

Communication

Consumer directed approach is only possible when older people, their families and carers are able to be actively involved in the negotiation of care plans and contracts with aged care service providers. Effective communication is also essential to the physical, emotional and psychological well-being of aged care consumers.

Communication poses a challenge for older people who speak languages other than English and are having to negotiate the aged care service sector in English, a language they may not prefer to communicate in or they may not speak.

Key considerations

Assessment / Care Planning / Contract Negotiation

Accurate communication is crucial at all times, especially when contracts are negotiated and when care plans are developed and reviewed. Using professional interpreting services at these times – and whenever informed consent is required – will help ensure that misunderstandings does not occur, quality and safety are not compromised and risk of adverse events is minimised.

The Australian Government subsidises aged care providers to access TIS National interpreting services. TIS National is available 24 hours, seven days a week and provides both telephone and onsite interpreting. TIS National can be accessed in both residential and home setting settings and can assist consumers with negotiating and understanding agreements, care plans, individualised budget and monthly statements, at no cost.

When accessing TIS National, providers need to quote their Unique Client Code. If a provider is unsure of their client code, they can contact TIS National directly on 1300 655 820.

[Download Accessing Interpreter Services Practice Guide](#)

Bilingual Staff

It is not uncommon for aged care providers to employ staff with bilingual skills within a variety of roles and professions. Recognising and tapping into these language skills can be an enormous asset in any aged care service. When well-managed, these valuable skills can be effective in bridging communication barriers with consumers who speak a language other than English.

The Centre for Cultural Diversity in Ageing has developed a Practice Guide for aged care providers to assist them in harnessing the bilingual skills of their staff and maximising their effect within the workplace. The Guide provides an overview of key issues to consider in terms of human resource management, risk minimisation and improving service outcomes.

[Download Working with Bilingual Staff Practice Guide](#)

Communication (cont.)

Family and Friends

Family and friends play a critical role in communication with older people who speak languages other than English. However it is important that they are not seen as a substitute for using interpreters. The use of family and friends can lead to lack of accuracy, breaking confidentiality, conflicts of interest and increased risk in misinterpretation and misdiagnosis.

Translated Resources

The production and availability of high quality translated material is vital in supporting your communication efforts with consumers who speak languages other than English. This can be done by accessing existing materials which have been already translated by other organisations or producing translations of materials which are specific to your own organisation. Materials can range from information/promotion about services, aged care and health related information and internal communications such as service agreements, consumer rights, and consent/complaints forms.

In 2022, the Australian government Department of Health and Aged Care launched its project entitled [Different Languages, Same Aged Care](#) which offers free translations for Australian Government funded aged care providers. These services can be used to communicate with older people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds; First Nations Elders; and Deaf, blind, deafblind or hard of hearing older Australians.

Search the following links for existing translated materials:

[Multilingual Health and Aged Care](#)

[Communication Cards](#)

[Aged Care Signage](#)

Plain English

The use of plain English is important in both verbal and written communications. Using complex terminology, jargon, technical terms, acronyms and grammatical structure can make it very difficult for people to understand. There are a number of resources which can assist you in developing strategies for using plain English in all your communications, including preparation of text for translations.

Practice guide

Useful resources

[Translating and Interpreting Service for aged care service providers](#) Department of Health

[Health Translations website](#) Centre for Culture, Ethnicity and Health

[Drop the Jargon website](#) Drop the Jargon Campaign

[Working with TIS National interpreters](#) TIS National

[Hints and tips for working with interpreters video](#) TIS National

[Connecting through inclusive communication practices](#) EMR Alliance

[Planning for Translation](#) Centre for Culture, Ethnicity and Health

[Different Languages, Same Aged Care](#) Department of Health and Aged Care

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