



# Report 2018



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**Investigating the Current Status of Demand for  
Interpreter Services from Customers Utilizing JobCentre  
Plus in Rusholme**

Ana Filipa Dos Santos Alves

Sarah Nimrah Aslam

Tanya Bhamber

Ethan-Cole Evans

## **1 Introduction**

The goal of this research is to seek information about the demand of interpreter services provided by JobCentre Plus, located in Rusholme, as well as the users' satisfaction of the services provided. An additional goal was to highlight the efficacy of these services. Because the UK is one of the leading pioneers in interpreter services in healthcare fields, (El Ansari, 2009) we decided to explore the JobCentre as there is a lack of substantial research on interpreter services provided in a different industry. Thus, we found it to be of importance to investigate the current provisions as well as any potential future provisions that could be implemented to strengthen the overall quality of the JobCentre services. This report will aim to introduce the research methods used to collect the data for our investigation and report our findings and analysis thereof.

## **2 Literature Review and Research Questions**

The Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) report (2011) mentions that there will be a cut to face-to-face interpreter services for people who cannot speak English and instead will be replaced with telephone interpretation. It is reasonable to infer that there might be a theoretical improvement in users' experience by using this method as it requires no booking and is immediately available. We were interested if this method is effective and what the users' satisfaction rates were, thus we asked: How satisfied are you with the current interpreter services provided by the JobCentre?

In a study where JobCentre customers were asked whether access to services was limited, 81% of all users stated they had no problems accessing the service (Howat and Pickering, 2011). Non-native speakers reported a similar figure, suggesting that the interpreter services are sufficient enough for them to easily access the rest of the services offered by the JobCentre. Based on this we produced the research question: How accessible are the interpreter services provided in the JobCentre?

When asked how the service overall could be improved, 23% replied 'providing information' (Howat and Pickering, 2011). We devised one of the questions asked in the questionnaire based on these statistics: Was the information given in translation clear?

Frijters, Shields, and Price (2005) compared the job search methods and their success rate of Black and South Asian immigrants and found that they were more likely to use the JobCentre as opposed to other methods. This can possibly be attributed to low literacy and English levels, leading to a greater need for interpreter services. Consequently, a question we wanted to explore was: How much do you agree or disagree that JobCentre should provide interpreter services for non-Native English speakers?

### **3 Methodology**

In order to provide a full picture of the research, we wanted to collect both quantitative and qualitative data from Rusholme JobCentre to ensure a blend of both objective and subjective views. Obtaining anecdotal experiences through interviews is crucial since data complexities can establish conclusions with more depth and accuracy, something which cannot be achieved through qualitative or quantitative data alone.

The least invasive way to conduct our questionnaire would be to leave copies in the JobCentre. We printed 100 copies aiming to gain at least 50 responses. This would achieve a reasonable sample size and conclusive data about a representative cross-section of users.

Due to unforeseen circumstances during our data collection, the methodology had to be adjusted. One of the major changes was the method of data collection itself. We visited Rusholme JobCentre prior to data collection to seek permission to distribute questionnaires inside the building, but we did not receive permission. We decided to stand outside and hand out questionnaires to clients leaving the JobCentre.

We attempted to appear as authentic and credible as possible by wearing university lanyards. Nonetheless, this change in method was limiting compared to our initial, planned method. Many users of the JobCentre did not want to speak to us. Overall, we received 56 completed questionnaires.

In some cases, we had to explain and re-word questions in the questionnaires to participants with limited English skills. This may have guided the respondents' answers unintentionally, a phenomenon referred to as observer's paradox (Labov, 1972). Initially, we wanted to distribute, collect and analyse the questionnaires and then create interview

questions based on our analysis. However, we were unable to obtain any responses to the emails, texts or phone calls sent. Emails and texts were translated in the potential interviewees language as to mitigate the language barrier, but this made no difference. Since no interviews could be secured we decided to replace the qualitative component with an observation of the inner workings of Rusholme JobCentre.

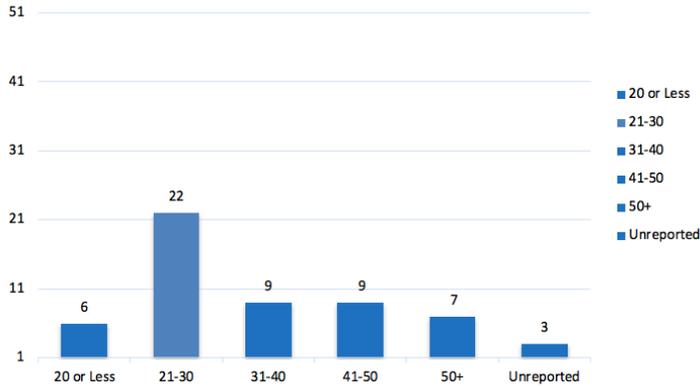
In order to analyse the findings of the questionnaire, we created a spreadsheet in Excel that documented the data. We ensured that all sensitive information gathered remained confidential by utilising the University computers to protect participants' privacy. We used a code to group the data in a succinct manner, which can be seen in appendix 1. On the spreadsheet each answer was coded with a specific number. For example, question 2 asks whether the respondent is a UK citizen. We would input number 1 for yes, 0 for no and 0.09 for if the answer was missing. The data was coded like this as we initially planned to use the program SPSS to generate our graphs. We later decided against it and thus created our graphs on Excel.

