and Tyneside)</p> <p>Everyday Language Solutions (Teesside, Durham and surrounding areas)</p>	<p>Can be found via the National Register for Public Service Interpreters (NRPSI)</p> <p>If you sign up to the website (for free) you can search for interpreters by language and by region.</p> <p>All interpreters have a Level 6 Diploma in Public Service Interpreting (DPSI) which also includes translation.</p>
<p>Things to ask (beside cost)</p>	<p>Will you be able to provide me with level 6 interpreters in all the languages I require?</p> <p>Can you provide the same interpreter for every assignment? (This is not a deal breaker but could help if your area of work is complex)</p> <p>How much detail will interpreters have in advance? (Your interpreters need to understand the purpose and background of the work. To what extent will the agency pass this on?)</p> <p>Can you provide face-to-face interpreters?</p>	<p>Can you interpret and translate?</p> <p>Here are the assignment dates, can you commit to them all?</p> <p>Can you attend a briefing meeting in advance and will you charge for this?</p>	<p>Can you interpret and translate?</p> <p>Here are the assignment dates, can you commit to them all?</p> <p>Can you attend a briefing meeting in advance and will you charge for this?</p>
<p>Advantages</p>	<p>It's less time consuming if you leave the sourcing of interpreters to someone else. Agencies have the experience, capacity and resources to do this.</p> <p>Agencies may be able to advise you which are the most spoken languages in your region.</p>	<p>You might work with just one person for each language which saves you the trouble of repeated briefings. The bigger the agency, the less likely this becomes.</p> <p>You can choose someone with the life skills to treat your subject matter with sensitivity. (Consider gender, background, maturity etc.)</p> <p>100% of your fee goes to the interpreter or translator which may result in lower costs.</p> <p>You can be certain their credentials have been checked by NRPSI.</p>	<p>You might work with just one person for each language which saves you the trouble of repeated briefings. The bigger the agency, the less likely this becomes.</p> <p>You can choose someone with the life skills to treat your subject matter with sensitivity. (Consider gender, background, maturity etc.)</p> <p>100% of your fee goes to the interpreter or translator which may result in lower costs.</p> <p>You can be certain their credentials have been checked by NRPSI.</p>

What influences the cost?

How much does translation cost per word?

It depends on three things

1. Whether you're going via an agency (paying a translator directly will be cheaper).

Below are some estimates of prices in 2022

- Via an agency, 10p-15p per word
- A freelance translator
 - o 12-13p per word if it's a rare language
 - o 7p-8p per word if it isn't

2. How technical the document is.

This has two aspects:

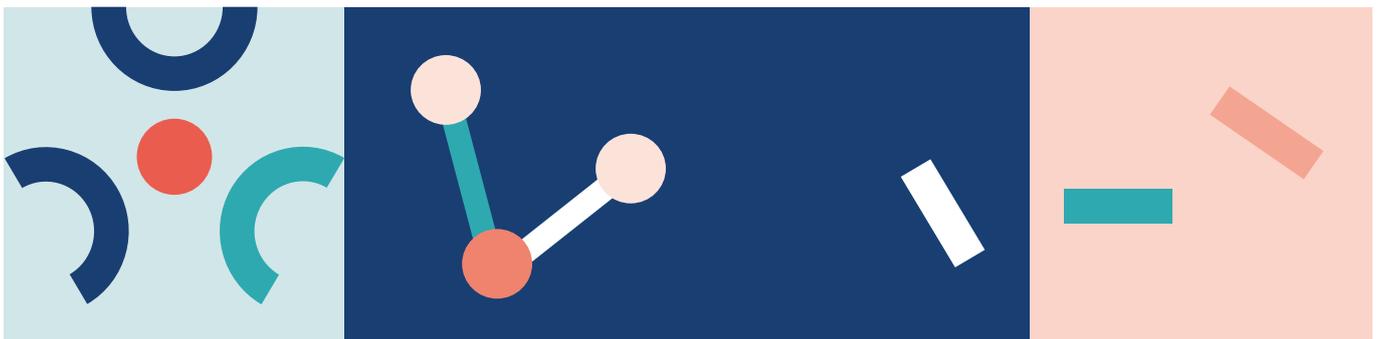
- Jargon/ subject specific terminology
- The document format; Is it just a Word document? Or a colourful leaflet with images and logos which requires typesetting and editing skills? This is skilled, time-consuming work and it costs more.

