

## Manchester City Council Report for Information

**Report to:** Communities and Equalities Scrutiny Committee – 22 June 2016

**Subject:** Impact and Update: M-Four Communications Support Services

**Report of:** Head of Strategic Communications

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### Summary

The report provides an outline of the Translations and Interpreting Services within Communications and its strategic direction. This report outlines how the service has performed in the last few years.

### Recommendations

The Committee is invited to note and comment on the report.

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**Wards Affected:** All

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### Contact Officers:

Name: Jennifer Green  
Position: Head of Strategic Communications  
Telephone: 0161 234 4420  
E-mail: j.green1@manchester.gov.uk

Name: Paul N Williams  
Position: Communications Lead (Operational & Commercial)  
Telephone: 0161 234 3300  
E-mail: p.williams@manchester.gov.uk

Name: Atul Ramanuj  
Position: Communications Support Service Manager  
Telephone: 0161 234 3008  
E-mail: a.ramanuj@manchester.gov.uk

**Background documents (available for public inspection):**

The following documents disclose important facts on which the report is based and have been relied upon in preparing the report. Copies of the background documents are available up to 4 years after the date of the meeting. If you would like a copy please contact one of the contact officers above.

- **Championing Communications publication**
- **Manchester Migration - A Profile of Manchester's migration patterns**

## 1. Introduction

- 1.1. Every public organisation has a legal duty for a variety of equality measures. This includes the duties outlined in the Local Government Act 2000, the Equality Act 2010, the Children Act 1989, the NHS and Community Care Act 1990, the Mental Health Act 1983 and the Human Rights Act 1998. The Communication Support Service (CSS) supports the Council in fulfilling its responsibilities under the Equality Act 2010 for many of the city's communities. The service supports equal access to services and information for all Manchester residents regardless of their race, culture or disability.
- 1.2 The priorities for the city are set out in the revised Manchester Strategy - Our Manchester. One of the key themes within the strategy is the aim for a progressive and equitable city, where everyone will have the same opportunities and life chances no matter where they are born or live.
- 1.3 The team was established to ensure that the city's communications and messages can be understood and acted upon by non-English speakers. In order to do this, CSS provides translations and interpretation services in any language including British Sign Language and Braille. This service ethos directly contributes to the Council's objectives and strategies by improving access to information and ensuring that no one is excluded from services or opportunities offered by the Council.
- 1.4 CCS's purpose is to remove language barriers between service users and the Council and the makeup of the permanent team is tailored to the languages in regular use within the city.

## 2. Background

- 2.1. Manchester is a truly diverse city and CSS has a long record of supporting the Council to deliver services to all residents from all backgrounds, speaking a mixture of languages since its establishment in 1992. There are over 100 languages spoken or used in Manchester.
- 2.2. After English, Urdu/Punjabi language is spoken by more people in Manchester, followed by Arabic, Bangla, Chinese (covering Cantonese & Mandarin), Somali, Czech, Romanian, Farsi, and Polish. The top 18 languages spoken in the city, based on ONS statistics from April 2017, are represented in the table below.



2.3. A recent research paper<sup>1</sup> by the University of Manchester (UOM) concludes that Manchester has the most densely multilingual population for its size in the UK and Manchester has experienced a 16.9% (75,300) rise in its population between 2004 and 2014<sup>2</sup>. Other research projects<sup>3</sup> from UOM concluded that Manchester has one of the UK's most diverse linguistic cultures and 80% of Manchester residents, whose first language is not English, state they speak English well or very well.

### 3. CSS – service offering

3.1. CSS provides face to face interpreting in any language (including BSL) and written translations in a variety of languages including Braille and other accessible formats such as audio CDs. The workload split between interpretations and translations is approximately 85% interpretation to 15% translation. It is an income generating service and offers support both internally and externally. Internally the majority of CSS's work comes from Children and Families, with significantly less work completed on behalf of Growth and Neighbourhoods and the Corporate Core. Externally key service users include other local authorities, health and social care trusts and the National Driving Improvement Scheme.

3.2. Through its work, CSS aims to foster positive relationships, by promoting an understanding of the linguistic and cultural needs of the protected characteristic communities within the context of the Equality Act.

