



Homes for Haringey

# Standards for translation, interpreting, and alternative formats

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## 1. Purpose of this document

This document sets out the standards that Homes for Haringey will use for providing information to residents in translation or alternative formats.

## 2. How we will provide information

- Face to face, using an interpreter or British Sign Language (BSL) communicator if required
- In writing, translated into community languages, Braille, large print or as an audio version, as required

## 3. Providing information according to preference or need

The principles are:

- where documents already exist in a particular language or format, anyone can request these as a preference or need.
- where documents **do not** already exist in a particular language or format, we will provide a translation or alternative format **unless** the request seems unreasonable and/or unnecessary. An example of this would be a known English speaker requesting a document in one or more community languages without good reason.
- when residents request a **standard letter** in a language or format that does not currently exist, we will provide the letter in the requested language or format. We will create a database of translated/alternative format standard letters to use in future.
- we will provide an interpreter (including a British Sign Language communicator) unless the request seems unnecessary or unreasonable, or we have not been given enough time to provide one. We will start trying to book an interpreter on the same day as we receive the request, as long as this is before 4pm, and do our best to provide one but we cannot guarantee immediate availability.
- Where a resident is known to have difficulty in reading, staff will arrange to contact them in person or by telephone (using an interpreter if necessary) to communicate issues that might have more serious consequences for them (such arrangements for works to the home/block, significant changes of management arrangements, or the possibility of legal action).

We will accept a request for any of the above from a carer or other responsible person acting on behalf of a Haringey Council tenant or leaseholder. We will also accept a request from a recognised community representative who is acting on behalf of a Haringey Council tenant or leaseholder.

## 4. General standards for written information

Homes for Haringey will provide all written information (including letters) for residents in clear English. This will:

- be jargon free (or jargon will be explained)
- always spell out acronyms in full the first time they are used in a piece of text. We will generally avoid acronyms unless they are commonly used and known (e.g. ASBO).
- be accompanied by a translation panel (see below) when we cannot be sure of the translation/format needs of those receiving the information
- use the correct font (Century Gothic)
- use a minimum font size of 12 point (where possible, 14 point).

We will use upper and lower case letters; people with sight problems or learning difficulties find words printed in all capitals more difficult to read.

The main body of text will be aligned with the left margin. Justified text must not be used because the irregular spacing between words can make the text difficult to read.

**Printed and electronic information** (such as Homes for Haringey's website) will follow the RNIB's guidance for accessible information – [www.rnib.org.uk/xpedio/groups/public/documents/publicWebsite/public\\_seeitright.html](http://www.rnib.org.uk/xpedio/groups/public/documents/publicWebsite/public_seeitright.html). This covers issues such as point size for text, layout and colour.

The Homes for Haringey website will also conform to the AAA standard of the Web Accessibility Initiative (WAI) Web Content Accessibility Guidelines 1.0. – [www.w3.org/WAI/guid-tech.html](http://www.w3.org/WAI/guid-tech.html). These are internationally recognised guidelines for creating accessible websites. (The Web Accessibility Initiative (WAI) is affiliated with the World Wide Web Consortium (W3C) and works with organisations around the world to increase the accessibility of the web.)

The Homes for Haringey Communications Team must be involved in the production of publications when:

- the project brief is being drawn up
- the publication is being signed off.

The team can also advise on using the Homes for Haringey brand. Brand guidelines are available to staff on the intranet (Harinet) at [http://harinet.haringey.gov.uk/h4h\\_brand\\_partner\\_guidelines\\_may\\_2006.pdf](http://harinet.haringey.gov.uk/h4h_brand_partner_guidelines_may_2006.pdf)

## 5. Plain English checking

Homes for Haringey will ensure that key documents for use by a wide range of residents over time (such as charters and service standards) are checked so that they meet nationally-recognised standards of plain English.

## 6. Capturing information needs

We will put systems in place to gather and store residents' information needs, including:

- preferred spoken language (including British Sign Language)
- preferred written language
- alternative formats, including Braille, large print and audio version
- other communication requirements, including text phone (Minicom) for people who have impaired hearing, induction loops, and assistance with reading and/or writing
- the date on which this information was entered onto Homes for Haringey's systems so that we can review this information periodically.

We will adapt our housing computer systems so that individual needs (such as those listed above) are flagged up on screen.

We will ensure that we comply with the Data Protection Act 1998 in terms of the information we hold and how we store and use it.

We aim to capture the communication needs and preferences of at least 90% of residents by 2011/12. This will allow us to personalise our communication with residents and provide information in a way that meets their needs, and at the point of origin rather than on request.