It must be noted here that the questions 1-5 in the questionnaire were intended for native speakers and the remaining questions intended for non-native speakers. However, we found it to be the case that some non-native speakers did not fill out all the questions as they could speak English and thus the questions were not applicable to them. Some participants also just missed questions out. Therefore, the number of responses varies between questions. To avoid confusion the number of participants will be noted in the figure under each graph.

## 4 Results and Discussion

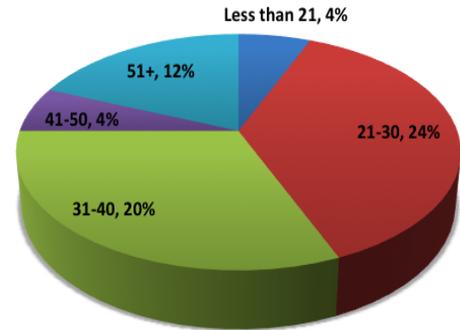
### Quantitative results

**Participant Age Distribution**



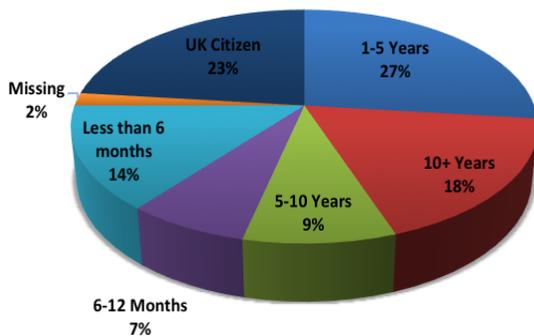
**Fig 1: Number of Participants In Each Age Group (56 responses)**

**Percentage of Participants Who Use at least One Interpretation Service by Age**



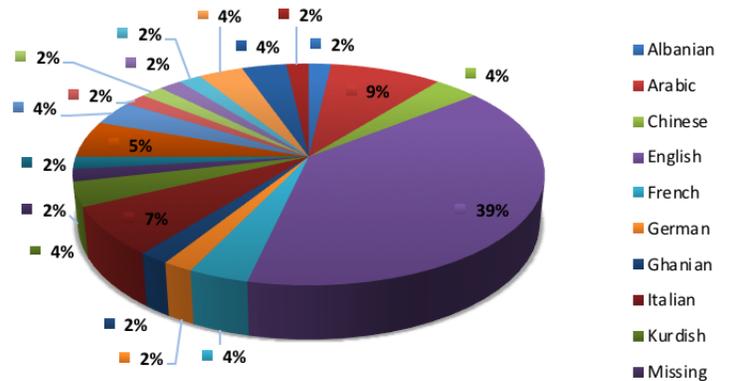
**Figure 1.1: Percentage of Participants In Each Age Group Who Use At Least One Interpreter service (56 responses)**

**Participant Residency Distribution**



**Fig 2: Participants' Residency Status In Percentages (56 responses)**

**Participant Native Language Distribution**



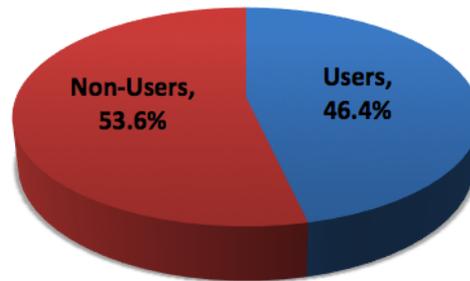
**Fig 3: Participants' Native Languages In Percentages (56 responses)**

Figures 1, 1.1, 2 and 3 represent demographic features of all questionnaire respondents providing an idea on who utilises the JobCentre. Figure 1 shows that the age group of individuals between the ages of 20 and 30 is the largest (which makes sense since most young people are seeking employment). Another point of interest is whether there is a correlation between age and usage of interpreter services. Figure 1.5 illustrates this relationship,

confirming that 20-year-olds are the highest cohort who make use of the interpreter services and the majority of usage falls between the ages of 21 and 40. While people in their 20s frequent the JobCentre most often, but only 24% of them report to use interpreter services. Conversely, 31-40 year old's make up 16% of the population yet 20% use interpreter services.

