

Evaluation

May 2004

Executive summary

This report is an evaluation of the Multikulti project, a website providing multilingual information on social welfare issues, hosted by the London Advice Services Alliance. It was conducted from December 2003 to April 2004, by way of interviews and questionnaires from the project team, user agencies, translators and the editorial board.

The evaluation was conducted to look back over the project and investigate whether it was meeting the aim of supporting citizenship through information provision, to find out whether the translation process is an effective and efficient way to produce materials, and to provide evidence for funding application to enable the project to continue to operate. Thus this evaluation is aimed at both the project group themselves, the New Opportunities Fund who have provided funding for the project for the last 4 years, and for new funders

The main findings are that:

- Multikulti is a well-needed, well-used information resource that supports organisations working with black and minority ethnic communities;
- information provided through Multikulti is seen as relevant to the needs of agencies and their clients, and is perceived to be of a high quality;
- Multikulti plays an important role in empowering individuals to better understand their rights and entitlements, and thus:
- allows agencies making use of the site to use their, often limited, resources more efficiently and effectively;
- participating in the project as a translator/proofreader is fulfilling and develops the skills of those involved;
- further development of the site depends on sufficient resources being available.

Although the user group survey was relatively small, the results from the user group survey along with feedback directly from the website and from the translators all indicate the unique position of Multikulti in the services it provides. Support for the aims and objectives of Multikulti was universally expressed and it seems clear that as a model of community translation, there is a lot that can be learned from the project for other services that aim to produce similar multilingual material to a similar standard.

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Aims and objectives of the Multikulti project

Broad aim –

The Multikulti website aims to support citizenship through the delivery of culturally appropriate and accurately translated information on social welfare issues in community languages.

Specific aims -

To improve access to reliable and relevant information for individuals from BME communities.

To develop a robust and reliable process for translating material to ensure quality and relevance.

To promote views of BME communities in the selection process for site content and languages.

To improve presentation and accessibility of content on website.

Objectives

1 - To improve access to reliable and relevant information for individuals from BME communities.

Objectives

- Provide translated material in 11 community languages on debt, employment, health, housing, immigration and welfare benefits
- Organise regular meetings of editorial and user groups made up of BME community representatives
- Provide content in Unicode
- Conform to accepted web standards for accessibility

2 - To develop a robust and reliable process for translating material to ensure quality and relevance.

Objectives

- Use editorial group to nominate content
- Use bi-lingual translators with experience of subject matter
- Provide keyword glossary for standard technical terms
- Use proofreaders for translated text before display
- Gather feedback from user group

3 - To promote representation from BME communities in the selection process for site content and languages.

Objectives

- Organise regular meetings of editorial and user groups made up of BME community representatives
- Editorial group nominate content

- Gather feedback from user group

4 - To improve presentation and accessibility of content on website.

Objectives

- Provide content in Unicode
- Provide search facility on site
- Conform to accepted web standards for accessibility

Figure 1. A Multikulti document in English, Arabic & Chinese



Background to Multikulti

Interview with Multikulti project team in December 2003, present: Njomeza Kartallozi (Project Co-ordinator), Dan McQuillan (Project Leader), Interviewer: Paul Treloar

PT began by reading to the project team a quote from the home page of Multikulti –

“The Multikulti website aims to support citizenship through the delivery of culturally appropriate and accurately translated information in the following areas of welfare law - debt, employment, health, housing, immigration and welfare benefits”

In response to being asked whether they felt that they had achieved this broad aim, NK and DM expressed satisfaction that they had achieved all of their desired aims over the course of the Multikulti project, and had actually delivered more than expected on certain areas. Issues such as breadth of content, spread of languages, relevance and topicality of material, and technical developments had all progressed in a positive manner.

