



Addressing language inequity in paediatric care

Dr Elizabeth Lawson

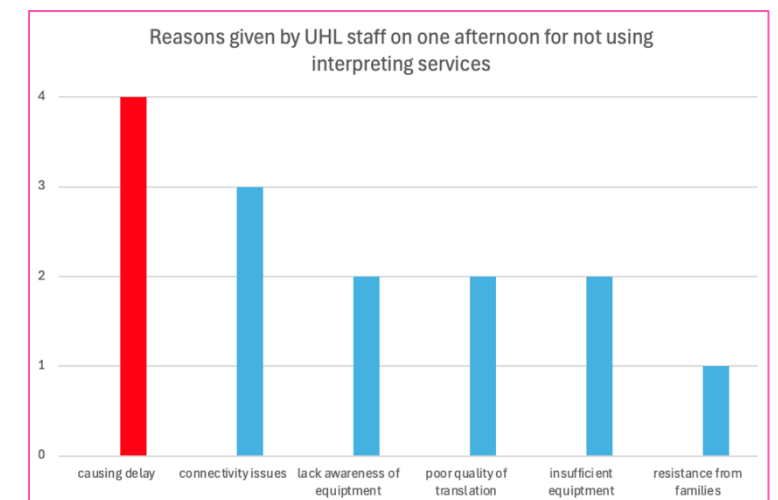
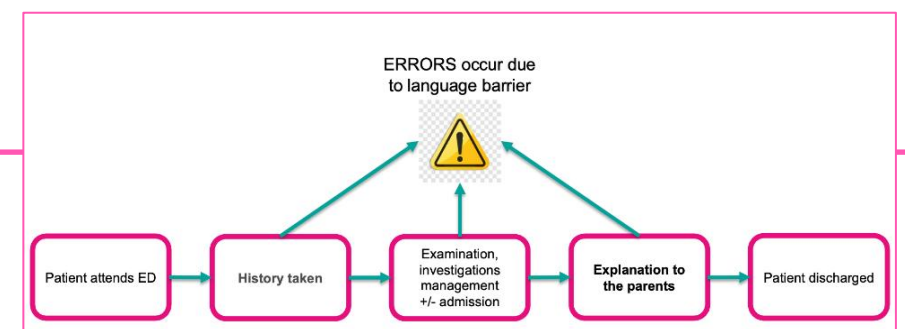
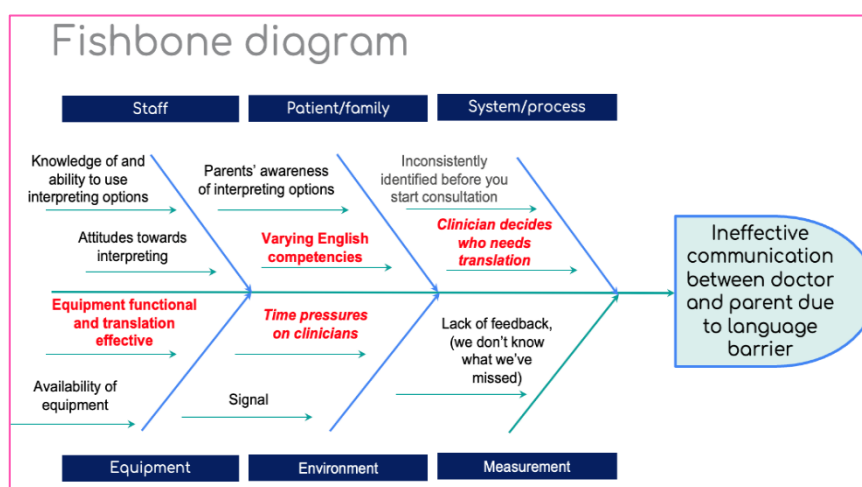
BACKGROUND



PROBLEM

Doctors are not using translation services for parents who need it. This is a patient safety issue for their children.

