

Overview of the Emergency Multilingual Aid Box

Welcome to the Emergency Multilingual Aid! We hope this resource will be a useful support to you in your work.

The changing demographic profile of the population in Ireland means that some patients with limited English proficiency may present at hospitals or other community settings in acute or emergency situations unable to communicate their symptoms and distress to staff. At the same time, staff risk being unable to provide timely assistance when such barriers to communication exist.

The purpose of this Emergency Multilingual Aid is to assist staff in communicating more effectively with patients who present in such situations. It is intended for use prior to requesting the services of an interpreter or while awaiting the interpreter's arrival.

It is not intended to replace a professional interpretation service.

While the scope of this resource is directed towards patients who do not speak or understand the English language proficiently, there is also potential for it to be used by staff as a support in communicating with patients who may be deaf or who may not be functionally literate.

Rollout of this Multilingual Aid is one measure taken by the HSE in our aim to improve access to health and care services by all service users. The resource was developed as a collaborative initiative between the Health Promoting Hospitals Network and the National Social Inclusion Unit of the HSE. Its nature and content takes account of consultation with frontline staff and of relevant evidence based research around similar initiatives in a range of other jurisdictions.

Development and use of the resource is strongly aligned with recommendations of the HSE National Intercultural Health Strategy around reducing barriers for service users accessing and using our health services.

The resource comprises the following sections:

- **Welcome Sheet**

- **Language Identification Card:** This stand-alone card provides assistance to staff in ascertaining the language spoken by the patient.

- **On Speaking Terms:** This is a standalone operational manual containing guidelines for staff on accessing and using interpreters. Useful references around the topics covered in the manual are also included in this section.

- **Twenty separate phrasebooks** in those languages identified as presently most widely spoken in Ireland viz. Irish, French, Polish, Czech, German, Bosnian, Hungarian, Latvian, Lithuanian, Portuguese, Romanian, Russian, Slovak, Spanish, Arabic, Cantonese, Mandarin, Pashtu, Somali, and Urdu. These booklets contain common questions and statements to help front line staff to communicate with patients who have limited English proficiency. It also contains a series of patient-led questions. All questions have been designed to enable staff to make an initial assessment while an interpreter is being contacted. Each translated booklet is divided into 6 sections, with the first five being staff-led and comprising relevant aspects of Admission, Assessment, Clinical care, Maternity and Discharge. The final section contains some common questions patients may have, relating to their needs and discomfort.

- **A CD** containing digital versions of the Language Card, Operational Manual and the set of translated phrasebooks is attached to the inside of the box.

All parts of the resource are available on the HSE website www.hse.ie and may be downloaded from there in a PDF format.

General comments, feedback and queries around this resource are welcomed, and should be forwarded to socialinclusion@hse.ie

Postscript

The EMA box is the result of a pilot multilingual initiative involving 9 hospitals led by the HSE Irish Health Promoting Health Services Network in 2007. The evaluation of the pilot pointed the way to the development of this EMA box. It has been supported by the National Social Inclusion Unit as part of the implementation of the National Intercultural Strategy and integration of services.

The following individuals provided their experience, expertise and guided the development of the EMA box

- Laura McHugh, Health Promoting Hospitals - National Intercultural Hospitals Initiative Coordinator
- Rosemary Orr, Health Promotion Coordinator, Connolly Hospital Blanchardstown
- Fiona Falvey, Health Promotion Officer, HSE West
- Ann O'Riordan, Director, Irish Health Promoting Health Services Network
- Ruth Buckley, Health Promotion Coordinator, Mater Misericordiae University Hospital
- Maria Gibbons, Health Promotion Officer, Mid-Western Regional Maternity
- Sharon McGuigan, Manager, Centre for Health Information and Promotion Spirasi (Spiritan Asylum Services Initiative)
- Suzan Marzoug, Health Information Officer, Spirasi (Spiritan Asylum Services Initiative)
- Sandra Okome, Health Promotion Officer for Ethnic Minorities, HSE Dublin North East
- PJ Boyle, Clinical Nurse Specialist for Refugees and Asylum Seekers, Baleskin Reception Centre, Dublin
- Mary Phelan, Lecturer, Dublin City University Translation Studies Dept
- Michelle Guerin, Equality Officer, HSE Dublin North East
- Vincent Gilgunn, Community Welfare Officer for Asylum Seekers, HSE West
- Diane Nurse, National Planning Specialist, HSE Social Inclusion
- Alice O'Flynn, Assistant National Director, HSE Social Inclusion

Decontamination instructions:

If there is a risk of contamination it is recommended that the relevant pages of the Multilingual Aids are photocopied for single patient use.

It is recommended that the resource is stored in a dust free environment and cleaned on a regular basis. (It should not be stored with clean/sterile stores).