

Guidance for interpreters attending a MPTS hearing

(updated August 2017)

Background

The Medical Practitioners Tribunal Service (MPTS) manages the adjudicatory function of the General Medical Council. Where a doctor's fitness to practise is called into question they may be referred by the General Medical Council to an Interim Orders Tribunal hearing where it is considered that interim restrictions may be required pending investigation, or once the investigation has concluded to a Medical Practitioners Tribunal hearing.

Purpose of this guidance

Doctors referred to a hearing at the MPTS, or witnesses called to attend, may not speak English as their first language and their knowledge of English language may be such that it is necessary for them to appoint an interpreter to ensure that the hearing process is fair.

This guidance is intended to assist interpreters attending at the MPTS to understand their role.

Interpreters may be professional or lay interpreters, but all interpreters must adhere to this guidance.

Role

The role of the interpreter* during MPTS proceedings is to enable communication between all of those concerned in situations when this otherwise would not be possible.

* Arrangements for interpreters for doctors or witnesses with hearing or sight impairments are not covered in this guidance and will be managed separately in accordance with any requests for reasonable adjustments.

You should ensure that any interpretation carried out is an accurate interpretation of what the individual is saying and is not changed, simplified or contextualised by you. You should take care to ensure that communication is accurate in terms of tone, language and content and as such may need to ensure that you are familiar with equivalent words where colloquial expressions or derogatory terms are used.

Identification

Our hearings are formal legal proceedings, and therefore the role of the interpreter is an important one which must be undertaken with care.

You will be required to produce identification at the start of first hearing session where you are providing an interpretation service. Acceptable identification is indicated at Annex A.

Duty

As an interpreter you have a duty to the tribunal and you will be required to provide an oath or affirmation to confirm that your interpretation is to be given to the best of your ability.

Oath – I swear before [Almighty God/The Gita/Allah/Guru Nanak etc] that I will interpret the evidence that will be given to the best of my ability.

Affirmation – I do solemnly, sincerely and truly declare and affirm that I will interpret the evidence that will be given to the best of my ability.

Annex A

Prior to providing services as an interpreter at an MPTS hearing, you will be required to show identification to MPTS operations staff. Please bring the original version of your identification. We will make a note of your name and address and, if you are a professional interpreter, your accreditation number and the organisation with whom you are accredited. If you are a lay interpreter we will make a note of the type of identification you have shown us (please see lists below). We will retain this information so that if there is any challenge to your translation we are able to contact you and show that the tribunal took reasonable steps in accepting you to provide your services as interpreter. We will retain the information for 5 years, following which it will be deleted. No copies will be taken or retained of your documents.

Professional interpreters

Professional Interpreters registered with a relevant body (eg The Association of Police and Court Interpreters - www.apciinterpreters.org.uk, The Institute of Translating & Interpreting - www.iti.org.uk, The National Register of Public Service Interpreters - www.nrpsi.org.uk) should produce their identity card on attendance at the hearing centre. Staff may verify the identity card to ensure that the person who presents it is actually the individual named.

Lay interpreters

Lay interpreters should produce one document from each of the lists below and where possible provide any relevant evidence of suitability to carry out the role of interpreter and any CRB check documentation that they may have.

List One

Valid current passport
Valid UK photo-card driving licence (including paper counterpart)
Valid current national ID card and/or other valid documentation relation to immigration status and permission to work

List Two

(any financial information may be redacted before presentation)

Recent utility bill (gas, electricity or land line phone)
Local authority council tax bill for the current year
Most recent mortgage statement
Current local council rent card or tenancy agreement
Current benefit book/ card or notification from DWP confirming the rights to benefit
Confirmation from an electoral register search that you live at the relevant address
UK court order form
TV licence

Where an interpreter attends without suitable identification, the tribunal may permit him or her to stay and support the doctor or witness but s/he may not be able to act as a formal interpreter during proceedings.