3.3. It provides interpreters in a variety of situations from family contact sessions, domestic violence, homelessness and housing options, school appeals panel

<sup>1</sup> <http://www.manchester.ac.uk/discover/news/manchester-is-britains-city-of-languages/>

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.neweconomymanchester.com/media/1560/nw-key-facts-feb-16.pdf>

<sup>3</sup> <http://www.alc.manchester.ac.uk/subjects/languages/research/impact/multilingual-manchester/>

meetings, child safeguarding panel meetings to court cases and trials covering issues as broad as fraud and murder.

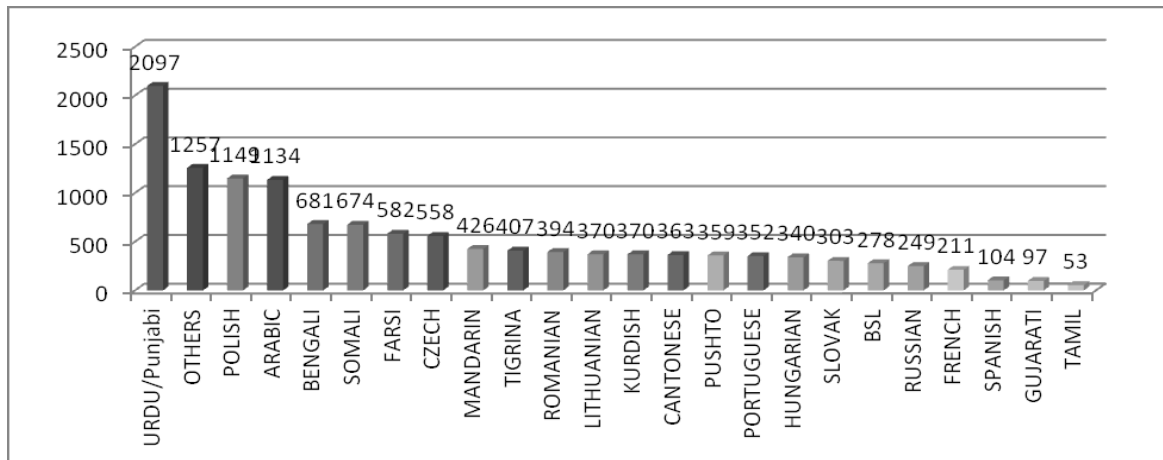
- 3.4. The current provision of in-house interpreters covers major Manchester languages and enables the service to meet its service standards and any emergency requests promptly from both internal and external customers. In terms of service standards, the service aims to answer all calls within four rings, provide an interpreter booking within a 4 hour timeframe (physically within 2 hours if in an emergency) and provide written translations within 48 hours. The team has 9.4 full time equivalent employees.
- 3.5. Alongside the in-house team the organisation has developed a qualified freelance pool of over 300 people, covering more than 100 languages. All freelance interpreters are trained in-house and undergo strict assessments and give us the opportunity to flex service to meet the needs of its customers.
- 3.6. The team has a service desk in the Customer Service Centre which operates from 10am until 4pm, Monday to Friday. From this location they provide mainly translations services for non UK nationals including students, for official documents such as driving licenses, qualifications and birth certificates. This is to support activities in the Customer Service Centre and walk in requests for support.

#### **4. Customers, Performance and Trends**

- 4.1. As previously mentioned the service monitors performance and trends in demand to ensure that it continues to meet the needs of its customers and in line with the Council's priorities and objectives. The service also closely monitors and manages the quality and effectiveness of the provision provided.
- 4.2. There are 10 major external clients and many more individual customers of the service. The following table summarises the split between internal and external interpretations for the last full financial year of 2015/16.
- 4.3. In the past year (2015/16), a total of 12,808 face to face interpreting sessions have been carried out for the council (49% 6,323) and for external customers (51% 6,577).

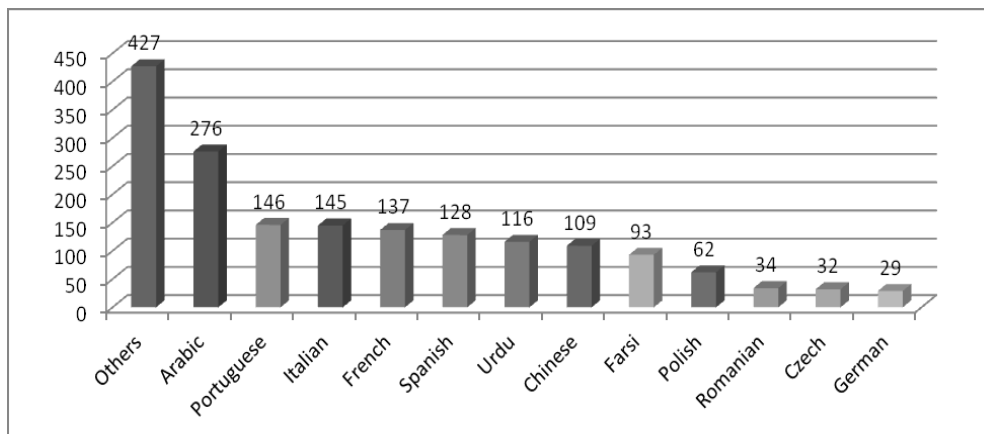
A total of 278 interpretation sessions were conducted in British Sign Language. The top five languages demanded were Urdu/Punjabi, Polish, Arabic, Bengali and Somali.