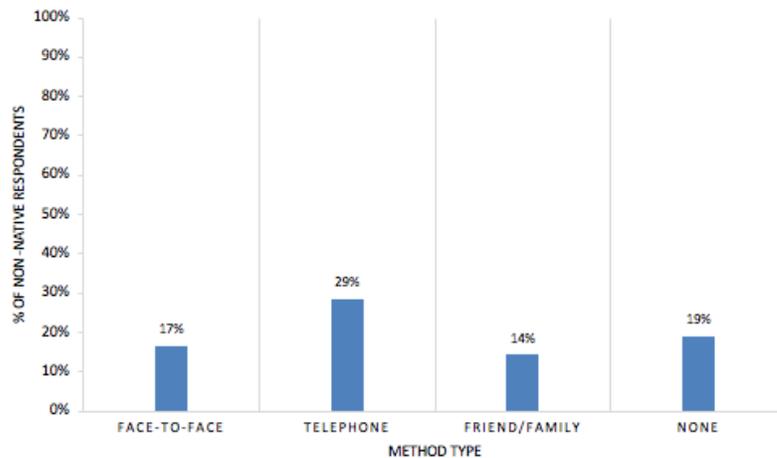
Figure 3 presents the native languages spoken by our respondents. English is the largest, at 39% of all participants. 60% of participants reported speaking a different language thus there is potentially a great deal of demand for more or better interpreter services, and our findings and analysis will illuminate whether that demand does exist.

**Percentage of Participants Who Reported Using at Least One Method of Interpretation**



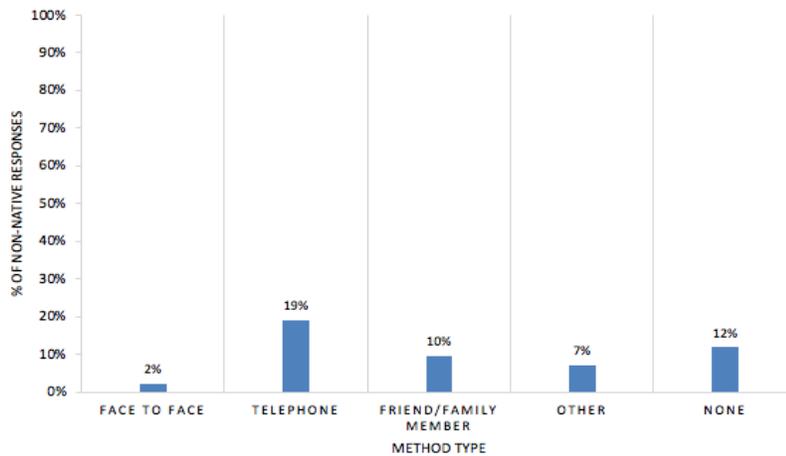
**Fig. 4: Percentage of Participants Who Reported Using At least One Method of Interpretation (53 responses)**

**WHICH METHOD OF INTERPRETATION SERVICES HAVE YOU USED?**



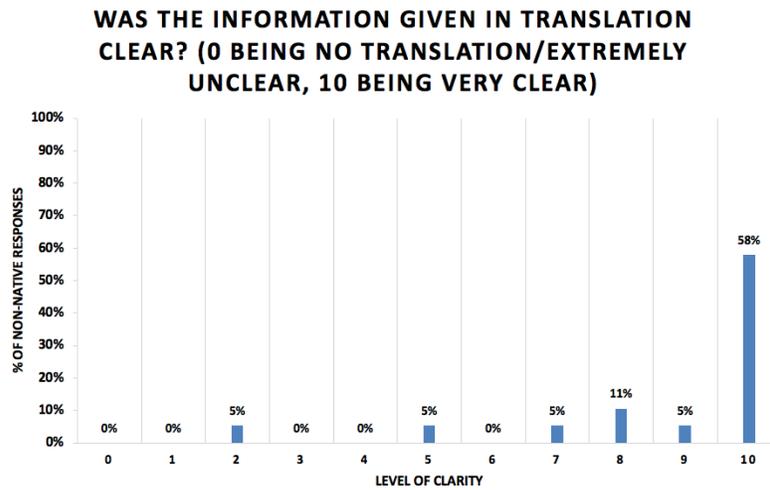
**Fig 5: Percentage of Participants' Who Have Used Interpreter services (26 responses)**