Pilot Multikulti project

Looking back to the beginnings of the project, the initial Multikulti pilot was run in conjunction with Haringey CAB and other local community groups in Haringey, the thinking being that communities should decide the content of the website to ensure the relevance and suitability of material to the communities represented. An editorial board was formed that was made up of representatives of the various groups involved. An intended function of the editorial group was for members to select appropriate content for inclusion on Multikulti, as well as to proofread translations for correctness. Bilingual translators who work in communities were identified as possessing relevant skills in both being able to translate material itself and in understanding the content of the material being translated in a technical sense, thus improving final quality.

The initial pilot had material available in 14 languages, based on the needs of resident communities living in the London Borough of Haringey – this was found to be too much of a challenge as each language of translated material has effectively been found to represent a project in it's own right.

Languages

“Brent is an area where over 100 languages are spoken, but I think this site will provide useful advice for the majority of Brent citizens. I have featured it on our website”

*User comment from **Trades Unions in Brent***

When the move to a national project took place, the languages available on Multikulti were necessarily selected in accordance with relevance to national communities, as well as some other considerations. For example, Bengali was selected as one of the

languages for inclusion as there is evidence of little English-speaking-skills within the Bengali community, whilst the Bengali community is also quite a large ethnic minority community, relatively speaking. Gujarati was selected due to a dearth of suitably translated material. Further decisions were taken in relation to selecting languages relevant for both settled communities and newly arrived communities, as well as considerations such as the widespread usage of French, Spanish and Arabic.

Feedback over the course of the Multikulti project suggests that Urdu and Portuguese are two languages that users of the site would most like to see included that are not currently available – other than these, feedback indicates general satisfaction with languages currently available.

Materials and content

“Thank You! We cannot afford translators & have so many different languages in our area; leaflets are so difficult to keep up to date, even to store as we need about 10 of each for each language.”

*User comments from **The Greenway Community Centre, Nottingham***

As stated above, an assumed role for the editorial board was with regard to the selection of appropriate material for display on the website. Initially, the project group approached some key agencies for assistance with this, as well as having some content specifically drafted for inclusion. Since these beginnings, lots of different agencies, for example Shelter, Coventry Law Centre, MIND, Age Concern, etc have approached the Multikulti project group with offers of relevant material. This has made the process of gathering content for inclusion on the website much less onerous – however, a vital lesson has also been learned with regards to copyright and the distribution of materials. Certain agencies offering content have been uncertain about the stipulation made by the Multikulti project group that the agency must agree to their translated materials being freely distributed through Multikulti – building relationships with the information departments of agencies has helped to overcome some of these difficulties.

Another difficulty has been experienced in keeping the content of translated material up to date. Organisations and agencies offering material for translation, as well as agreeing to allow free distribution of the translated material, must agree to update material as part of their contract with Multikulti. Additionally, at the time of the translation, the material should have a “shelf life” of at least 12 months before needing to be updated. In practise, there have been some difficulties in upholding this part of the agreement, and to ensure that materials are updated at appropriate times, the Multikulti co-ordinator uses regular deadlines to check material as well as using feedback from users, translators and the editorial group. The new Content Management System should also help to make rewrites and updates of materials much easier to carry out, although there are some concerns about the ICT skills of translators.

The editorial group discuss material offered for inclusion on the website at regular meetings, and decide on the relevance and suitability of material to their respective communities – essentially, they act as community advocates and have been selected as members of the board specifically because they work as community workers or community translators already. The project co-ordinator selects board members using existing contacts and by contacts made through talking to other people in different capacities – there is also a lot of contact via the website from people offering their services, as well as links made with other translation services.

Translators

“Although we have access to a community language translation service it takes time and money to organise help from them. Well done - it will be a great help to us in our work with young people.”

*User comments from Youth Access member in **Milton Keynes***

Key areas that have been identified in relation to translators for Multikulti include:

- bilingual skills
- ability to both translate words **and** transform meaning of material to ensure comprehension of target audience
- knowledge of how to carry out basic research on topic of translated document
- willingness to request help or assistance, when necessary, from project group, editorial group or other translators
- experience of advice work in the community
- previous experience of translation

Multikulti has developed a rigorous translation process in order to produce “bespoke” translators. Potential translators are given training at the start of their induction process before having to complete a competency test.