Every five years we will ask all residents to confirm whether their individual needs have changed. This will help to reduce costs and enable us to meet residents' information needs effectively. We will do this through:

- sign-ups and welcome visits
- occupancy checks
- day-to-day contact, including customer service, the call centre, operatives, tenancy management officers, concierge and construction partners

We will promote the council's courses in English for speakers of other languages (ESOL) in relevant publications and on our website.

## 7. Information for residents provided by contractors and consultants

We will expect contractors and consultants working on our behalf to follow our standards (or higher) when providing information to residents.

We will check that contractors and consultants can meet this requirement as part of the procurement process and will monitor their performance regularly.

We will ensure that contractors and consultants comply with the Data Protection Act 1998 in terms of the information they hold about residents and how they store and use it.

## 8. Translated pages on the Homes for Haringey website

We will translate key pages (as well as the site home page) into the five most requested languages (French, Albanian, Kurdish, Turkish and Somali in October 2006). These pages will initially be:

- Getting advice – help with finding accommodation
- Tenants' rights and responsibilities
- Leaseholders' rights and responsibilities
- Housing repair reporting service
- Join the action – a guide to getting involved
- A brief history of Homes for Haringey
- Equal access to Homes for Haringey information and services
- The anti-social behaviour action team (ASBAT)
- Give us your opinion – suggestions and compliments
- Tell us where we have gone wrong – making a complaint.

There will be links to these translated pages from each language home page (for example, on the Turkish version of the home page there will be a list of all other pages available in Turkish) so users can navigate the available sections of the site in their own language.

We will translate links to downloadable documents (for example, the Complaints, Compliments and Suggestions leaflet). To get a translated version of a published document the user will complete the translation request form (included on the back page of each published document) and return to Haringey Council's Translation and Interpreting Services.

### Monitoring

We will monitor use of the translated pages for six months. If the translated pages are successful we may add more in the future.

We will also monitor the languages that we translate web pages into to ensure we are always translating the top five (as these are likely to change over time).

## 9. Translation panels

We will include translation panels on the back of all standard and individual letters, as well as other documents we produce such as newsletters and information leaflets.

The panels will offer translations or alternative format versions. The panels will:

- be at least 12 point in font size
- carry translations in the six most requested written languages (as advised by Haringey Council's Translation and Interpreting Services) and, in English, offer other languages
- offer Braille, large print and audio
- carry a freepost return address or a mobile text contact and code
- carry a description of the information, so residents can decide if this is something they need to request. The exception to providing a description is for letters, which will have a standard, pre-printed panel.

We propose to research the feasibility of providing the translation panels in the top six languages used by Haringey Council's tenants and leaseholders rather than the six most widely spoken community languages in Haringey. This will enable us to meet residents' information needs more effectively.

For example, it is likely that the languages read by new housing applicants or people on one estate may vary a lot from the wider population. Council tenants may also have distinct needs from the wider population of Haringey. So having the translation panels in the most widely spoken community languages in Haringey may not meet the information needs of council tenants.

Providing more targeted information will be more expensive and harder to manage. We will therefore look at costs and logistics when researching this option. However, over time it will become easier to assess accurately language/format requirements as we capture and store information about residents' preferences on our housing computer systems.

Where appropriate, for example in a survey questionnaire, the translation panel will include an invitation to the resident to request an interpreter by texting a unique code to the council's Translation and Interpreting Service. The Service manager will have a list of these codes and will arrange for an interpreter to call the resident within five days to give assistance.

## 10. Translations and alternative format versions of Homes for Haringey documents

### 10.1 Newsletters

We produce a number of newsletters including: Homes Zone; estate or area newsletters; consultation and information newsletters such as those for major works.

We will translate or provide alternative format versions of the full text of all regular newsletters when one or more people need this.

We will aim to send out the translated versions on the same date as the English version is sent, or as close as possible to this date. To ensure this happens the person producing the newsletter will need to:

- give Haringey Council's Translation and Interpreting Services advance notice of the type and length of the translation(s)/alternative format(s)
- send the text to Translation and Interpreting Services at the same time as to Design and Print.

Examples of when we should provide translated/alternative format versions of newsletters are:

- when one or more people make a request (one-off)
- when we are sending a local newsletter (for example, on an estate) to an area where we know a significant number of people need a particular language/format and the information in that newsletter is important
- when one or more people need every edition of a newsletter translated into their language or provided in an alternative format
- when one or more people regularly require a particular language or format.

In the last two cases, we will translate or provide an alternative format version of all future editions of the newsletter and send them to all residents who have registered for that language/alternative format version. For cost reasons we will produce the newsletter as a Word document.