**WHICH METHOD DID YOU USE MOST OFTEN IN THE LAST YEAR? (FROM JANUARY 2017 TO PRESENT)**



**Fig 6: Percentage of Participants' Most Used Interpreter service in the last year (21 responses)**

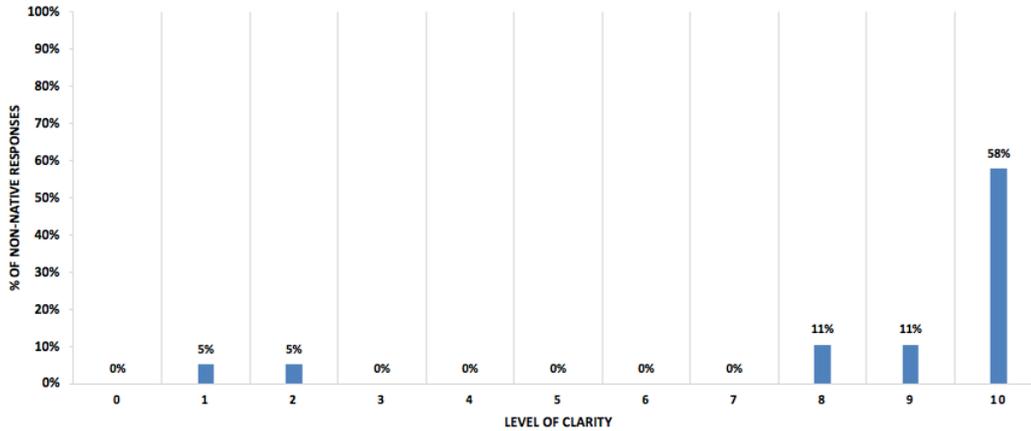
According to Figure 4, approximately 46.4% of all respondents use at least one type of interpreter service. Out of those respondents, the most commonly used method of interpretation was the telephone (29%) as seen in Figure 5. When asked what service they used most often in the last year (Figure 6), results confirm a high rate of telephone interpretation, almost 10% greater than the next closest method type (none) which is obviously unsurprising as the Job Centre is reducing the service solely to telephone interpretation. This figure is not as high in the question asking which service they have used, raising an interesting question: if respondents stated using at least one service in the past, but reported 'none' for the type of service they have used in the past year, this could indicate a decline in the use of the service. The reason for this is unclear, although one possible explanation is that users have gained enough competence in English to no longer need assistance. Future research would be required to properly confirm or deny a decline.



**Fig 7: Ratings For The Clarity of Information Provided By the Interpreter In Percentages. (17 responses)**

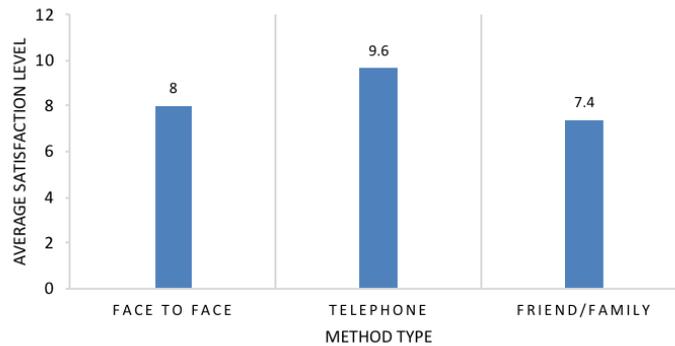
Figure 7 illustrates service quality and user satisfaction. The graph shows users' perception of clarity given in the translation. Over half of the participants rated clarity as a 10, and the majority of the rest of participants rated clarity as an 8 or 9. While a study conducted by the JobCentre, some users displayed a dissatisfaction towards the clarity of information provided (Howat and Pickering, 2011), our data contradicts this. Ten percent of users from our sample rated clarity with a 5 or less, depicting that some users found the information unclear. However, the great majority of the responses seem to rate the service positively, and because our sample of JobCentre users is not exceedingly large, the 10% of users who felt the services had low clarity translates at most to only 2 or 3 individuals. If we were able to conduct interviews with these participants, further insight into their dissatisfaction may have been possible.

**HOW SATISFIED ARE YOU WITH THE CURRENT INTERPRETATION SERVICES PROVIDED BY JOBCENTRE? (0 BEING EXTREMELY UNSATISFIED, 10 BEING VERY SATISFIED)**



**Fig 8: Satisfaction Ratings of The Interpreter service In Percentages (17 responses)**

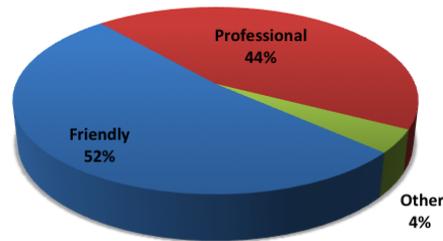
**AVERAGE SATISFACTION LEVEL BY INTERVIEW METHOD TYPE**



**Fig 8.1: Average Satisfaction Rating based On Method Type**

General satisfaction levels are shown in Figure 8, and the majority of responses were again high with only 5% of users giving low scores of 1 or 2. Figure 8.1 identifies telephone as having the highest average satisfaction rate. Whether this is because it is the most common interpretation method or that users found it to be of higher quality than other methods is unclear. As previously mentioned it would be interesting to know why these users were so dissatisfied with the service, but the lack of interviews prohibits this. Based on some of the previous questions it could be a combination of lack of clarity in the translated information.