3. How rare the language is.

For example, at the time of writing Ukrainian, Tigrinya, and Kurdish dialects are in short supply which can cause time delays and higher prices.

How much does interpreting cost via an agency?

This depends on the level of qualification the interpreter holds. For a community interpreter you would be paying around £20 - £25 per hour through an agency. For a DPSI Interpreter you would pay anywhere between £25 - £40 per hour depending on the rarity of the language. You would also need to factor in travel costs (time and mileage).



What you'll need to provide to get a quote

Timeline

You should be able to get a quote from an agency within 24 hours. If you find your own interpreters and translators (for example using the NRPSI register) it will take longer. The following explains steps you should take if you request a quote from an agency.

In the planning stage (for example when applying for funding) you'll need an approximate figure. If you explain it's for a funding bid, they should be happy to give you an estimate with some provisos.

For the translation estimate they will need to know:

- The approximate word count in total
- The level of technicality
- The subject
- The languages required

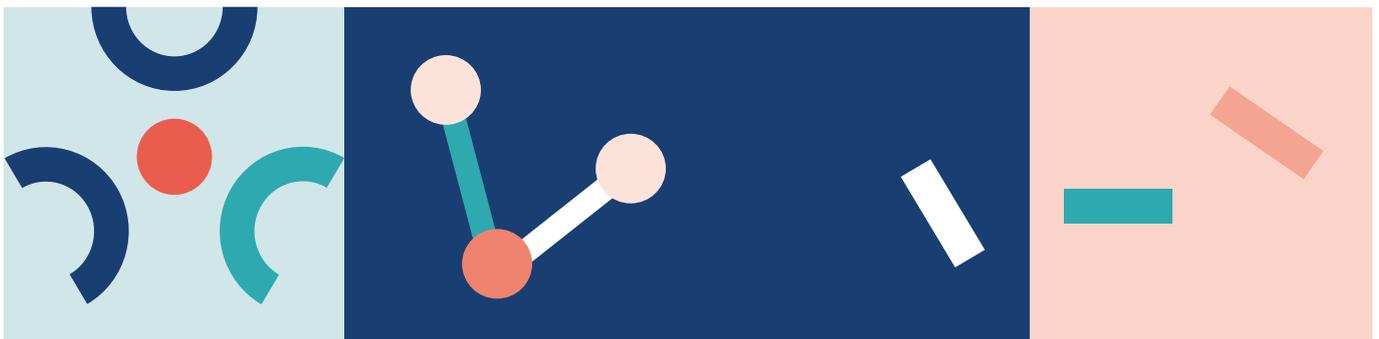
For the interpreting estimate they will need to know:

- Languages
- Estimated time
- Location (for face to face)

Later you will require a more exact quote (This should include the availability of translators, and timescales) For this, the agency will need more information.

They'll need to:

- See the documents and show them to the translators
- Ask the translators for availability so they can tell you how long it will take



Realistic expectations

How long should translations take?

You need to allow time for you (or the agency you use) to source the right translators for the job. Predictions on how many words per day a translator can produce vary quite a lot.

Some estimates are below.

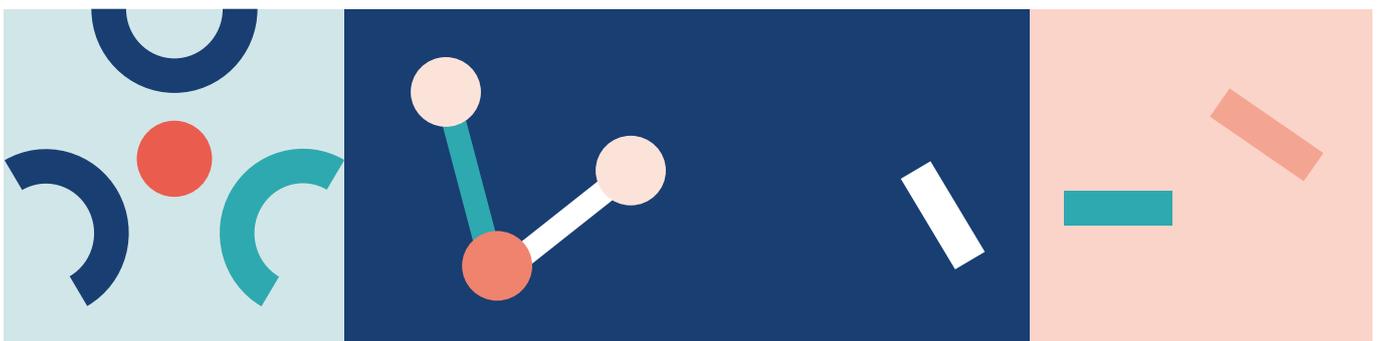
- Up to 1,000 words a day if working exclusively on your document
- A 25-page patient information document will take at least a week, assuming the translator has no other jobs to attend to
- Four A4 pages, non-technical, not a rare language, would take two to three days.

