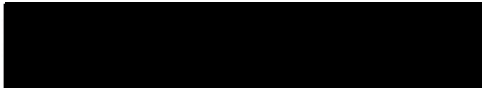




30 April 2021



Dear [REDACTED]

Re: OIA request – Employment of New Zealand Sign Language interpreter

Thank you for your Official Information Act request received 31 March 2021 seeking information from Waitematā District Health Board (DHB) about consultations and decisions relating to employment of an in-house New Zealand Sign Language interpreter.

Before responding to your specific questions, it may be useful to provide some context about our services.

Waitematā is the largest and one of the most rapidly growing DHBs in the country, serving a population of around 650,000 across the North Shore, Waitakere and Rodney areas. We are the largest employer in the district, employing around 8,600 people across more than 80 locations.

In addition to providing care to our own resident population, we are the Northern Region provider of forensic mental health services and child rehabilitation services, plus the metro Auckland provider of child community dental services and community alcohol and drug services.

Waitematā DHB operates Waitematā Translation and Interpreting Service (WATIS), an in-house translation and interpreting service with a 24-hour, seven-day-a-week call centre that has interpreters covering more than 90 languages and dialects, including NZ Sign Language (NZSL).

In response to your request, we are able to provide the following information:

- 1. All documents (including correspondence) that led to the decision to employ an in-house New Zealand Sign Language (NZSL) interpreter at Waitematā District Health Board, including a pros and cons consideration of such a decision.**

We currently use a combined model where services are partially covered by an in-house NZSL interpreter, while external sources offer support to sustain 24/7 service-delivery. We also use external NZSL interpreters to meet specific patient needs or at the request of Deaf patients.

During September 2017, Waitematā DHB carried out community consultation through an online survey and meetings with the disability and Deaf communities. A meeting was held on 16 September 2017 at the Deaf Society to get specific feedback from the Deaf community. The meeting participants provided feedback on the DHB's Disability Strategy Implementation Plan

2016-2026 and their suggestions on how to improve the DHB's response to the Deaf community - **Attachments 1 and 2** – consultation meeting minutes.

Waitematā DHB's disability advisor had been advocating for a full or part-time NZSL interpreter since late 2019 – see **Attachment 3**. Contact details of Waitematā DHB staff have been redacted under section 9(2)(a) of the Official Information Act 1982 to protect privacy.

In June of last year, our interpreting services manager, director of patient experience and disability advisor identified an opportunity to trial a part-time in-house interpreter. This has given us increased flexibility in ensuring we meet the needs within our community.

Data from March 2021 shows 47% of NZSL jobs in Waitematā DHB were completed by our in-house interpreter while 53% of jobs were allocated to external providers, noting it is not possible for one person to cover all service requests in all locations.

- 2. Evidence of consultation with the Deaf Community prior to this decision being made and afterwards informing them of the changes; evidence the community's feedback was taken on board; evidence of those consultations being NZSL-accessible.**

Please refer to our response to question 1 regarding the NZSL community consultation meeting minutes are attached (**Attachments 1 and 2**).

In addition, an NZSL consumer survey was conducted from December 2020 to February 2021 - **Attachment 4**.

- 3. Evidence of communication with Deaf patients/clients, informing them they have a choice of NZSL interpreter. And, evidence these communications are NZSL-accessible.**

WATIS' booking system ensures that patients are asked about their preferred interpreter - **Attachment 5**.

If the patient has a preference, WATIS checks the interpreter's availability first and makes contact with the external providers to accommodate patient preferences. However, we may need to find other interpreters on occasions where the preferred interpreter is not available.

Please also see the attached Waitematā DHB guideline, "How to access interpreters" for staff to check a patient's preferred interpreter (including gender) when making a booking - **Attachment 6**.

Waitematā DHB's disability advisor, our Communications team and our in-house interpreter have been working together to develop NZSL videos promoting information about the DHB's services.

- 4. What steps, if any, have been undertaken to ensure that booked NZSL interpreters have continuity of knowledge and background information with Deaf clients who have ongoing appointments, and/or have specific language needs?**

WATIS dispatches interpreters based on patient preference or interpreters who have previously worked with a patient for continuity of knowledge.

Please note that interpreters cannot speak on behalf of a patient, although they may be aware of a patient's background. Their role is to accurately deliver a patient's message.

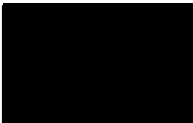
You have the right to seek an investigation and review by the Ombudsman of this decision. Information about how to seek a review is available at www.ombudsman.parliament.nz or freephone 0800 802 602.

I trust that this information is helpful.

Waitematā DHB supports the open disclosure of information to assist community understanding of how we are delivering publicly funded healthcare. This includes the proactive publication of anonymised Official Information Act responses on our website from 10 working days after they have been released.

If you consider there are good reasons why this response should not be made publicly available, we will be happy to consider your views.

Yours sincerely,



Acting CEO
Waitematā District Health Board