### What was your experience of the interpreter?

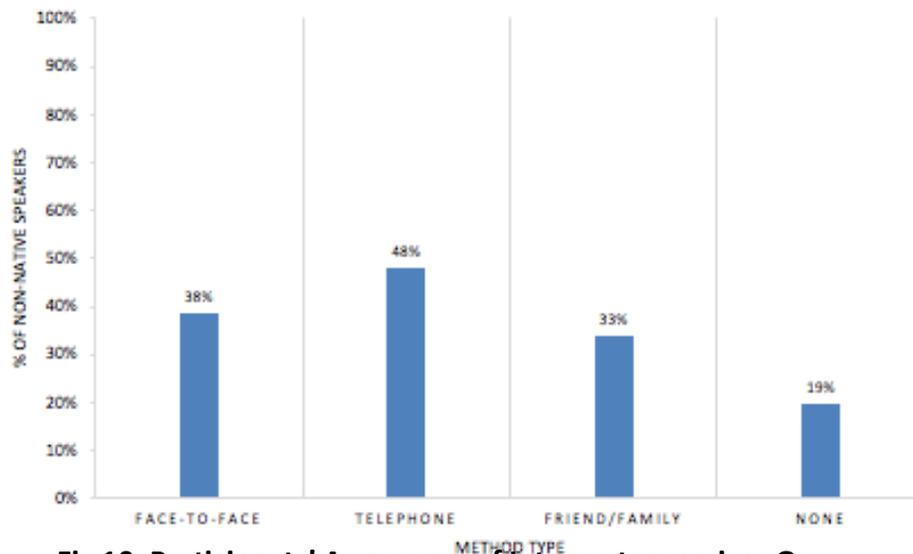


**Fig 9: Participants' Experience of The Interpreter In Percentages (17 responses)**

Respondents' experiences with the translator were very positive, with respondents' reporting them most often as professional and friendly. Howat and Pickering (2011) found that  $\frac{1}{3}$  of users complained about staff, stating that they were judgmental and lacked respect. This was not the case in our sample, so perhaps users of different Jobcentres differ in their views and experiences of staff. The data overall suggests that the majority of users had positive experiences with interpreters provided by JobCentre, with the exception of a few people.

The DWP report (2011) stated that reducing the interpreter service to solely telephone interpreting would show improvement in user satisfaction and reduced costs. Hadziabdic et al (2011) disagrees, and notes that users perceive telephone interpretation as a hindrance. We cannot claim that the switch to this method caused an improvement in satisfaction levels without access to data on satisfaction levels prior to when the cuts were made. However, our data does not show aversion to the use of telephone interpreting, thus contradicting Hadziabdic's findings.

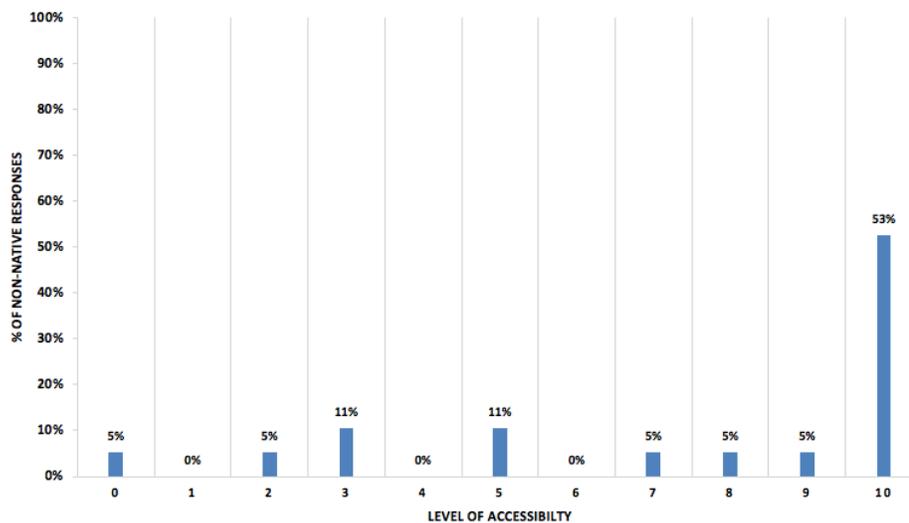
**WHICH METHODS OF INTERPRETATION SERVICES ARE AVAILABLE AT THIS JOBCENTRE ACCORDING TO YOUR KNOWLEDGE?**



**Fig 10: Participants’ Awareness of Interpreter services On Offer In Percentages (38 responses)**

Over 80% of both native and non-native participants reported being aware of the interpreter services available through JobCentre. This shows that the services are advertised effectively since many users, even those who do not need the service, are aware of their existence. Our qualitative data will address what methods the JobCentre employs to publicise the services on offer.

