

# **European Charter For Regional Or Minority Languages**

## **Department for Regional Development**

### **Code Of Courtesy For Ulster-Scots**

**May 2008**

#### **Introduction**

Linguistic diversity must be regarded as a common cultural wealth. Everyone is entitled to respect and courtesy, which extends to their language. Every effort should be made to convey this respect even if it is not possible to deal with the person in the language of his/her choice.

Officers should become familiar with the provisions of the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages that apply to Ulster-Scots and the measures the Department has decided upon to implement them.

#### **Personal Names**

A person is legally entitled to assume any name he or she wishes – in English or in any other language. If he or she is generally known by that name, it is valid for purposes of legal identification. Unless it appears that he or she is not generally known by that name, staff must respect the wishes of anyone who wants to be known by the Ulster-Scots version of their name, and should use only that name in official business. Care should be taken to avoid confusion and duplication if an individual is known by both Ulster-Scots and English names. It may be useful to put a record of both versions on file.

If an officer believes that the person in question may also have been using an English form of their name, he/she might ask, *“Is this the form of your name you always use? I have to ensure that all your records are together”*

If a person gives his/her name in Ulster-Scots, and the officer dealing with the person has difficulty in writing or even pronouncing it, they should ask the person to help them spell it.

If the name includes an accent, this should present no problem. Practically all computer software packages cater for this.<sup>1</sup>

In short, a person may use whatever form of their name they choose. This right should never be questioned. Every effort should be made to write and/or pronounce a person's name correctly. Don't be embarrassed to seek that person's help.

### **Face-to-Face Interviews and Meetings**

In the spirit of the Charter, Departments and associated bodies are encouraged to make provision for Ulster-Scots interviews and meetings. However at present it is not normally possible to facilitate face-to-face meeting in the Ulster-Scots language due to difficulty in ensuring appropriate quality assurance for interpreters. Further advice can be sought through the NICS Central Translation Service, telephone Linguistic Operations Branch on extension (028 90 2) 58979.

### **Telephone Calls**

If a caller begins the conversation in Ulster-Scots the officer may respond in Ulster-Scots (if they speak it) or English. If the officer does not speak Ulster-Scots they should explain this and offer alternatives for dealing with the call. The following form of words may be helpful:

*“I am sorry I cannot answer you in Ulster-Scots. But I can offer you the following options for dealing with your call. You may:*

- *continue the call in English*
- *write to us in Ulster-Scots*
- *transfer you to our voice mail where you can leave a message in Ulster-Scots.”*

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<sup>1</sup> Some Ulster-Scots spelling systems use accents to represent inflexion. When using Microsoft Word, the accent can be keyed in by pressing the *Alt Gr* key and then the vowel in question. In the case of capitals the *Shift* key should also be pressed. All such letters can also be accessed by using the *Insert –Symbol* facility.

To contact the **voice mail** phone – **extension (028 90 2) 58924**. Whilst the Charter does not require acceptance of oral applications in Ulster-Scots, this offers the opportunity to encourage and promote the language in line with Part II of the Charter.

### **Procedures for the use of Ulster-Scots Language Voicemail**

If a caller contacts the central switchboard or an individual Department indicating that they wish to conduct their business in Ulster-Scots, the official receiving the call speak to them in Ulster-Scots if they feel confident they can do so. If they cannot do so, or divert the caller to an Ulster-Scots speaking member of staff, they will divert or direct the caller to the Ulster-Scots language voice mail on extension (028 90 2) 58924.

The voice mail is monitored by officials in Linguistic Operations Branch, Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure.

Messages received will be translated immediately or forwarded to an interpreter for translation.

Translated enquiries will be forwarded to the appropriate official or business area for action.

#### **MESSAGE ON ULSTER-SCOTS VOICE MAIL FACILITY (IN ULSTER-SCOTS)**

“Welcome to the Northern Ireland Civil Service. If you would like to leave a message with us someone will come back to you as soon as possible. You can leave your message after the tone. To handle your call we need you to give us the following information:

- Your name
- Your address
- Your daytime telephone number
- The name of the person you would like to contact, if you know it

- The name of the Department you would like to contact, if you know it.
- The nature of your business

We will try to get back to you as soon as possible but if your business is very urgent you are advised to contact the particular Department directly in English.

### **Correspondence**

The Charter does not oblige Departments to accept written correspondence in Ulster-Scots, but the Department's policy is to do so, using the Central Translation Service, where necessary. If it seems that, taking translation into account, it will not be possible to provide a substantive reply by the relevant deadline, an acknowledgement should issue in the normal way, explaining that the letter is being translated and that a substantive reply will follow (Annex A). The acknowledgement should be issued in Ulster-Scots using the translation provided at Annex B. Further advice can be sought through the NICS Central Translation Service, telephone Linguistic Operations Branch on extension (028 90 2) 58979.

The Charter does not oblige Departments to acknowledge or reply in Ulster-Scots to correspondence received in Ulster-Scots, but the Department's policy is to do so, using the Central Translation Service, where necessary. All translations should be obtained through the Equality Unit (Liz Stewart, ext. (028 90 5) 40867 and Tim Laverty, ext. (028 90 5) 40850). English translations of the original letter and response should be filed. For the avoidance of doubt officials issuing responses in Ulster-Scots who have no Ulster-Scots themselves may wish to sign the English translation of a response and attach a copy to the unsigned Ulster-Scots version.

### **Translations**

All translations should be obtained through the Equality Unit (Liz Stewart, ext. (028 90 5) 40867 and Tim Laverty, ext. (028 90 5) 40850), who will arrange translation of documents or correspondence from, or into, Ulster-Scots via the Central Translation Service.

### **Writing Paper**

Business areas should ensure that all external correspondence issues on the

trilingual writing paper approved by the Minister.

## **Addresses**

The Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) (Northern Ireland) Order 1995 provides that a District Council may place a version of a street name in another language alongside the English name. For up to date information on non-English street names adopted by District Councils go to:

[http://www.osni.gov.uk/paper/dual\\_lang.html](http://www.osni.gov.uk/paper/dual_lang.html)

or contact the Ordnance Survey ([info@pointer-ni.gov.uk](mailto:info@pointer-ni.gov.uk)). When a person has used a lawful Ulster Scots language street name staff should use the Ulster-Scots form in replying to correspondence or while processing applications. Both Ulster-Scots and English versions should be noted on the official record.

Where third parties may be involved i.e. where a document may need to be scrutinised (e.g. driving licence) or publicised (e.g. planning application) the English form of the street address should be shown as well as the Ulster-Scots version. There are no restrictions on using Ulster-Scots versions of other parts of an address e.g. townland, town, county, country.

When contact is being initiated, it would be in keeping with the spirit of the Charter to use both versions initially, and then continue using whichever language was used in the reply. Departments and associated bodies are encouraged to use versions in both languages in their documents and publications.

## **Enquiries and Monitoring**

Enquiries about this Guidance and further advice on requests to do business (oral or written) in Ulster-Scots should be addressed to the Equality Unit (Liz Stewart, ext. (028 90 5) 40867 and Tim Lavery, ext. (028 90 5) 40850).