How long does interpretation take?

People often underestimate this. Interviews will take **AT LEAST** twice as long for as they would do with a native English speaker.

Everything is said twice, plus:

- You should allow time to brief and debrief the interpreter
- Participants who grew up outside the UK may require additional explanations for commonplace terms.



Summary

How to estimate language support costs for a funding application.

1. Find out about your target population. What percentage of them rely on interpreters? In the interests of equality and diversity, the proportion of non-English speaking participants in your study should reflect that.
2. Which are the most spoken languages among that population/ in your region? Choose which language speakers you will try to include in the study based on this.

Tip: You may find data on points 1 and 2 above by looking at the Local Authority Joint Strategic Needs Assessment for your region (although not all JSNAs include this data.) Or census information. Alternatively, if you obtain your estimate from a local agency with regional knowledge, they may tell you.

3. Look at the documents you will need to translate. What is their total word count? Use this to make an approximate cost calculation using the costs above (and taking into account the considerations listed in this document.)

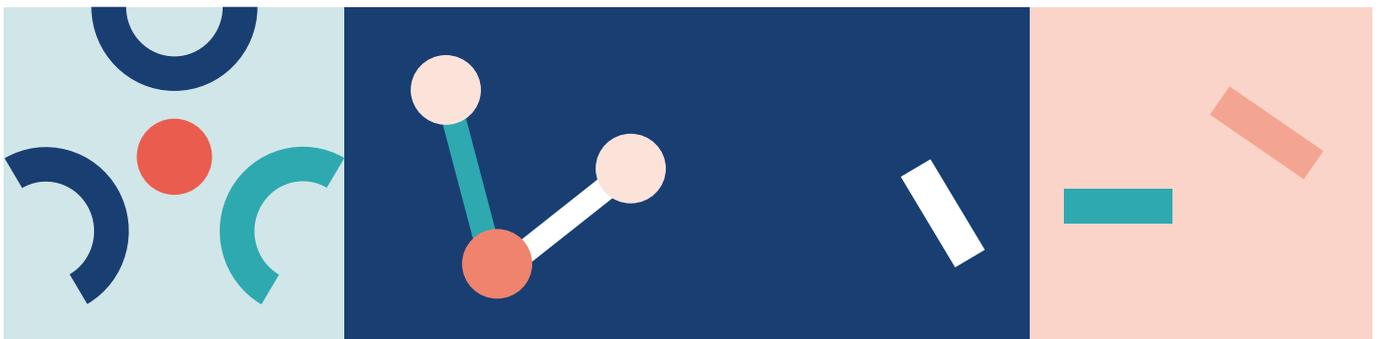
Your estimate for translation should look like this:

$(\text{Number of languages}) \times (\text{total word count}) \times (\text{cost per word})$

As mentioned above, the cost per word may vary.

4. Using a typical native English-speaking participant as your starting point, calculate how many hours an average participant would normally spend in appointments. Bear in mind that some interpreter costs for routine appointments should be met by the NHS not your funders. If that's the case, subtract this from your estimate.

Multiply the total hours by 2.5 (because it will take more than twice as long if an interpreter is required). Use this total number of hours to calculate your interpreting estimate.



About this guide

This project was funded and commissioned by the National Institute for Health and Care Research (NIHR) Applied Research Collaboration (ARC) North East and North Cumbria (NENC).

This information was gathered by Shelley Purchon (Director of English Unlocked).

Thanks to Everyday Language Solutions for providing all estimates, correct at the time of writing (September 2022).

Get in touch

Shelley Purchon (Director of English Unlocked)

info@englishunlocked.co.uk

NIHR Applied Research Collaboration (ARC) North East and North Cumbria (NENC)

arcnenc@cntw.nhs.uk

