



**NORTHERN IRELAND PRACTICE AND EDUCATION
COUNCIL FOR NURSING AND MIDWIFERY**

Code of Courtesy on the European Charter for Regional and Minority Languages

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1. Introduction

The UK government has a commitment to the European Charter for Regional and Minority Languages as ratified in 2001. As part of this commitment, we must meet certain obligations in respect of Irish and Ulster Scots. The Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety circulated guidance on these obligations in June 2004 and issued revised guidelines in 2005.

2. Background: The Charter

The European Charter protects and promotes regional and minority languages for cultural reasons and the measures within the Charter apply to all government departments and their associated bodies.

The Charter highlights the need to base policies and practice on the promotion, encouragement and recognition of Irish and Ulster Scots to ensure the languages are preserved. It also contains suggestions on pro-active measures which can be adopted (for example, translating key documents), and outlines the obligations that public authorities face in relation to users of Irish and Ulster Scots.

In this respect, we must:

- have the capacity to use the regional form of the minority languages in question
- have the capacity to allow the use of minority languages
- have the capability to deal with the submission of applications in the languages
- have the ability to publish official documents in the languages
- ensure that all staff are aware of the provisions and their implementation.

3. Code of Courtesy

This Code of Courtesy spells out what we will adhere to in relation to the use of personal names and addresses, telephone calls, correspondence, meetings and interviews.

Personal Names

Staff must respect the wishes of anyone who would like to be known by the Irish or Ulster Scots version of their name, and must use only this name for official business. If a person is known by both English and Irish/Ulster Scots versions, it may be useful to put both versions on file. If there is any confusion as to the spelling or pronunciation of a name, it should be clarified with the person in question.

Addresses

When a person has used a lawful Irish or Ulster Scots street name, we will address any correspondence in the same way.

Telephone Calls

If a caller begins a telephone call in Irish or Ulster Scots, the member of staff will respond in Irish or Ulster Scots if they speak the relevant language. If not, the following options will be offered:

1. to continue the call in English
2. to write to us in Irish or Ulster Scots
3. to wait while the call is being transferred to a member of staff who speaks Irish or Ulster Scots, if this is available
4. to be transferred to voicemail where a message can be left in Irish or Ulster Scots.

The organisation has an obligation to receive requests and applications in Irish and Ulster Scots, but has no such obligation to respond in kind if it is not possible.

The voicemail facilities can be accessed by calling:

028 90515252 (Irish)

028 90515251 (Ulster Scots)

Any messages will be translated as soon as possible and passed on to the relevant organisation.

Correspondence

The organisation is obliged to receive written documentation in Irish or Ulster Scots, but is not obliged to acknowledge or reply in Irish or Ulster Scots although it is encouraged to do so.

For those who do not speak the relevant language, it is possible to sign an English version and attach it to an unsigned copy of the Irish or Ulster Scots version.

Face-to-Face Interviews and Meetings

If a person starts speaking in Irish or Ulster Scots to a member of staff who does not speak the language, there are three options which can be offered:

1. to continue the interview / meeting in English
2. to submit the issues in writing in Irish or Ulster Scots
3. to make an appointment when an interpreter can attend.

If a person has made an appointment and indicated in advance that they wish to speak in Irish or Ulster Scots, we will endeavour to arrange the attendance of an interpreter. An exception to this would be when interviewing an applicant for a job which would require the applicant to communicate in English.

4. Further Information

Further information or guidance can be obtained from the Business Services Organisation's Equality Unit on (028) 9536 3961 or at equality.unit@hscni.net.