



Crown Office and Procurator Fiscal Service

INSTRUCTION OF INTERPRETERS FOR CRIMINAL COURT DIETS

PROTOCOL

This protocol sets out agreed arrangements between Crown Office, Scottish Court Service and ACPO(S) for the instruction of interpreters for criminal court diets. It is intended to cover the instruction of community, foreign and sign language interpreters (and other interpreters required for those with sensory impairment).

It is the responsibility of the police to advise the Procurator Fiscal in the police report whether the accused or any proposed prosecution witness requires the services of an interpreter to give evidence in court. The reporting officer should specify the language and dialect required in the police report and should also provide the name, designation and qualifications of any interpreter used at the investigative stage so that the Procurator Fiscal and the Scottish Court Service may ensure that, so far as possible, the same interpreter is not used at any court diet.

It is the responsibility of the Procurator Fiscal to engage a suitably qualified and experienced interpreter¹, skilled in the language and dialect specified in the police report, to assist prosecution witnesses in giving their evidence.

It is recognised that there is limited time available between arrest and the first appearance of an accused person in custody.

In all cases therefore where accused persons are appearing for the first time from custody the police will, so far as possible, arrange, *on behalf of the Scottish Court Service*, for a suitably qualified and experienced interpreter to appear at court to assist the accused. The interpreter engaged for court should not be the same interpreter who assisted the accused during the investigation stage although it is recognised that it may not always be possible

to secure the services of a different interpreter who has appropriate qualifications and experience given the limited time available. The fact that the police have engaged an interpreter for the accused's first appearance from custody should be set out in the police report to the Procurator Fiscal. If difficulties arise in securing the services of an interpreter the police should make early contact with the Procurator Fiscal. The fee of the interpreter in such cases will be paid by Scottish Court Service and they will instruct the interpreter for the accused for any continued diets in the case.

In respect of all other criminal court diets, both pre-trial and trial diets, it is the responsibility of the Scottish Court Service to engage a suitably qualified and experienced interpreter, skilled in the language and dialect required to assist the accused. In respect of all other diets the Procurator Fiscal will advise the Sheriff Clerk (or in High Court cases the Deputy Principal Clerk of Justiciary) in writing of the language needs of the accused, namely the language and dialect as set out in the police report, at least 14 days prior to the scheduled diet.

It is recognised that the role of the interpreter in the criminal court is crucial. The Procurator Fiscal, Scottish Court Service and the police will ensure, so far as possible, that interpreters are engaged through recognised interpreting services and that interpreters engaged have appropriate qualifications and experience.

CROWN OFFICE
FEBRUARY 2002

¹ So far as possible spoken language interpreters engaged should have the Diploma in Public Service Interpreting (Scottish Legal Option) and recent experience of both consecutive and simultaneous interpreting in the court context. It is recognised however that there is a shortage of qualified and experienced interpreters in some languages and that particular difficulties may arise in relation to first appearances from custody. On occasion it is recognised that interpreters who do not have the preferred qualifications and experience will require to be engaged. When this is necessary the interpreting service involved should be asked to provide a written assessment setting out why the interpreter is deemed to be suitable for the proposed work.

Sign language interpreters should be registered as qualified interpreters with the Scottish Association of Sign Language Interpreters.