4.4. The following graph shows interpretations by language for 2015/16.



4.5. For written translations, 1,734 projects were completed in 15/16 covering over 65 different languages. These figures include the 958 visitors to the Translations the walk-in service desk at the Customer Service Centre which equates to 55% of all translations provided. There were 44 Braille, 28 recording (Audio/CD) and 20 (Large Print) projects. Arabic topped the demand on written translations work followed by French, Portuguese, Spanish and Urdu.

4.6. The following graph outlines translations by language for 2015/16:



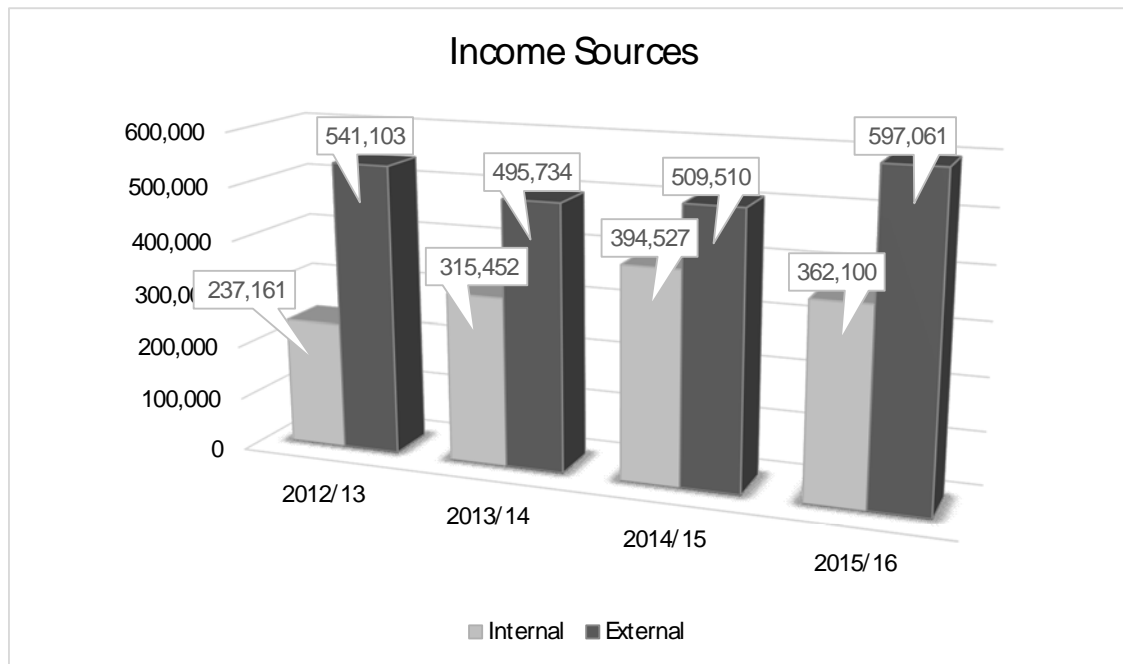
4.7. Face-to-face interpreting services have increased in the last year, in the main for safeguarding issues and family contact sessions. Support from CSS at school appeals has also steadily increased. Homelessness and housing options services have traditionally seen the greatest demand for interpreting initial assessments.

## 5. Financial Information

5.1. CSS is self-financing and has a surplus income budget, and achieves its target year on year as demonstrated below. The overall service income is split between external (60%) and internal (40%) revenue generation. The

service does not seek to achieve a surplus from its internal customers.

5.2. The following graph shows the income sources for the past four years:



5.3. The service overall budget target for 2016/17 is -£108,990 and previous year's budgets and results are provided in the table below.