Before any material is passed to translators, the project co-ordinator reads through documents to look for any keywords, which are then identified in advance to the translator. In this way, a keyword glossary has been produced over time that takes in terms for jargon, cultural names and words, technical and official terms, and departmental names. Translators are then expected to prepare their translations to a deadline, before the translated material is passed on for proofreading and then correction where necessary. It takes approximately two to three months to produce a translation on average, although certain issues such as the complexity of the document or pressures of the translator’s day job can cause delays.

The availability of keywords assists translators in ensuring consistency in technical terms across all translations. The aim is to produce translations that use plain language, rather than literary, dialectic or jargon-heavy language, as for the Plain English Campaign for example. The proofreading stage and usage of keywords are

also intended to increase the confidence of the translators when producing a translation.

The project co-ordinators background in translation work has been a strength in relation to the development of the translation process because she has an understanding of the experiences and issues that surround other translation work and translated material. For example, the fact that much translated material available on the internet is not proofread and is therefore of questionable quality; that translated material often uses terms that have no meaning or sense for target audiences; that languages can have many regional or national variations, for example French and African-French, Spanish and Latin American Spanish. This awareness has led to developments such as using a Latin American proofreader for Spanish translations to ensure the widest possible audience.

Display of documents

“To all the staff at MultiKulti. Well done on the website. It's great to see that not only are you doing lots to serve minority communities, but, also you've now made the site accessible. All too often, I find that minority services are not accessible (either physically, or, webwise). And, when I got to disabled groups, they don't know about, or, don't want to know about my other needs. Argh! Thanks for making a difference.”
User comment from **an individual**, “George”

The Internet has gone through several phases, but all the way through it's been an English-based medium. Ideally, Multikulti wanted to make the technology work with people's cultures rather than the culture with the technology. This commitment meant they had to confront some 'challenging' technical issues, particularly around multilingual scripts (and the languages chosen included Bengali, Gujarati, Arabic, Farsi, Chinese – all of them non-Roman scripts). The Internet remains a mainly European- language technology. Every letter displayed on a website is sent to a computer as a number. The highest number allowed in HTML was originally 255, which means there aren't enough spare numbers for the different characters that make up non-European languages. One way round this is for each language to have its own "character set." However, it was found that character sets weren't available for many of the languages wanted, and they can only ever display European letters along with one other script - they aren't multilingual character sets.

Another approach was tried - "Unicode". This is a different way of linking numbers to characters so that more than 255 numbers are available. But, disappointingly, Unicode wasn't a satisfactory technological solution at the start of the project, partly because the standard was incomplete and partly because browsers implemented it poorly. Since Multikulti was dealing with many languages, a simple solution was needed, which could also produce high quality printouts. Using the Adobe Printed Document Format (PDF) format was decided as a suitable alternative. The multilingual content was converted into PDF files and made accessible through the language categories on the website.

