

Dealing with customers from culturally diverse backgrounds

We aim to provide our customers with a professional, efficient and courteous service. Some customers from ethnic and minority groups may experience difficulties with communication. This might be because their English is limited; they lack confidence or simply do not understand the terminology being used.

Staff should keep the following points in mind when dealing with such customers:

- Be respectful, friendly and welcoming.
- Consider a private meeting area away from noise and distractions.
- Be patient and give customer time to explain and understand.
- Speak clearly and slowly but do not raise your natural speaking tone.
- Where available and appropriate advise the customer of the availability of an interpretation service.
- Avoid using jargon, departmental acronyms and local expressions.
- Consider whether there any other sources of support available to the customer.
- Make sure the customer knows what will happen next - if there is follow-up required.
- Put any directions or requests for information in writing and include your name in the communication.
- Apply plain English principles to any follow-up written communications.

Staff of certain areas of the Department, such as the Irish Naturalisation and Immigration Service already have procedures in place for dealing with their diverse customer client base including when interpretation services, documents translated into different languages and other services are available. This note is not intended to supersede these arrangements but rather as a general information note for all staff of the Department who increasingly will find themselves dealing with customers from a wide variety of culturally diverse backgrounds.



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