Holding bilingual video meetings

Annex

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Contents

Important note:

A number of organisations are required by statute to comply with the standards regime under the Welsh Language (Wales) Measure 2011. This advice document is not a statutory code of practice under that Measure and should not be referred to in interpreting of the standards. It is a matter for organisations to decide how to comply with Welsh language standards. In doing so, they may refer to this document. But failure to act in accordance with its recommendations will not necessarily mean non-compliance with the standards.

For other organisations, this advice document will support them to provide first-class bilingual services and to operate in a context where the Welsh language has official status in Wales.

1 Background

This advice note is intended to give practical guidance to organisations on how to continue to offer high-quality bilingual services when holding virtual meetings. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, there have been fundamental changes to people's work patterns and lives and a revolution in the use of technology, especially those technologies that allow people to conduct meetings remotely. It is almost inevitable that these technologies will continue to develop and evolve, – as will our experience of using them. Therefore we do not intend for this advice note to be static: we will continue to add to it as new developments emerge and as people and organisations in Wales – and beyond – continue to innovate in order to continue to offer bilingual services.

We want to hear from you about your experiences of holding bilingual video meetings so that we can share good practice and support other organisations and individuals. Please share your comments with us at post@cyg-wlc.wales.

2 Holding bilingual video meetings

2.1   Holding video meetings is a good way of saving on time and travel costs, and sometimes it's the only practical way of holding a meeting when people are scattered far and wide. When holding a video meeting, it's possible that you will need an interpreter present in order to facilitate a bilingual meeting. There is further information about using simultaneous interpretation services in Part 3 of the Advice document: Bilingual drafting, translation and using Welsh face to face where you will find practical considerations relating to using a professional interpreter, when it's necessary to use more than one interpreter, and how to go about arranging an interpreter's service, for example.

2.2   It should be emphasised, however, that video meetings can be more challenging and more stressful for the interpreter than an ordinary meeting. It can be more difficult for the interpreter to understand contributions due to audio or video interruptions, for example. It is therefore important that the interpreter is not expected to translate for long periods without breaks. Discussions should be had with the interpreter in advance as to whether more than one interpreter will be required.

3 System requirements

3.1 Although not all videoconferencing systems can fully support bilingual meetings as standard, there are systems available where participants can choose to hear the meeting in its original language or listen to the translation through a different channel. Zoom and Microsoft Teams are popular software choices, and both support simultaneous interpretation. You should check what your system offers or discuss your needs with your provider.

3.2 If your provider doesn't offer a system that facilitates interpretation, it may be possible for you to invest or develop an add-on solution for your current system. Discuss with your IT specialists and refer to the case study by ADRA (formerly Cartrefi Cymunedol Gwynedd) in Part 3 of the advice document (p. 52) for an example of how to go about adding an element to your videoconferencing system that facilitates interpretation.

3.3 It may also be possible for you to use an additional, separate system to your existing videoconferencing system where the interpreter contacts the main meeting and then provides the translation through a phone line or other device. It must be emphasised that this solution would not be suitable if a large number of people needed a translation, however, and that there are obvious limitations as it requires participants in the meeting to have access to more than one device.

3.4 If you are unable to find a satisfactory solution internally, remember that you may also discuss your needs with an external language service provider. Translation companies in Wales are gaining experience in this area very quickly and some may even provide a meeting service for you, using appropriate videoconferencing software.

4 Security

4.1 The Information Commissioner has published a blog about general issues to bear in mind when conducting meetings via videoconferencing software. Depending on which solution you prefer, there may be additional security considerations. Therefore, make sure you check your provider's security guidelines and discuss your needs with your IT specialists or external providers to ensure that relevant and appropriate security measures are in place.

4.2 You can find more data protection considerations on the Information Commissioner's website, and there may be additional considerations if you are using an external interpreter.