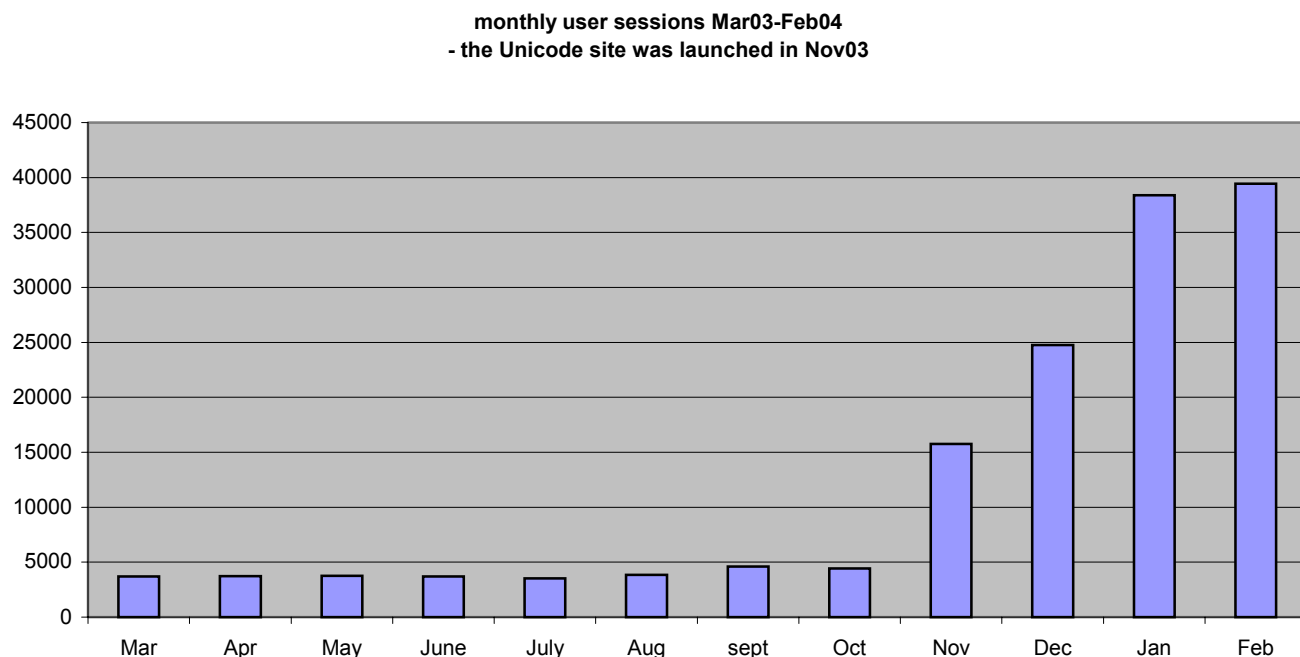
This worked reasonably well, but PDFs have limitations. They take multilingual content and wrap it in a kind of software cellophane. Furthermore, you need an extra piece of software (Acrobat Reader) to read it, which for site users complicates the process of accessing documents. For the Multikulti site in its original ideal form, this was not good as it remained a basically English site with multilingual content hanging off it whereas the project team wanted the information on the site to be available as real text in all the languages, instead of being zipped inside a PDF package.

Unicode technology, however, moved on. So the development of a new site began using Unicode, with funds provided by the New Opportunities Fund. A Unicode site enables Multikulti to comply not only with their own commitment to a culturally appropriate technology but also with accessibility standards like the Web Accessibility Initiative from the World Wide Web Consortium (W3C). The Unicode content should be searchable, making Multikulti resources easier to find via Internet search engines. Also, as the text is directly editable within the Multikulti Content Management System, it should make the job of keeping the content up to date easier.

Even with these advances, for the display of certain scripts, e.g. Bengali and Gujarati, users need to be running Windows XP Pro on a powerful computer. However, experience of working with local community groups has shown that you can't just say *'get a new PC with Windows XP Pro'* and leave it at that. Time, money and training resources are usually stretched, and there are always other more pressing priorities. As a safety net, it was decided to continue to make PDF's available for computers that cannot render the correct script. So, there are still some problems with a fully Unicode-enabled site. Suitable Unicode fonts still need to be made available to users for all languages, and only recent browser versions will properly display right-to-left and complex scripts. Some people are using old operating systems that have never heard of Open Type fonts. Also the current compliant fonts for these languages are proprietary, and cannot be given away. Hopes for an open and accessible font solution lie in projects like 'Freebanglafont', where progress is being made. The full Unicode version of the site should be with us this year.

