



Feidhmeannacht na Seirbhíse Sláinte
Health Service Executive

An Oifig Náisiúnta don Chuimsiú
Sóisialta
Rannóg Cúram Príomhúil
Feidhmeannacht na Seirbhíse
Sláinte
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National Social Inclusion Office
Primary Care Division
Health Service Executive
Mill Lane
Palmerstown
Dublin 20

11th August, 2016

Deputy Billy Kelleher
Dáil Eireann
Kildare Street
Dublin 2

PQ 24100/16

* To ask the Minister for Health the results of the survey of health service user experiences of using interpreting services in two settings.

Dear Deputy Kelleher,

The Health Service Executive has been requested to reply directly to your above Parliamentary Question which you submitted to the Minister for Health for response. I have examined the matter and the following outlines the position:

The HSE Primary Care Division's Operational plan for 2016 contains an action "Conduct a survey of service user experiences of using interpreting services in 2 settings". To date a survey has been completed in University Hospital Galway, with findings of this survey informing planning in respect of a second proposed survey to be carried out at a community level.

The survey was carried out in the first half of 2016 with service providers as well as with service users.

Feedback in the survey was provided both via focus groups and online.

A formal report is currently being finalised, and recommended actions contained in this will be progressed wherever feasible; a number of key findings can however be summarised below:

1. Service users participating in the evaluation stated that they used professional Interpreters regularly.

- Overall, service users stated that the quality of professional interpreting was good and that they had been able to understand the health care practitioner and had the opportunity to ask questions.
- However, a very small number of service users stated that communicating through an interpreter was difficult and that this risks compromising the quality of overall health service provided to them.

2. Some service users use family and friends to interpret for them.

- Some service users regularly use family members or friends to interpret for them. In the majority of cases this does not entail a problem for the service user and in some cases this was preferred. However, some service users stated that using friends or family members to interpret for them was sometimes unsatisfactory because of privacy and that the person interpreting was not familiar with medical jargon/terminology.

3. Problems were encountered if an interpreter was not available

- Not having an interpreter available impacted on communications with a health care professional. When an interpreter had not been requested in advance, in non-urgent cases appointments were rescheduled to enable an interpreter to be present. However, there were a small number of instances where Google Translate or the HSE Emergency Multi-lingual guide was used if cases were urgent.

4. Staff speaking a service users' language often step in to assist if no interpreter is available.

- In some cases, staff speaking the service users' language provided interpreting. This is particularly common for Irish speakers because of the large numbers of Irish speakers working at the hospital.

5. Recommendations were also suggested by service users in respect of such instances as booking Interpreters, providing training for staff in working with Interpreters and making increased use of technology when making appointments and booking Interpreting services.

6. Staff experiences of using Interpreting services varied but overall were satisfied with the quality of interpreting services provided. Recommendations by staff included suggestions around improving booking arrangements, provision of guidance to staff in working in settings where interpreting is required, enhancement of systems for signalling need for interpreting in patient records and promoting the importance of a same sex Interpreter in sensitive conversations or medical examinations

I trust the above information is useful to you but should you have further queries around this area of work, please do contact me.

Yours sincerely,



Diane Nurse
National Lead: Social Inclusion