

Housing Services Translation and Interpreting Policy

Department	Housing Services
Responsible Person	Director of Housing
Last Reviewed	17 June 2026
Next Review	16 June 2028

Table of Contents

1. Introduction.....	3
2. Legislative framework	3
3. Aims of the Policy.....	3
4. The Policy	3
5. Translation and Interpreting Services.....	4
6. Equality Impact.....	5

1. Introduction

- 1.1 The Housing Services Team is committed to ensuring that all tenants can access housing services fairly and effectively, regardless of their ability to communicate in English, or if they have a sensory impairment and use sign language or braille to communicate.
- 1.2 This Policy outlines how the Housing Services Team will provide translation, interpretation and accessible communication support to enable tenants who do not use spoken or written English as their main language or have a sensory impairment, to understand information, participate in decision-making and access services on an equal basis.

2. Legislative framework

Equality Act 2010

Public Sector Equality Duty (within the above)

3. Aims of the Policy

- 3.1 The aims of this Policy are to:
- Ensure all tenants who have difficulty communicating in English are able to access key housing services.
 - Ensure all tenants who are hearing impaired and require signers are able to access key housing services.
 - Ensure all tenants who are registered as severely sight impaired or partially sighted are able to access key housing services.
 - Ensure compliance with legislation and ensure that no tenant is disadvantaged because of their inability to communicate.

4. The Policy

- 4.1 Before considering translation or interpretation, Housing Services officers will ensure they communicate in plain English with a simple, accessible, and jargon-free style.
- 4.2 Housing Services Officers will, where possible seek to proactively reduce or remove language barriers before tenants encounter them, by providing simple written summaries, or by using interpreters and language translation services.

- 4.3 Translation and interpretation services are offered without prejudice reflecting the councils' values of equality and inclusivity.
- 4.4 When a Housing Services Officer is made aware of a tenant's preferred language for communication (both spoken and written) they will record this on the housing management system.

5. Translation and Interpreting Services

- 5.1 The council offers translating and interpreting services to assist tenants who may require help in understanding council information and services. The council offers free online tools which enable pages on their website to be translated into other languages, these include;
- Google Translate
 - Google chrome – the chrome browser enables web pages to be translated into different languages.
 - Microsoft translate – an app that can be used on a phone for translations.
 - Translating letters – the Google Translate app can also translate text in photos for both Apple and Android devices.
- 5.2 However, translation software and applications are not always entirely accurate and therefore the council cannot be held responsible for any inaccuracies that may arise from their use.
- 5.3 Resources the council have available for tenants who may have difficulty communicating in English, are;
- Tense Buster – which is a tool which helps improve understanding of English grammar and is suitable for anyone wishing to enhance their English skills.
 - Community Language Support – the council's community hubs may be able to offer community language support services for tenants who need assistance with translation for various purposes including accessing services and information.
 - Local Libraries – may provide resources or information on local translation services and community support for language needs.
- 5.4 Resources the council have available for those tenants with hearing or sight loss include;
- Drop-in sessions at the Barking Learning Centre or Dagenham Library to meet the Sensory Team who can provide guidance on how to use accessibility tools and apps on mobile phones, tablets, or laptops.
 - Inclusive Digital Zones in the Barking Learning Centre and Dagenham Library which are more accessible to all members of the community. The

zones are equipped with technology, including screen readers, magnification software, and speech recognition tools. They have been designed to include features such as accessible seating and adjustable desks as well as having volunteer digital champions who can give support. These were created in partnership and consultation with The Royal National Institute of Blind People and the Good Things Foundation.

- 5.5 Households that require translation and communication support, often find that friends or family members are their preferred source of assistance and the council both recognises and encourages this use of support for everyday translation needs or when immediate translation is required in a timely fashion, such as in cases of emergency. However, when the subject being discussed could have a severe and detrimental outcome for the tenant, if misunderstood, or if communication related to a legal matter, then the Housing Services Officer would always seek the support of professional translation and interpretation services in these cases.
- 5.6 The Housing Services Team will use professional interpretation services to either provide language translations or sign language where the tenant may have hearing impairment and require a signer.
- 5.7 When using an interpretation service, the Housing Services Team will ensure interpreters understand that;
- the information is confidential and must not be shared with anyone else.
 - their role is to transfer the meaning of what is said from one language to the other.
 - they must be as accurate as possible, and honest if they have any difficulty in translating particular points.
 - plain English is used as far as possible.
- 5.8 Translation and interpretation services, when needed, are provided free of charge to the tenant.

6. Equality Impact

- 6.1 Applying this policy consistently and sensitively will ensure that all tenants and their household members in Council owned homes who have protected characteristics and/or are deemed vulnerable for other reasons receive services that are based on a recognition of their vulnerability. The Council will make all appropriate adjustments to the services they receive in order to mitigate any potential negative impacts on them and to ensure they receive fair and equal treatment from the Council as their landlord.