Year	2013/14	2014/15
Budget Target (above costs)	-£67,140	-£92,730
Actual Surplus Achieved	-£105,778	-£114,014

5.4. In future, the team has an ambition to generate more income from across GM dependent on a successful agreement between the authorities involved and a strategic commitment from all the stakeholders.

## 6. Training, Development and Networking

6.1. More than 2,000 bilingual members of the local community have taken advantage of the service's specialist interpretation training and engagement sessions, assisting them to become skilled professional interpreters and translators. These sessions provide an opportunity for the business to network amongst prospective clients as well as supporting training and development for freelancer interpreters and service users. The sessions aim to improve all parties skills in working with interpreter's specifically from an officers perspective that is receiving the interpreted information. The team's partnership with Manchester Adult Education Service resulted in members of the public gaining nationally recognised qualifications in the field of interpreting and translations delivered by the Chartered Institute of Linguists.

6.2. Training and enhancing the skills of the local bilingual community, will hopefully have offered multiple opportunities for individuals. Many individuals have gone on to become self-employed interpreters.

6.3. The service have also worked with several universities (UCLAN, University of Manchester and Manchester Metropolitan University) and facilitated various community training and engagement projects. These courses are specifically designed to provide qualified and professional individuals for a variety of sectors. CSS's continuous involvement in MSc Applied Mental Health programme with The University of Manchester for more than 10 years has resulted in professionals being more aware of the issues around ethnicity, culture, languages, interpreting and translation as well as enhancing their equality skills.

## 7. Benchmarking

7.1. CSS have carried out several benchmarking exercises' comparing the processes, functions, performance and pricing with the aim of highlighting best practice and to identify areas of strength, weakness and improvement. Desktop research and discussions with customers have been used to collate information. The utilisation of different methods of service delivery particularly around the use of technology has been analysed including the use of telephone interpretations and video conferencing,

7.2. Across Greater Manchester, six of the ten local authorities (including Manchester) have an internal translations and interpretations service. The remaining have accessed CSS's services as part of a variety of alternative solutions.

7.3. As an in-house council service, the CSS team compare well with benchmarked external costs based on the services own desktop qualitative research. Competitors' prices range from £10 to £50 per hour for interpreting (CSS price is £22 per hour with a minimum two hours per booking) and 100 words of Translations ranged from £75 to £200 (CSS price is £150 per hour). All prices can fluctuate dependant on the rarity of the language being provided. The benchmarking also revealed that whilst initial pricing can appear competitive, often additional fees for proof reading and typesetting and administration charges were added which makes the prices less competitive. Following the research it was felt that the service pricing comparing favourably, particularly when added value of speed of turnaround, quality of interpreters and training and development are added to the full service package.

7.4. CSS also offers other services such as advice/consultancy on language and cultural diversity along with training for those who work with interpreters and training on equality and cultural diversity and an understanding of many public sector services and their processes, which other providers do not offer. The team's competitive advantage is in the quality of the service matched with the reputation and experience of the interpreters and translators. The service have numerous feedback correspondence from satisfied customers that can



corroborate this. All freelance staff also hold professional qualifications, are fully trained and vetted and follow council values

- 7.5. Many service providers have contracts with central government, statutory, non-statutory and other sectors, however, there is no one single agency that has exclusivity and the market for interpretation and translation services remains competitive, well established and stable.

## **8. Next steps for the service**

- 8.1. Given the substantial competition in the market place and the volume of providers a further strategic review of the service is planned to understand how the service sits within a redesigned Corporate Core and linked to the city's priorities. This will be completed as part of this year's budget process and will help to understand the implications of delivering the service in house with the additional benefits that brings compared with the cost of delivering the service in a different way. This will also scope the capacity for the service to build its customer base and sustainably grow income generation opportunities.
- 8.2 The service provide mostly ad hoc and consecutive interpreting, on demand which usually takes the form of face to face interpretation for meetings, case conferences or court proceedings etc. This meets the current requirements of the Council and the service's current client base. For the development of the service and as part of the strategic review, the possibilities of expanding the current service offer will be explored.
- 8.3 Utilisation of technology may also offer cost and efficiency savings but needs to meet the needs of the customer. The implications of implementing technology, particularly for legal and statutory activity, requires further understanding and this will also be included in the scope of the review. As will the financial contribution that the service delivers.

## **9. Conclusion**

- 9.1 The committee is asked to note the paper and comments about the recommended next steps for the development of the service are welcomed.