### 10.2 Specific articles

When we need to communicate important information that is particularly relevant to specific communities, we will translate relevant articles into that language/format and send them to residents who have registered for that language/format.

Examples might include:

- articles on new provisions for blind people (to those preferring Braille/large print/audio tape or CD)
- advertising a new user group for Chinese people (in Cantonese/Mandarin)
- publishing standards for providing information in other languages/alternative formats (to anyone with any language/alternative format requirements).

### **10.3 Standard letters**

We will identify the key standard letters that have the most serious implications for residents, particularly those about possible ending or changing of tenancies. Initially, we will translate these letters into the top six languages. We will use our database of residents' information requirements to ensure these letters are always sent in the languages/formats that residents have registered for.

When residents ask for these letters in languages/formats that are not already available, we will order a new translation and add it to the list of available documents.

### **10.4 Individual and non-standard letters**

Where a resident has registered for information in a particular language/alternative format we will send letters in translation or the preferred format. Staff will need to allow up to five working days for a translation/alternative format.

If appropriate we will add the translation/alternative format version to the list of letters available.

We will also include our standard translation panel (see above) on the back of all letters so that residents can request them in translation or an alternative format.

### **10.5 Text messaging**

For reasons of cost and time we will only communicate with residents by text in English. We will avoid abbreviations in text messages and follow our standards for clear English.

Where we enable residents to use text messaging to take part in surveys or ask for information in translation or alternative formats, we will make sure that the instructions for doing this are in clear English.

### **10.6 Email**

For reasons of cost and time we will only communicate with residents by email in English. We will avoid abbreviations in emails and follow our standards for clear English. We will use a minimum font size of 12 point and the font will be Century Gothic.

## 11. Meetings, public events and interviews

For one to one meetings with residents we will provide interpreters (including British Sign Language communicators) if required when we are given enough time to book an interpreter. We will start trying to book an interpreter on the same day as we receive the request, as long as this is before 4pm, and do our best to provide one but we cannot guarantee immediate availability.

When we already know of the need for an interpreter because this is recorded, we will arrange the interview at a time suitable for the resident and the interpreter.

If the meeting/interview has not been arranged beforehand and a resident would like to have a language interpreter present staff will use:

- a bilingual member of staff if one is available
- the Haringey Interpreting by Telephone Service.

For clients who are deaf or hearing impaired, staff will try to get a British Sign Language communicator or write what they need to say. Staff may need to arrange another meeting with the client and a British Sign Language communicator.

For meetings and public events in buildings where an induction loop facility is available, staff will request that the building's facilities management staff make sure the equipment is fully charged and in working order.

Where a meeting/interview concerns important tenancy issues (such as arrears, tenancy breaches, harassment or anti-social behaviour suffered or caused by the resident) and the resident needs an interpreter, then staff should do all they can to ensure one is available either in person or on the phone, arranging another meeting if necessary.

Children should not act as interpreters. Family members should only be used where it is clear they understand what needs to be communicated.

For meetings and public events we will provide interpreters (including British Sign Language communicators) if required when we are given enough time to book an interpreter. We will start trying to book an interpreter on the same day as we receive the request, as long as this is before 4pm, and do our best to provide one but we cannot guarantee immediate availability.

## 12. Freedom of information (Fol) requests

We will provide a summary of the information requested in the language/format needed by the person making the request. We will provide the full document and any additional information in English.

If the person wants a translation of the full document and any additional information, we will charge for this at standard Haringey Council Translation and Interpreting Services rates.

### 13. New work instructions for staff

We will draw up a range of new work instructions for staff. These include:

- providing key standard letters in the language/format that a resident prefers when this is flagged on housing computer systems
- ordering a new translation/format of an existing standard letter, ensuring it is accurate and legally correct for future use.

There are several important issues that must be resolved before we can provide certain standard letters in translation or an alternative format (for example, those with a legal standing such as a Notice of Seeking Possession). We are examining:

- how translations/alternative format versions of key standard letters should be checked and signed off
- possible legal issues (for example, whether a translation/alternative format version should act as a guide to the original version, or will be sufficient on its own)
- how best to make translations/alternative format versions available to other staff for future use
- how to ensure that staff can easily insert variable information in a letter they cannot personally understand (such as contact details, amount of arrears etc).

### 14. Ordering translations/alternative format versions and booking interpreters

Information about using Haringey Council's Translation and Interpreting Services and their charges is available to staff on the intranet (Harinet) at

[http://harinet.haringey.gov.uk/intranet/directorates/chief\\_executive\\_services/strategy\\_directorate/communications/translation.htm](http://harinet.haringey.gov.uk/intranet/directorates/chief_executive_services/strategy_directorate/communications/translation.htm)