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DEFINING STANDARDS OF EXCELLENCE

Charity Translators

A Brief Guide to Supporting Charities

For Language Service Providers (LSPs)

This brief guide has been created for Language Service Providers (LSPs) in the UK to foster continued support for languages in the charity sector.

This Guide is the result of a collaborative 2021 workshop with the Association of Translation Companies (ATC) and Charity Translators.

Charities and community groups bring vital and vibrant support to people in our communities across society. Charities are on the frontline, becoming a lifeline in our multicultural communities, and will often need help with **languages, translation, and interpreting** to support their work or to advance their efforts for equality, diversity, and inclusion.

Advisory note: This brief guide has been written for all Language Service Providers (LSPs), including freelancers, as an initial introduction to languages in the charity sector but is not comprehensive guidance. This guidance has sought to be mindful of the individuality and diversity within the charity sector and the various ways of approaching language barriers.

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Charities at a glance

The charity sector is vast and very diverse. Charities are personalised to the causes and communities they support, who they help, and where they carry out their work. In February 2022, there were more than **170,000** charities listed on the register of charities in England and Wales, more than **25,000** recorded on the register in Scotland, and more than **7,000** registered in Northern Ireland. There are many more community groups, grassroots initiatives, Social Enterprises, and Community Interest Companies that have a clear social purpose but are not reflected in these figures.

With so many causes and communities being represented and supported by the charity sector it is understandable that charities or community groups will have their own bespoke needs for languages and how they are able to meet those needs.

It is also important to acknowledge that **language support**, which can be described as all the different ways of decreasing language barriers, includes both informal and professional solutions within the charity sector.

The need for language support and how charities are able to respond to these needs can be influenced by many factors, such as the size of the charity, access to funding, their location and reach, how they help, and who they help.

The table below describes the broad categories within the charity sector, drawn from the Register of Charities in England and Wales that is published by The Charity Commission.

Cause-based

- Accommodation, Housing
- Advancement of Health or Saving of Lives
- Animals
- Disability
- Environment, Conservation, Heritage
- Overseas Aid, Famine Relief
- Prevention or Relief of Poverty

Community-based

- Amateur Sport
- Armed Forces, Emergency Services Efficiency
- Arts, Culture, Heritage, Science
- Economic, Community Development, Employment
- Education, Training
- Recreation
- Religious Activities

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Charity facts & figures

You can explore up-to-date figures on the Charity Commission website, however in February 2022 the data from the **170,000+** charities registered in England and Wales reveals the following:

- The charity sector has a gross annual income of more than **80 billion**.
- There are more than **5 million volunteers** and nearly **1 million trustees** supporting the sector.
- More than **60%** of charities have an annual income **less than just 25k**.
- Fewer than **12%** of charities have an annual income of **more than 250k**.
- Fewer than **5%** of charities have an annual income of **more than 1 million**.
- The charity sector spends more than **95%** of its gross annual income.

The charity sector encompasses every kind of social purpose from nursery schools and social groups to hospices and food banks.

With so much diversity in the charity sector and with all the challenges they face, there is a huge opportunity to help make a difference with languages.

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Initial info, signposting, and services

A. Getting to know the charity

If a charity reaches out to you for language support, you will naturally want to learn more about them before considering a potential partnership. You would normally check websites and possibly social media, but you can also review any data listed in the charity registers. This is valuable research to explore whether you have an affinity with their work and whether you can support them. For organisations and groups not listed in the charity registers, you can request for more details about their structure, governance, and their impact.

You can search the charity registers using the links below for a clearer picture of a charity, their work, and their resources.

England and Wales
Scotland
Northern Ireland

B. Signposting

You will notice if a charity is already familiar with translation and interpreting from their initial message to you. If a charity appears to be less well-informed about language support you can offer a link to the introductory resource **A Quick Guide to Language Support**, which includes a checklist that could help streamline your discussions.

You can also signpost them towards Charity Translators, who offer personalised advice and support to charities about their language needs, or you could recommend other trusted providers.

C. Selective services and offers

With a range of available services from MTPE to Transcreation, you are always best placed to give charities the advice they need for effective and affordable translation and interpreting support. It is useful to explain all the different services you offer to build awareness of the complex processes involved with professional translation and interpreting. It is also helpful to show the original quotes before applying any discounts or pro bono offers to give charities a greater awareness of the costs associated with professional language services to inform their future budgets.

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Sensible social responsibility

Whether you are able to offer discounted, non-profit, or pro bono support to charities will always depend on your own circumstances at the time and your receptiveness to their work.

Discounted: Providing a discount to reduce the overall cost but still profit-making.

Non-profit: Only quoting for incurred costs. This could also include a pro bono element if skills and time are donated.

Pro bono: Free with no charge at all to the charity with all costs absorbed by the Language Service Provider.

Charities may be able to express their thanks for any cost reductions by sharing testimonials on social media and websites, or other public relations and profile-raising activities. These opportunities could be sensitive due to the work undertaken by the charity and will need to be respectful to beneficiaries, therefore it is always recommended to explore any such engagement activities or expectations in advance.

Finally, there is no need to wait for charities to approach you for help. Many charities simply will not have the resources to consider professional language support, therefore you can be proactive by reaching out to charities in your local community to make a difference. You can also look to link up with other Language Service Providers with the aim of pooling your resources so that helping charities becomes more sustainable.

Referrals

You may not always be able to help a charity with the language combinations they need, or for a number of other reasons. In these circumstances, please consider referring these charities to Charity Translators for dedicated advice or signpost other professionals who may be able to help.

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Sector specific questions

Sensitivity & safeguarding

Charity work will often involve sensitive situations and safeguarding considerations. Always look to explore whether the language support is likely to include any sensitive, personal, or confidential information. For example, a charity working with domestic violence may need to restrict access to some information and documents that may need to be shared using encrypted systems, or a mental health charity may need a specially trained professional for a therapy session.

Pre-editing

It is useful to ask if any documents have been pre-edited before translation or whether they need to be sense-checked for potential language challenges.

Language levels

You should always explore any accessibility needs and the literacy levels of those using the language support as this may determine the best solution to offer. For example, there may be circumstances where a written translation would be unsuitable and where an audiovisual solution would be more effective.

It might also be useful to know whether those using language support are familiar with or have some knowledge of the source language and culture.

Bilingual forms and responses

Check for instructions about how to manage forms or other communications that could invite a reply in other languages, such as registration forms and email templates. Does the charity have the means to process multilingual responses or should an advisory note or instruction be added to the translation to request responses in a specific language, usually English for charities working within the UK.

Piloting

It is always recommended to advise charities to pilot translations with a small group of beneficiaries or representatives to get their endorsement before wider distribution – the user experience is essential to ensure effective language support. It is also useful to share with charities that everyone will have their own preferences about how phrases should be translated and so reviews should focus on whether the information has been communicated effectively.

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More info

For more information about this guide or to further explore how you could support charities, please contact Charity Translators.

Charity Translators - grassroots but global!

Charity Translators are a growing volunteer community offering language support to the charity sector.

Working with UK and international charities, the Charity Translators' team provides advice and guidance on language support, as well as supporting translation work for charity projects.

Get in touch with Charity Translators at
https://www.charitytranslators.org/

Association of Translation Companies

The Association of Translation Companies (ATC) is a professional membership association representing language service companies in the UK and internationally.

The ATC defines standards of excellence for language service companies by promoting quality-managed services and best practice. Its members provide translation, interpreting and other language services to charities as well as and public sector and commercial organisations across the UK and the world.

Find an ATC member at
https://atc.org.uk/member-directory/