Things to consider before translating NAEDI project materials into different languages

Prior to translation we recommend the following issues are given consideration

Aim to identify:
- The composition (ethnicity, numbers, ages and location) of residents in the region that are likely to speak another language. The age breakdown of communities is particularly important given the evidence of stronger English skills in younger members of ethnic minority communities – particularly those who are second and third generation migrants
- The approximate language and literacy levels (in both mother tongue and English) of each of these communities
- The information needs of each community – for example which groups within communities may be most vulnerable, which services may need to be tailored to them, and which might be delivered through mainstream provision
- The medium and channels best suited to engage each community (including where key intermediaries and community organisations could be used to get messages across).

Ensure that translation of written materials is done in a way that builds integration and cohesion, and maximises efficiencies
- Within the context of the communication strategy outlined above, the provision of translated and/or interpreted information for people who speak languages other than English should not be considered to be the default solution to communication. The most appropriate language, medium and delivery channel used should be assessed on an audience-by-audience and a need-by-need basis.
- Plain, straightforward English is often far more effective than complex translated materials as this also provides accessibility for the less literate English speaking residents. Complex things can often be explained later, usually face-to-face.
- Many non-English speakers are not literate in their mother tongue language – oral advice (possibly via an intermediary) may be far more effective
- Key phrases or names of services often have no obvious direct translation (e.g. cancer, screening, etc)
- The provision of monolingual translated information may cause concern amongst those communities (white and ethnic minority) who are unable to understand the context and content of the communication
Written translation good practice:
If you are producing a translated leaflet or poster, these basic rules will help optimise the impact and effectiveness of your communication:

- Produce the original text in plain and simple English: complex text is harder to translate and may be much more difficult to understand
- Avoid jargon and technical terms. Leave the name of the service in English (do not transliterate). Leave any contact information (telephone number, address) in English
- Ensure any translation is checked prior to production, it should also be in the correct register for the target audience, i.e. straightforward and not in an academic style
- Produce bi-lingual text in mother tongue language and English to ensure that the different generations within a family can all access the information. Similarly intermediaries and front line service staff will be able to read the leaflet alongside the patient
- Always state the objective of the communication (e.g. ‘to advise of changes to service X’) in English and the mother tongue
- Keep it short – a maximum of four sides. Produce simple fact sheets using:
  - Bullet points and checklists
  - Step by step structure with short sections of text
  - Clear typography and large fonts
  - Visual cues on the cover for people who have limited literacy in their Mother Tongue.
- Also consider producing the material as PDF files on your website for intermediaries and staff to access

Note: Source: The practical Impacts of translation: findings and recommendations, The Commission on Integration and Cohesion 2007
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