DIAGNOSTICS



AIM & MEASUREMENT DEFINITION

Aim

8/10 parents aware of the interpreter options available and are given information in a language they understand

Chosen measure

- Parents report awareness of interpretation services available
- Interpretation services used or information provided in a way the parent understands

Sampling method and frequency

- Opportunistic convenience sampling of eligible parents present in the department across different shifts
- Baseline and ongoing small, regular samples during PDSA cycles

Inclusions

- Parents/carers of children in paediatric A&E and on the children's inpatient ward at UHL

Exclusions

First Language is English (self-reported)
Child clinically unstable

CHANGE IDEAS

Improve parents' awareness that interpretation services are available

- Parents informed at **check-in desk** of options for interpreter
- Parents informed at **triage**
- Parents informed during **admission to the ward**
- Posters** in PED (e.g. triage room, waiting room) and on the ward

Improve the utilisation of interpretation services

- Language barrier **flagged** to PED staff by check-in staff, **triage note**, on the front sheet or the bed board
- Language barrier flagged to ward staff on **handover sheet**
- Improve the equipment**, troubleshoot issues
- Educate staff** about current resources and debunk time consuming myths



08/03/2026 16:29
Safety Briefing: No. of nurses (4) Patients (13/17) HDU (1) S

BED	PATIENT incl. language barrier	AGE/ SEX	DOA/ CONS	DDx	HISTORY/BACK
B1	Name Hospital number *Portuguese speaker*				

PDSA cycles

PDSA Test #	PLAN	Do	STUDY	ACT
1.1	'Flagging' language barrier on the handover sheet will increase the likelihood of being offered an interpreter	Language barrier for 4 patients who had a complete language barrier was put on the handover sheet for the children's inpatient ward.	Ward round planning utilised this information and all 4 parents involved were offered an interpreter.	Adopt + Extend this to parents with a partial language barrier (limited or partial English proficiency).
1.2	Flag 'language barrier' on the handover sheet for parents with both complete and partial language barriers.	Complete and partial language barriers 'flagged' on the handover. SHOs continued to implement this change in my absence.	More complex for partial language barriers as they don't necessarily need interpreter for every conversation.	Adopt for complete language barriers and abandon for partial English proficiency.
2.1	Explore if parents could be informed of the interpreting options on admission to the ward when a language barrier is identified.	Spoke with the nursing staff during one shift to understand the admission process.	Where they document language barrier is not routinely seen by doctors. They recommended talking to the inpatient Practice Development Nurse.	Again: talk to Practice Development Nurse (PDN), who advises the admission procedure.
2.2	Meeting with PDN to discuss how the admission process to the ward could be utilised to inform parents of interpreter options.	PDN suggests that admission nurse could flag language barrier in various places e.g. bed board, front of the admission booklet.	PDN sends email to all nurses to instruct them to inform doctors of language barriers and highlight this in different places. However, doctors don't usually look here and relies on the action of nurses.	Abandon: difficult to change the action of another profession in the MDT, and unlikely significant difference from doing so.
3.1	Inform staff of current practice, equipment and ideas for change. Audience to include consultants as permanent staff and lead ward round.	Presented QI project at the departmental governance meeting with consultant body present.	Positive feedback from consultants. Volunteering to help execute change ideas. I expect this to have improved current staff's awareness and hence practice.	Extend: update department when implemented change ideas and welcome reflection and feedback.
4.	Triage nurses to consistently include language barrier in the triage so PED doctors are aware before consultation.	Talk to triage nurses and doctors about their views on including need for an interpreter in triage	Inconsistency from nurses on including. Doctors confirm it is helpful to know prior to consultation. PED Practice development nurse (PDN) confirmed it should be included and she would reinforce. Suggestions of a poster in front of the triage chair.	Adopt: triage nurses reminded to consistently put language barrier in the triage. Adapt: PDSA 5.2 try poster in triage.
5.1	Putting a poster stating "you can ask for interpreter" in lots of languages at check-in desk, triage, waiting room, ward.	Created the poster. Edited in accordance with feedback from Patient Information Review Process (PIRP) Team	PIRP also provided an already approved but non-child-friendly option. Clinical team including consultants prefer my poster and keen for it's use.	Extend: liaise with PIRP on approving new poster. Pilot poster in triage rooms.
5.2	A poster in triage that nurses reference to when a language barrier detected, to improve awareness of the option for an interpreter.	Piloted poster in triage room and asked triage nurses to reference to it.	Triage nurse and parent reported this was a useful change to inform parents.	Extend: when have final poster approved by PIRP, put up posters and inform all triage nurses of this through the PED PDN.

RUN CHART

Composite Score (0-2) for Interpreter Awareness and Language-Appropriate Information Received in Eligible Parents at UHL Paediatrics department in Jan-March 2026



Aim achieved
8/10 parents meeting both outcome measures

CONCLUSIONS

- Five consecutive data points** above the median, suggested a **statistically significant change** following the introduction of changes.
- Information on the **handover sheet** was an effective and reproducible change
- Running several small PDSA cycles in parallel allowed their **combined impact** to accumulate

LEARNING POINTS

- Addressing the needs of parents with **limited or partial English proficiency** is more challenging than for those who clearly require an interpreter.

