

**WRITTEN QUESTION TO THE MINISTER FOR CHILDREN AND HOUSING
BY DEPUTY C.S. ALVES OF ST. HELIER
ANSWER TO BE TABLED ON MONDAY 9th MARCH 2020**

Question

Will the Minister state what support, if any, is given to parents who need help with understanding, and access to, information (whether this is due to English being their second language or other difficulties) during encounters or meetings with professionals from social and children's services?

Answer

The Minister utilises a range of tools and methods in order to ensure that meetings and encounters with parents who need help with understanding or accessible information is available in a way that maximises their ability to participate, contribute and understand.

In order to ensure that information is accessible we use the approved Island Language and Communication Service, which provides face to face qualified interpreters proficient in a number of languages. The service has a manager, one full time interpreter and several bank staff, three of whom speak Polish, two and French speaking and thirteen speak Portuguese. All are signed up to confidentiality agreements and are fully aware of the need to declare any conflict of interests in regard to people within their own communities with whom they may have personal contact. Ninety-Three requests for an interpreter were made by Children's Social Care to this service last year.

In addition to this, when documents need translating or telephone translation is required, Children's Services use the services of the "Big Word" which is a professional organisation providing services on an international level with the ability to use multi-media technology. This service also supports individual requirements to be met, for example, someone who speaks Thai, which is not a commonly used language on the Island can, have their individual and unique needs met via "Big Word".

A range of more specialised services are also available locally including the new interpretation service for those who use British Sign Language via an on-line video services called SignVideo which is a Government sponsored trial for 12 months.

Examples of materials used to promote accessible services include the Independent Safeguarding and Standards services translating Child Protection Conference information into Polish and Portuguese as well as a recently ordered acetate sheets for parents with dyslexia. The Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub have their correspondence available in both Polish and Portuguese languages and an example is attached.

Children's Services commit resources to ensuring that these accessible services are used to benefit families with up to £44,000 annually.

There is also a range of options available to support parents who for their own unique reasons may need support to fully understand the content or process of meetings. The support that is put in place varies on a case by case basis depending on their individual needs. Parents who have cognitive learning issues can be offered a support worker from adult services or a can bring a legal advocate or amicus friend to meetings

if they agree to this support. Parents who have literacy issues will have letters or reports verbalised to them and they are provided with a written copy should they wish to review reports with trusted friends or supporters at a later date. For parents with more complex needs, Children's Social Care will also work across agencies to ensure that the support that is needed to help them attend or understand meetings is provided, for example using specialist adult safeguarding services such as mental health support workers or professionals from MENCAP <http://www.jerseymencap.org/about-us/projects-2/self-advocacy/> or the My Voice service <https://myvoice.org.je/>

Suitable venues for meetings are also identified for parents with physical disabilities in order to support attendance.

The Children's Service is committed to further developing our services to ensure effective communication with service users. This includes producing more information leaflets about our services in multiple languages, recruiting bi-lingual staff, working more proactively with our local diverse communities and developing our management information.