

[Research] NHS spent GBP 66m on translation and interpreting services in 2019/2020, new study from Inbox Translation finds

Submitted by: Inbox Translation

Wednesday, 18 May 2022

Inbox Translation

Freedom of information requests sent to all 244 NHS Trusts revealed that the spending on translation and interpreting services increased on average by 6% year on year.

=====

NHS Trusts and Health Boards in the UK spent GBP 65,962,418 in 2019/2020 on translation and interpreting services (including BSL – British Sign Language – and Welsh), an increase of approximately GBP 3.5 million compared to 2018/2019 according to a new study by Inbox Translation (<https://inboxtranslation.com/resources/research/nhs-spending-translation-interpreting-services/>).

The study has revealed that over a period of five years there was an average increase of 6% year on year in the spending on such services.

Methodology

=====

The research was conducted between December 2020 and May 2022, and it was based on freedom of information requests sent to all 244 NHS Trusts and Health Boards in England, Scotland, Wales, and Northern Ireland. The report investigated how much these organisations spent on translation and interpreting services (including BSL, braille, and Welsh) between 2015/2016 and 2019/2020.

Results

=====

Increase in spending

While translation and interpreting for foreign languages saw an increase of just under 0.5% in 2019/2020 compared to the previous year, BSL increased by more than 20%, which showed this is in fact the main driver.

This was explained by the NHS organisations enquired as having three reasons:

- more patients seen every year
- moving away from using friends and family for interpreting and starting using professional interpreters
- national BSL plans implemented

Spending by country in 2018/2019 and 2019/2020

Scotland

2018/2019: GBP 7,744,814

2019/2020: GBP 7,416,538

Wales

2018/2019: GBP 2,119,280

2019/2020: GBP 2,421,845

England

2018/2019: GBP 47,602,752

2019/2020: GBP 51,097,091

Note: data split per England region available in Section 5.1. of the report

(<https://inboxtranslation.com/resources/research/nhs-spending-translation-interpreting-services/#spending>)

Northern Ireland

2018/2019: GBP 4,942,647

2019/2020: GBP 5,026,944

UK Total

2018/2019: GBP 62,409,493

2019/2020: GBP 65,962,418

Top spenders (UK-wide)

(<https://inboxtranslation.com/resources/research/nhs-spending-translation-interpreting-services/#top>)

The top three spenders in 2018/2019 and 2019/2020 were:

- 1) NHS Greater Glasgow and Clyde
- 2) Southern Health and Social Care Trust
- 3) Manchester University NHS Foundation Trust

Languages

Translation and interpreting were offered in 120 languages.

Ambulance spending

Ambulance services have nil or negligible costs with written translations, BSL, or braille.

Employment of translators and interpreters

The Health Boards in Wales are the only organisations that routinely employ translators and interpreters, while Trusts elsewhere in the UK outsource these services. For Welsh Health Boards, most of the spending in this area is for the Welsh language.

Alina Cincan, Managing Director of Inbox Translation commented:

“To put this spending into perspective, the amount reported in 2019/2020 relative to the UK population is the equivalent of a contribution of just under GBP 1 per person per year. In healthcare, errors in communication put people’s lives at risk, so we cannot afford to look at these figures only from a spending point of view, but we need to consider what’s at stake.”

More data and full study results:

<https://inboxtranslation.com/resources/research/nhs-spending-translation-interpreting-services/>
(<https://inboxtranslation.com/resources/research/nhs-spending-translation-interpreting-services/>)

Company and author info

=====

Inbox Translation (<https://inboxtranslation.com/>) is a translation agency providing translation services (including for the medical private sector) and a member of the Association of Translation Companies (https://atc.org.uk/directory-find_a_trans/member/inbox-translation/) in the UK.

Alina Cincan (<https://inboxtranslation.com/about/alina-cincan/>), the author of the report, is a qualified translator, Fellow of the Chartered Institute of Linguists (<https://www.ciol.org.uk/translator/profile/43796/37/10829>), member of the Mediterranean Editors and Translators, and member of the Medical and Pharmaceutical Network of the Institute of Translation and Interpreting.

Contact: Alina Cincan, alina@inboxtranslation.com, +44 (0)20 7993 8080