5   Arranging a meeting

5.1   Holding bilingual meetings via videoconferencing is still a relatively new experience for some. It is therefore important that you prepare thoroughly in advance, and also take responsibility for preparing and briefing those who will take part in the meeting, including chairs, interpreters and technicians. You will need to consider in advance the technological challenges that may arise during the meeting and how you will deal with them. Also remember to:

- consider the length of the meeting: video meetings can be tiring and you will need to consider carefully whether you require more than one interpreter to be present; if so, you will need to discuss how the interpreters will communicate with each other
- check that the interpreter has experience of providing services in a video meeting, if not you should certainly arrange to test the technology beforehand
- ensure that you brief the interpreter thoroughly beforehand and provide a copy of the meeting papers well in advance
- ensure that the papers (including any slides or documents that will be shared on the screen during a meeting) are all prepared bilingually
- consider in advance whether you wish to record the meeting and discuss this with the interpreter, although the ability to record the interpretation varies depending on the provider
- note when inviting participants that the meeting will be bilingual with an interpreter present
- give clear instructions, in Welsh and English, about how to join the meeting, especially if this is the first time participants are using the system
- give clear instructions beforehand about how to receive the interpretation
- ask participants to join the meeting promptly, or a few minutes before the meeting starts, so that the meeting settings can be arranged and the interpreter appointed before discussions begin
- ensure that the interpreter is designated as the translator in the software system when organising the meeting if it is necessary to do this beforehand. Note that it is not possible to designate an *external* interpreter beforehand in Microsoft Teams and that the meeting's organiser must designate them as the translator once the meeting has started
- ensure that the chair understands that they will be facilitating a bilingual meeting and understands the requirements of the interpreter and the basics of the technology
- ensure that the interpreter has a good microphone and headphone set
- note if participants will need to use special earphones
- note if participants will need to use a specific app or browser.

5.2   If you're likely to be using a chat function, often found on the side of the screen, during a video meeting, remember to appoint one of the participants to keep an eye on these messages, or invite a translator to do so. These messages will also need to be translated. Please note that it would not be reasonable to expect the interpreter to provide this text translation service as well. It is possible to translate these chat messages automatically on some platforms; for example Microsoft Teams where the messages are translated by default to the language set on the user's Teams system.

5.3   If one or more of the participants are deaf or hard of hearing, make sure that the individuals have the appropriate equipment to hear the meeting in their language of choice. There are currently no systems that support automated captions in Welsh but some allow subtitles where it's possible to appoint a meeting attendee to transcribe or invite a third party to do the transcription. There is information on how to designate a captions transcriber in a Teams meeting here:
[Use CART captions in a Microsoft Teams meeting (human generated captions)](#);
and in Zoom meetings here:
[Enabling manual captions – Zoom Support](#).

6 Holding a meeting

6.1   Before starting the meeting, remember to:

- explain to participants how to open and close their microphones and cameras by using the system, and note if the meeting is being recorded
- encourage people to connect to the meeting using video as well as audio as this will help the interpreter to know who is speaking and to lip read if the connection is of high enough quality
- ensure that all participants are on the right channel; there is usually one channel for those who wish to listen to the meeting in its original language, and another channel streaming the interpretation
- introduce the interpreter and test that the interpretation system is working
- remind participants that they can contribute in Welsh or English during the meeting and also type messages through the chat function in both Welsh and English. You could also explain how to translate these messages automatically if the provision is available
- remind participants to speak clearly and slowly as it's possible that there will be some disruption to the connection and that the interpreter won't be able to see a speaker's face clear enough to lip read
- ask participants to mute their microphones when they're not contributing, this will improve the sound quality for everyone; some systems allow the meeting's host to open and mute other participants' microphones
- ask participants to wait a second or two after opening their microphones before speaking so that the interpreter can hear everything as there can be a delay on the audio.

7   If technical problems arise

7.1   You should be clear from the beginning who is responsible for making the technology work smoothly. It may be useful to specify in advance that an additional officer is available to oversee technical issues and respond to any queries. You can provide a specific phone number for people to contact or instructions on how to send written messages. Also ensure that the interpreter has had the opportunity to discuss with the IT officers or technicians in advance and knows how to contact them directly during the meeting.

7.2   It can be useful to have a system in place to allow participants to note if there is a problem with the interpreting; this can be as simple as raising a hand or typing a message through the chat function.

7.3   It is essential that the interpreter can concentrate fully on the interpreting. It would not be reasonable to expect an interpreter to be responsible for the administrative or technological arrangements of the meeting at the same time.

7.4   For more suggestions about how to hold a successful bilingual meeting, refer to the general guidance for chairs and guidance for the attendees of bilingual meetings in [Part 3 of the advice document](#) (pp. 50–1).

8   Instructions and advice

- [Seamless bilingual scheduled meetings in Microsoft Teams | GOV.WALES](#)
- [Use language interpretation in a Teams meeting (microsoft.com)](#)
- [Using Language Interpretation in your meeting or webinar – Zoom Support](#)
- [Welsh Language Policy | Museum Wales](#)