**HOW ACCESSIBLE ARE THE INTERPRETATION SERVICES PROVIDED IN THE JOBCENTRE WHEN YOU NEED TO USE THEM? (0 BEING IMPOSSIBLE, 10 BEING VERY EASY)**



**Fig 11: Ratings of The Accessibility of The Interpreter service in Percentages (19 responses)**

The rating of accessibility of the service varied - just over half of users rated accessibility as a 10, yet many respondents still found the services hard to access for reasons that are still unclear. The low ratings come as a surprise in comparison to relatively high ratings provided in previous questions. Perhaps this is due to misunderstanding the question. Irshard et al (2007) provides one possible explanation for the low ratings. The need for interpreter services is so great, thus the massive and vast demand puts a strain on the availability of interpreters.

## **5 Qualitative results**

Qualitative data was obtained through observations of Rusholme JobCentre and consisted of speaking to staff members and observing the main floor. The initial impression showed no promotional posters around the centre, and those that do exist are simplistic and comprised primarily of a large photograph and a website address. All the leaflets are at the desks of staff members and are exclusively in English and Welsh.

The goal entering into the JobCentre was to learn if and how people with limited to no English proficiency could discover the interpreter service on offer. A member of staff informed us that, in a customer's initial meeting, their language needs are assessed, and it becomes apparent quite quickly whether or not they need an interpreter and are typically referred to an ESOL class hosted by the JobCentre. These classes help people at varying levels of English proficiency to improve their speaking, reading and writing skills. Another provision that the JobCentre uses is using the external translation service, 'The Big World'. The same staff member stated that in the past they used to use face-to-face interpreters, but due to budget cuts and an increasing push for customers to begin learning English, this was replaced by telephone interpreting. The JobCentre also encourages users to bring family or friends to act as an interpreter.

A different staff member who we spoke to during our questionnaire collection expressed his personal dislike of the service, stating that at peak times it can be difficult to access interpreters over the phone in the language spoken by the customer. Thus, the call would be outsourced to The Big World's office, which is abroad. This can leave the staff member waiting on hold for long periods of time. However, another staff member expressed her satisfaction with the service, stating that the provisions in place were excellent. Evidently,

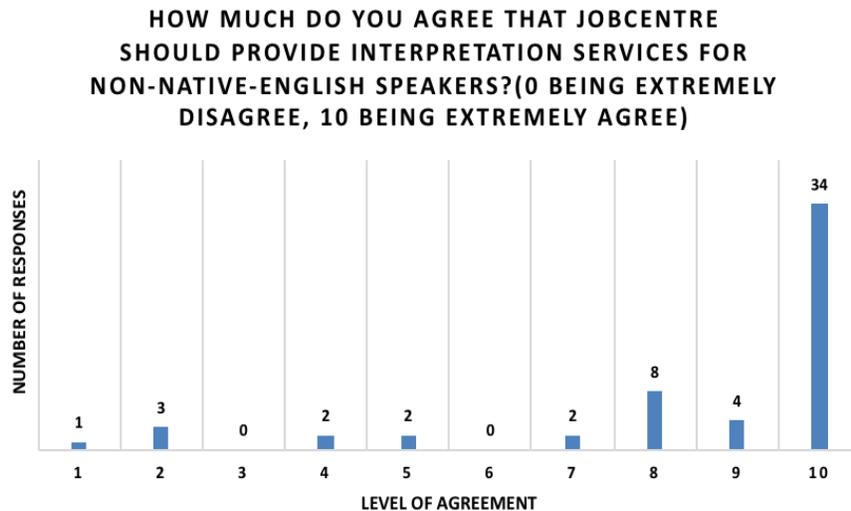
staff differ in their opinions of the service, but as the scope of our study does not include all JobCentre employees this is just a notable detail discovered in our observations.

We can compare the quantitative results to the qualitative results in regard to awareness and accessibility of the service. The high levels of awareness exhibited in Figure 10 do not seem to be due to the efforts of the JobCentre. The only way to gain knowledge of the service is by talking to a member of staff in the initial meeting if you are in need of it or alternatively, through word of mouth. Almost 20% of respondents reported having no knowledge of the service, which is understandable since this question included all respondents and not all of them have necessarily used the service. Further quantitative investigation revealed that ~18% of all respondents were aware of at least one method of interpreter services on offer yet used none of the interpreter services.

Irshard et al (2007) explanation for the low ratings users expressed in relation to accessibility are supported by one member of staff's experience with the service. He states that in busy periods they can be put on hold for a while. The Big World state on their website that their 'services are available in 250 languages'(thebigworld.com). They state that they can connect 'you to an interpreter within 30 seconds' which as we can see is not the case.

Budget cuts seem to be the greatest contributor to the JobCentre's decision to switch from face-to-face to telephone interpretation. It has been reported that interpreter services cost the UK £25 million for local authorities, which includes the JobCentre (Irshard et al, 2007). However, as previously mentioned, they also plan to move in the direction of encouraging users to learn English. This seems to be a growing sentiment across the UK. In an article on the matter one reader commented 'If we're going to fund anything, it should be English classes' (BBC news, 2006). This sentiment was expressed by one of the members of staff outside the JobCentre. Accordingly, in order to receive benefits, one needs to show that they are in the process of learning English. The same view was expressed by one of the respondents who was a native speaker of English.

