

Pre-Booking *Workflow*

A reception workflow template for arranging interpreter-supported and longer appointments at the time of booking. Reduces last-minute interpreter scrambles and improves the patient experience.

The Pre-Booking Workflow Template helps reception staff arrange interpreter-supported and longer appointments at the time of booking, rather than at the last minute. Pre-booking reduces missed interpreter needs and improves the patient experience from the first phone call.

What pre-booking achieves

For the patient <i>a planned visit</i>	The patient arrives knowing an interpreter will be there, that the appointment has enough time, and that the practice is set up for their needs.
For reception <i>no last-minute scramble</i>	Interpreters are booked in advance through TIS National. Longer appointments are scheduled, not improvised. The calendar shows what to expect.
For the GP and nurse <i>prepared, not surprised</i>	Clinicians know an interpreter is booked. They can review the patient record beforehand. They can plan staged care if needed.
For the practice <i>fewer disruptions</i>	Fewer appointments delayed, rescheduled, or shortened due to language access issues.

TIP

Build interpreter-booking into the standard booking script for reception staff. Asking "Do you need an interpreter?" should be as routine as asking for a date of birth.

Worked example

EXAMPLE — A NEW PATIENT PHONE BOOKING

Call comes in. Family member calling to book a new patient appointment for a relative.

Reception asks: "What language is most comfortable for the appointment?" → Sango.

Reception checks calendar: books a 30-minute slot (longer than standard 15) with Dr. Chen for the following Tuesday. Adds a tag "INTERPRETER NEEDED · SANGO" to the appointment.

Reception books interpreter: calls TIS National using practice's client code, requests Sango interpreter for Tuesday 10 am, gets booking reference.

Day before appointment: reception confirms interpreter is still booked, sends an SMS reminder to the patient and family member. Nurse reviews the appointment list and flags this booking to Dr. Chen.

Blank workflow

ADAPT FOR YOUR PRACTICE

PRACTICE NAME

1. AT THE TIME OF BOOKING

- ☐ Ask about preferred language for the appointment
- ☐ Ask whether an interpreter is required
- ☐ Note any gender preference for the interpreter where relevant
- ☐ Note any communication considerations (deaf or hard of hearing, family confidentiality, etc.)
- ☐ Record language and interpreter need in the patient record

2. CHOOSE THE RIGHT APPOINTMENT SLOT

- ☐ For first refugee health appointments: book a longer slot (30+ minutes)
- ☐ For routine follow-up with interpreter: book at least 20 minutes
- ☐ For complex cases: consider booking back-to-back slots or a planned staged visit
- ☐ Tag the appointment in the system so clinicians can see it's interpreter-supported

3. ARRANGE THE INTERPRETER

- ☐ Book through TIS National using the practice's client code
- ☐ Specify the required language and any gender preference
- ☐ Confirm the interpreter type (phone, video, or on-site)
- ☐ Record the booking reference number with the appointment
- ☐ Note the day and time the interpreter is confirmed for

4. CONFIRM WITH THE PATIENT

- ☐ Send a reminder SMS or call the day before, in plain language
- ☐ Confirm the interpreter will be there
- ☐ Provide directions, parking notes, what to bring
- ☐ If a translated reminder is available for the language, use it

5. PREPARE THE TEAM

- ☐ Reception flags the appointment on the daily list

- ☐ Nurse reviews the patient record and prepares any pre-consultation work
- ☐ GP knows in advance an interpreter is booked
- ☐ If interpreter is phone or video, the room is set up with speakerphone or video link

NOTES FOR THIS BOOKING

A NOTE ON SANGO AND LIMITED-ACCESS LANGUAGES

Sango interpreter availability is limited and bookings often need to be made several days in advance. Same-day Sango interpreter requests through TIS National frequently cannot be filled. For Sango-speaking patients, build in extra lead time when booking, and consider holding longer routine appointment slots that can be flexibly assigned.

NEXT STEP

Once the workflow is agreed, document it as a written reception procedure and train all reception staff. Use **Appendix 13 (Flexible Access Strategy Planner)** to think through after-hours and outreach options for patients who cannot attend standard appointment times.