

**Ministry of Defence Access to Information
Guidance Note**

Version 6

June 2009

Guidance Note D5: Requests Received other than in written English

Requests in languages other than English or Welsh

Correspondence received from within the “local community” – i.e. the UK

1. Correspondence which is not in English (or Welsh) is to be returned asking the correspondent to reframe it in English. When the English version arrives, the 20 day clock starts if the correspondence proves to be a request for information.
2. If it becomes clear that the applicant would have difficulty in framing their request or in understanding information in English the duty to advise and assist arises. Such circumstances may be apparent from the applicant's request or in dialogue with the applicant when seeking clarification. It would be appropriate to suggest that assistance is sought from a friend more familiar with English, or from the Citizens Advice Bureau. *Exceptionally*, if it is thought reasonable and appropriate, bearing in mind both the applicant's circumstances and the available resources, a reply may be offered in the correspondent's own language. Such an offer is entirely at the MOD's discretion, and this disbursable cost may be requested from the applicant.

3 Correspondence from outside the “local community”

- 3.1 Correspondence received from outside the UK which is not in English (or Welsh) is to be returned asking the correspondent to reframe it in English. If the correspondence then proves to be a request for information the 20 day clock starts. Your reply should be in English.

- 3.2 The exception is where the MOD already has arrangements to correspond in the local language, or regularly provides information in that language. For example, the British Forces Liaison Organisation (Germany) replies in German to correspondence from German authorities and the German public. In these cases it would be reasonable to reply in the requestor's language. Where the reply includes copies of documents there is no requirement for these to be translated. However, as above, there is discretion to do so if, exceptionally, this is thought appropriate.

4 Welsh

- 4.1 Under the MOD Welsh Language Scheme we must meet an applicant's request for a reply in Welsh. The cost of translation is borne by the requesting branch and may not be recovered from the applicant. The 20 days response time for FOI requests applies to requests in Welsh.

5 Requesting translation

- 5.1 Following changes to the funding and delivery of translation services DI SA-LSVS will undertake translation solely for the Defence Intelligence Staff. See DIN05-0142009. Business Units need to make their own arrangements for any translation services required. Guidance is available here:

<http://defenceintranet.diiweb.r.mil.uk/DefenceIntranet/Library/CivilianAndJointService/BrowseDocumentCategories/InformationPolicyAndServices/LanguageServices/TranslationServices/Din2009din05014.htm>