The majority of respondents rated a 10 in agreement in the provision of interpreter services at the JobCentre (Figure 12)



**Fig 12: Number of Participants Who Agree That The JobCentre Should Provide Interpreter services (56 responses)**

It seems there is a slight division in views from native and non-native speakers, with non-natives mostly agreeing with the need for interpreter services. Perhaps this division exists because non-native speakers are probably more aware of what the service offers and know how difficult it is to learn another language and gain access to more advanced English classes (Irshard et al, 2007).

## **6 Conclusions**

In conclusion the main findings of our investigation are as follows: We set out to find the demand for such services and our findings revealed that there is indeed a demand, especially for people in their 30's. The efficacy of the interpreter services was found by participants to be quite high, as were the ESOL classes referred to clients by JobCentre staff members. Satisfaction levels with interpreter services was also high, as were impressions of the staff. However, while the Rusholme JobCentre does provide a beneficial service, there is certainly room for improvement. While financial costs were an issue in the past for JobCentre (i.e. the

replacement of on-site face-to-face interpreters with telephone interpretation), a possible compromise could be investing in more regional call centers. The telephone interpreting services had high satisfaction levels except for waiting time, so a potential improvement could be to hire more local/regional interpreters rather than outsourcing. Another improvement could be to advertise these services more, but this may not be necessary since our findings suggest that the general public were already aware of the services.

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## Acknowledgements

We thank Yan Wen for her assistance in collecting the data and for creating our coded questionnaire.

## Appendix 1: Questionnaire

### Investigating customer perceptions of the current interpretation services in JobCentre Plus

This questionnaire is a part of the research project: *Investigating the current status of demand for interpreter services from customers utilizing JobCentre Plus in Rusholme*. It is led by a student group from the University of Manchester. The result will be published on Multilingual Manchester.

This research aims to explore your opinions and/or experience of the interpreter services in JobCentre to understand the current status of demand for multilingual services.

Thank you for participating!

#### Questions for all Users

1. What's your gender and age?

**Gender:**  Male  Female  Other  Prefer Not to Say

**Age:** \_\_\_\_\_

2. Are you a UK Citizen?

Yes  No

If No, how long have you lived in the UK? Please select one.

Less than 6 months  6-12 months

1-5 years  5-10 years  10+ years

3. What is your native language? \_\_\_\_\_

4. On a scale of 0-10, how much do you agree or disagree that JobCentre should provide interpreter services for non-Native-English speakers? (0 being extremely disagree, 10 being extremely agree)

0  1  2  3  4  5

6  7  8  9  10

5. Are you willing to participate in a 5-10 minute interview to share your opinions on the current interpreter services?

Yes  No

If Yes, please specify your preferred contact method to arrange an appointment:

by email: \_\_\_\_\_

by text message/phone call: \_\_\_\_\_

other: \_\_\_\_\_

## Questions Only for non-Native-English speakers

6. Which method of interpreter services have you used? Please check all that apply.

- Face-to-Face interpretation provided by JobCentre
- Telephone interpretation provided by JobCentre
- Interpretation provided by Friend/Family Member
- Other: \_\_\_\_\_
- None

7. Which method did you use most often since last year? (from January 2017 till now):

- Face-to-Face interpretation provided by JobCentre
- Telephone interpretation provided by JobCentre
- Interpretation provided by Friend/Family Member
- Other: \_\_\_\_\_
- None

8. On a scale of 0-10, how accessible are the interpreter services provided in the JobCentre when you need to use them? (0 being impossible, 10 being very easy)

- 0     1     2     3     4     5
- 6     7     8     9     10

9. What was your experience of the interpreter? Please check all that apply.

- Friendly    Professional    Cold    Rude
- Other \_\_\_\_\_

10. Was the information given in translation clear? (0 being no translation/extremely unclear, 10 being very clear):

- 0     1     2     3     4     5
- 6     7     8     9     10

11. How satisfied are you with the current interpreter services provided by JobCentre? (0 being extremely unsatisfied, 10 being very satisfied):

- 0     1     2     3     4     5
- 6     7     8     9     10

## Appendix 2: Coded Questionnaire

### Questions for all Users

1. What's your gender and age?

**Gender:** 0Male 1Female 2Other 3Prefer Not to Say

**Age:** \_\_\_ enter numbers \_\_\_\_\_ 0.09 for missing

2. Are you a UK Citizen?

0Yes 1No 0.09 for missing

If No, how long have you lived in the UK? Please select one.

