

EastendHomes Interpretation, Translation and Communication Needs Policy

Statement of Intent

- 1.1 EastendHomes is committed to delivering excellent services for all our residents. A central element of this is providing services that can be accessed by all residents, including those that do not have English as their first language, and people with restricted hearing or vision.
- 1.2 EastendHomes has developed this policy with clear reference to the identified profile of its service users, and also giving consideration to the relative costs of services, including the tailoring of services to meet residents' identified needs.

Languages – Interpreting and Translation services

- 2.1 There are four potential formats of customer service provision to tackle language barriers which will be used. These are:
 - Personal interpretation – a person with suitable language skills who translates conversations as they are taking place on a face-to-face basis
 - Oral interpretation – normally, a three-way conversation by telephone with one party providing verbal translation
 - Written translation – a formal reproduction of a published document in another language
 - Oral translation – a verbal translation of written text either in person or by telephone
- 2.2 The most appropriate form of provision will be deployed by EastendHomes with reference to the user's needs and the information being communicated, as per the practices described in this policy.

Interpreting Services

- 3.1 Appropriate interpreting arrangements (including sign language) will be provided to enable all residents of EEH to have effective access to EEH services.
- 3.2 EEH will use bilingual staff for personal or oral interpreting wherever possible. A register of staff language skills will be maintained to assist with this.
- 3.3 Where interpreting needs cannot be met by a bilingual member of staff, a specialist interpreting service will be used.
- 3.4 Interpreting will be delivered in person or via the telephone. Face-to-face interpreting is preferred when the issue being discussed is

complex, highly detailed, is seen as high risk, or is of a sensitive nature. Interpreting over the telephone is appropriate where the communication is relatively straightforward or in circumstances which cannot be planned for, such as when someone visits a reception desk. or where the matter requires urgent action.

- 3.5 Especially when dealing with issues of a sensitive nature, efforts will be taken to find an interpreter that best meets the needs of the user. Issues that may need to be considered include:
- Gender
 - Specific dialect
 - Specialist language (e.g. legal or medical)

When dealing with an urgent matter, whilst best efforts will be undertaken to provide an interpreter who best matches the service user's needs, the provision of information will be prioritised where this is considered to be in the best interests of the service user (for example, enabling an emergency repair appointment to be arranged or kept).

Demographic Considerations

- 4.1 Data from EastendHomes' resident profiling exercise indicates that more than half of all residents on our estates, and more than 40% of tenants, are of Bangladeshi ethnic origin. This reflects all of our properties and there are sizeable differences between the demographic profile of EastendHomes' various estates.
- 4.2 Although there are accordingly many households where Bengali/Sylheti or another language other than English is spoken, only a small minority of households are recognised to have *no* members who are English speakers. Preferred languages will be recorded on the housing management system together with the details of household members who are able to translate or interpret where these circumstances apply. Evidence from the resident profiling exercise and from the statistics recorded on property lets suggests that the proportion of households without a fluent speaker of English is steadily decreasing.
- 4.3 Additionally, national government guidance and policy is inclined towards promoting the speaking of English amongst BME communities. However EastendHomes is committed that this should not impinge upon the ability of our residents to access services. Given the particularly high level of BME and Bengali-speaking residents on EastendHomes estates, and EastendHomes' commitment to delivering services which are accessible to all, measures will be taken to support the accessibility of information on our services, including translation where required.

- 4.4 Resident profiling information also suggests that approximately 1 in 40 of residents have a hearing impairment which may affect their ability to access services, with a similar number having a visual impairment.

Translation Services

- 5.1 Given the evidence obtained via demographic factors outlined above, it is proposed that EastendHomes Tenant Handbook be provided in both English and Bengali. For all other documents translation will be offered on request, which will involve an offer of personal or oral translation in the first instance.
- 5.2 All published EastendHomes leaflets will include a panel promoting the option to have the document translated into alternative community languages, or adaptation into a range of alternative formats (such as large text or Braille) to meet residents' needs. Any such requests received will be managed under the terms of this policy.
- 5.3 As per 5.1, all published information other than the Tenant Handbook will be produced in English only as standard. Where requests for translation are received, a verbal translation will be offered in the first instance, which may include key details being written down for the service user. Where required, a written version may be provided within seven days for documents of A4 size material and 28 days for anything larger.
- 5.4 Demographic data collated through the resident profiling exercise, including language and communication needs, will be recorded securely on the housing management system available to frontline staff. In addition to the standard 'translation and communication needs' information, where bespoke communication is being generated to an individual service user, staff will have the capacity to include a sentence summarising the contents of the communication and including a telephone number for further verbal explanation. Standard sentences with a choice of the 8 most likely topics in the 29 most commonly spoken languages in Tower Hamlets are available to staff.
- 5.5 All housing centre reception areas will have standard posters promoting the availability of interpreting and translation services. This includes the EastendHomes Language Services leaflet which contains key phrases in each available language to assist a visitor to the housing centre to make themselves understood.
- 5.6 If it is felt that the effects of this policy result in EastendHomes disproportionately disadvantaging any particular group, then this policy will be reviewed.

- 5.7 EEH reserves the right to refuse an application for oral translation where the subject of the request is frivolous or mischievous. Additionally, EEH reserves the right to refuse an application for **written** translation or an alternative format where such a translation would represent an inappropriate use of funds. In such circumstances an oral translation facility will be provided.

Accessibility and Special Communication Needs

- 6.1 Where a resident requires tailored communication by reason of visual impairment, EastendHomes will communicate the information requested in the most appropriate manner based on the urgency of the request and the importance of the information. This may include verbal communication by staff, providing written information in large font type which is easier to read, the provision of an audio recording (audio CD or cassette), or a Braille translation. Alternative formats will be provided within 28 days. A verbal translation will always be offered in the first instance and 5.7 applies.
- 6.2 All EastendHomes offices will be fitted with an induction loop to assist service users with a hearing impairment. Officers will provide a written record of any communication with such service users on request to ensure that information has been understood.
- 6.3 EastendHomes' corporate website will be built to comply with web accessibility guidelines (WCAG 2.0 AA). This will include the option to alter the contrast to make text easier to read. The site will also offer a third-party translation feature to convert displayed text in English into other languages.

Review

- 7.1 This policy will be reviewed every three years, or sooner if required due to a change in circumstances, including significant changes to demographic considerations or national policy positions.