

Worcestershire County Council makes local services easier to access

CASE STUDY





Introduction

Worcestershire County Council makes local services easier to access

Worcestershire County Council provides vital services across the county, from adults and children's services to Registrar services and community support. Every day, staff work with people who need advice, guidance or urgent help. For residents whose first language isn't English, those conversations can be challenging and sometimes isolating.

To make communications more effective, the Council began working with Clear Voice and what started as a straightforward way to help staff and residents understand each other has become a wider commitment to accessibility and social value.

All Council departments now use Clear Voice's interpreting, translation and transcription services, helping people gain easy access to the support they need in a language they understand, whilst supporting the Government's procurement policy statement of using more VCSE's (Voluntary, Community, and Social Enterprise).

The Challenge

Finding a fairer, simpler way to deliver language support

Worcestershire County Council serves one of the most diverse populations in the West Midlands and almost every department needs to communicate clearly and effectively with residents, many of whom don't speak English as a first language.

Over time, the Council's language provision had become fragmented. Different teams used different suppliers, and there wasn't a single, clear view of quality or spend. Staff sometimes struggled to arrange interpreters quickly or to keep track of usage and costs. The system was serviceable, but it left too much to chance.

So, when Colin Bates joined the procurement team, he saw an opportunity to make improvements. The Council spent more than £100,000 each year on interpreting and translation, yet contracts focused only on price and

efficiency. Colin wanted that spending to deliver more: to give everyone a simpler way to access language support and ensure the investment benefited the local community.

He began looking for a supplier who could meet these aims and strengthen the Council's commitment to social value.



Summary

The Council's language provision was fragmented.

Different teams used different suppliers. Keeping track of quality, usage and costs was a struggle.



Turning essential language support into social value for the county

Colin used a public-sector Dynamic Purchasing System that helps councils deliver value for money and facilitate working with voluntary, community and social enterprise organisations. Through a sourcing exercise using that route, Worcestershire County Council appointed Clear Voice to provide interpreting, translation and transcription services across a variety of departments.

The change gave staff a simpler way to reach the help they needed. Instead of managing several suppliers, they could now request an interpreter by phone or online and receive confirmation within minutes. It reduced administration for managers and meant residents would get answers more quickly.

For Colin, the benefit went beyond simple measures of efficiency. He wanted to work with a supplier that reflected the Council's values and gave something back to the local community. Clear Voice's model met that brief by supporting its parent organisation, Migrant Help, and by running the InPower programme, which trains refugees to qualify and work as professional interpreters.

The partnership has also strengthened the Council's internal systems. Regular reporting provides clear data on usage, costs and languages, making planning easier. Council staff describe the service as responsive and dependable, and the relationship has developed and thrived as one built on trust.

“I’m here to make sure Worcestershire thrives. Clear Voice sources linguists from the county, pays people who live here and gives them meaningful work. That’s a good thing straight away and builds on the four priorities of the Council’s Corporate Plan.”

Colin Bates
Category Lead (People & Resources)
Worcestershire County Council



“We use telephone interpreters for Notices of Marriage and Civil Partnerships. They translate the statutory questions, explain the process of getting married and what happens on the day of the wedding. It breaks down barriers and helps our clients feel more at ease.”

Sharron Caldwell
Registration and Coroners Service





The Outcome

Better access, wider benefits and more community impact

Since adopting Clear Voice's services, Worcestershire County Council has gained a consistent and reliable way to communicate effectively with residents who need language support. All departments now use the same system, which allows staff to simply, quickly and easily connect with interpreters, and receive accurate translations. The service is available by phone, online booking or in person, giving staff the ability to respond in real time.

Staff describe the service as being professional and easy to use, also stating that interpreters are patient and dependable, even on difficult calls.

For Colin, the results and the value generated goes beyond improved access. The partnership delivers reliable support for staff and measurable benefits for the community. He appreciates that it's a professional service that helps the Council work more effectively and support the people of Worcestershire.

The new approach to language access is practical and fair. It helps staff do their jobs with confidence, gives residents a clearer route to support, and keeps public spending working for the people of Worcestershire.

“I've seen firsthand the benefits of using Clear Voice for our interpreting, translation and transcription needs. The on-demand telephone service and the professionalism of the team make a real difference for our residents.”



Paul Appleyard
Customer Services & Relations Manager
Worcestershire County Council



We make services accessible in every language

Everyone should be able to access the services they need, in the language they require. We are here to help you make this a reality.

Contact us with your language requirements

clearvoice.org.uk · 0800 520 0380