0 Less than 6 months 1 6-12 months 2 1-5 years 3 5-10 years 4 10+ years 0.01 for logical missing ie.UK citizen, 0.09 for missing

3. What is your native language? \_\_\_\_\_

**Q3nativ:** 1 for English, 0 for others

**Q3langue:** put in the string, leave it blank if not answered

4. On a scale of 0-10, how much do you agree or disagree that JobCentre should provide interpreter services for non-Native-English speakers? (0 being extremely disagree, 10 being extremely agree)

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 (0-10 / 0.09)

5. Are you willing to participate in a 5-10 minute interview to share your opinions on the current interpreter services?

Yes No (0/ 1/ 0.09)

If Yes, please specify your preferred contact method to arrange an appointment:

by email: \_\_\_\_\_

by text message/phone call: \_\_\_\_\_

other: \_\_\_\_\_

**If the respondent refuses the interview, put 0.01 for all these (Q5email-Q5other)**

**Q5email:** 0 for ticked, 1 for not ticked

**Q5emailD:** put in the string, leave it blank if not answered

**Q5phone:** 0 for ticked, 1 for not ticked

**Q5phoneD:** put in the string, leave it blank if not answered

**Q5other:** 0 for ticked, 1 for not ticked

**Q5otherD:** put in the string, leave it blank if not answered

Questions for non-Native-English speakers

- **For Native speakers, code all values for Q7-Q12 as 0.01**
- **For non-native speakers, follow the instructions below**
- **If she/he never heard of available service before ('none' for Q6, no application for the rest), put 0 for Q6none, and 0.01 for all the rest (from Q7face to the end)**
- **If she/he never has heard but never used any service, put 0 for Q7none, and 0.01 for all the rest (from Q8)**
- **If the respondent never heard of/ never used the interpreting service, then follow the instructions above**

6. Which methods of interpreter services are available at this JobCentre according to your knowledge? Please check all that apply.

- Face-to-Face interpretation provided by JobCentre
- Telephone interpretation provided by JobCentre
- Interpretation provided by Friend/Family Member
- Other: \_\_\_\_\_
- None

**For non-native speakers, if deliberately left over, code all Q6 values as 0.09**

**Include native speakers in question 6 if they provided an answer**

**Q6face:** 0 for ticked, 1 for not ticked

**Q6tele:** 0 for ticked, 1 for not ticked

**Q6fri/fa:** 0 for ticked, 1 for not ticked

**Q6other:** 0 for ticked, 1 for not ticked

**Q6otherD:** put in the string, leave it blank if not answered

**Q6none:** 0 for ticked, 1 for not ticked

7. Which method of interpreter services have you used? Please check all that apply.

- Face-to-Face interpretation provided by JobCentre
- Telephone interpretation provided by JobCentre
- Interpretation provided by Friend/Family Member

Other: \_\_\_\_\_

None

**For non-native speakers, if deliberately left over, code all Q7 values as 0.09; if not applicable, code all as 0.01**

**Q7face:** 0 for ticked, 1 for not ticked

**Q7tele:** 0 for ticked, 1 for not ticked

**Q7fri/fa:** 0 for ticked, 1 for not ticked

**Q7other:** 0 for ticked, 1 for not ticked

**Q7otherD:** put in the string, leave it blank if not answered

**Q7none:** 0 for ticked, 1 for not ticked

8. Which method did you use most often since last year? (from January 2017 till now):

0 Face-to-Face interpretation provided by JobCentre

1 Telephone interpretation provided by JobCentre

2 Interpretation provided by Friend/Family Member

3 Other: \_\_\_\_\_

4 None

**Q8most:** 0-4 / 0.01/ 0.09

**Q8otherD:** put in the string, leave it blank if not answered

9. On a scale of 0-10, how accessible are the interpreter services provided in the JobCentre when you need to use them? (0 being impossible, 10 being very easy)

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 (0-10 /0.01/ 0.09)

**For non-native speakers if deliberately left over, code all Q7 values as 0.09, if not applicable, code all as 0.01**

10. What was your experience of the interpreter? Please check all that apply.

Friendly  Professional  Cold  Rude  Other \_\_\_\_\_

**For non-native speakers, if deliberately left over, code all Q7 values as 0.09, if not applicable, code all as 0.01**

**Q10F:** 0 for ticked, 1 for not ticked

**Q10P:** 0 for ticked, 1 for not ticked

**Q10C:** 0 for ticked, 1 for not ticked

**Q10R:** 0 for ticked, 1 for not ticked

**Q10other:** 0 for ticked, 1 for not ticked

**Q10othD:** put in the string, leave it blank if not answered

11. Was the information given in translation clear? (0 being no translation/extremely unclear, 10 being very clear):

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 (0-10 / 0.01/0.09)

**For non-native speakers, if deliberately left over, code all Q7 values as 0.09, if not applicable, code all as 0.01**

12. How satisfied are you with the current interpreter services provided by JobCentre? (0 being extremely unsatisfied, 10 being very satisfied):

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 (0-10 / 0.01/0.09)

**For non-native speakers, if deliberately left over, code all Q7 values as 0.09, if not applicable, code all as 0.01**