Since the change to Unicode, website statistics have doubled, whilst the number of user sessions, i.e. identifiable single users, have increased four-fold. Feedback has been generally positive, although the project team is not sure that for many users they actually appreciate much difference between the display modes. It has, however, been noticed that the Unicode help instructions have been accessed frequently.

Figure 2. The increase in Multikulti user sessions, showing the effect of Unicode



“Multikulti... is an excellent service and an inspired idea by the way... and I can only imagine the technical implications you have had to face!”
 User comment from **Information Centre about Asylum and Refugees in the UK, London**

Feedback and monitoring

“We have always thought this is an excellent site and we encourage CLS partners to use it.” – User comment from **Legal Services Eastern Region**

When Multikulti began operating, a User Group was formed to provide feedback on the operation and design of Multikulti. However, the activities of this group has somewhat tailed off due to a lack of funding to promote and encourage participation of

organisations, a lack of time for organisations to take part due to their nature (e.g. often small, under resourced agencies), and a similar lack of time and resources available to the Multikulti project team to rectify these type of difficulties.

However, since it's inception, Multikulti has received a great deal of feedback from many other organisations and individuals who have accessed the website. This feedback has indicated that people using the site generally find it clear, useful and easy to navigate. Additionally, there have been many comments received praising the innovative and unique approach of Multikulti, both in terms of being a stand-alone website, as well as in comparison to other websites and other materials that have some degree of multilingual content. The project team continues to make links with other agencies of interest, such as the Legal Services Commission, to gather feedback, share good practise and develop the site.

Feedback received has been used in a positive way to influence the development of Multikulti. For example, there is now a directory of advice services that can provide multilingual advisers at the request of users. Another request was for English documents being made available alongside translated documents, which helps advisers not fluent in the language of a client to understand the material they are passing on. Future developments are hoped to include an expansion in available languages, including Portuguese and Urdu, and an increase in the range of topics and issues covered, including more health and educational materials.

The overall approach to feedback and development was described as "action learning" – basically, listening to what the users of the Multikulti are asking for and saying about the site, trying out the more interesting proposals and then evaluating the outcomes. This proactive approach to the development of Multikulti has so far produced a much used website and a positive response.

*"I manage our **welfare rights team in Greenwich** and am also currently co-ordinating the CLS Partnership here. Could you let me know what stage you at and how you will be involving other agencies/organisations? I'm keen to encourage involvement of agencies in Greenwich if you are looking for wider involvement/contact."*

Multikulti evaluation description

Purpose

- To investigate whether the Multikulti project has achieved its aim of supporting citizenship by providing culturally appropriate and accurately translated material via the Multikulti website.
- To better understand the needs and requirements of agencies using Multikulti, as well as why and how they use the site, in terms of quality, content and functionality.
- To examine the translation process, including skills development of those involved and consider any opportunities for improvement.
- To consider the future development of Multikulti in terms of languages, materials, functions, etc.
- To produce evidence of the need and worth of the project for funding applications to ensure the continued operation of the website.

Design

Who?

- Multikulti project group
- Agencies using the site
- Translators
- Proof readers and Editorial Board

How?

A mainly summative evaluation was undertaken to look at the impact of the site on both users and contributors i.e. translators/proofreaders, as well as to examine future developments related to the project.

An initial interview was carried out with the Multikulti project group to understand the background to the project, to investigate why procedures and processes related to translation and display of documents had been agreed upon, and to identify why certain languages and functions had been selected.

Visits were made to ten user agencies to carry out one-to-one interviews, using a standard questionnaire, to investigate their thoughts on the quality, design and suitability of materials available on the site, access issues, and whether the site helps advisors and the agency in dealing with their clients. Also, consideration was given to how they would like to see the site develop in the future.

For the translators, it was agreed to design an initial questionnaire covering their thoughts and opinions on the translation process, on skills development issues, quality control and technical development. Following the return of the questionnaires, common areas of interest and/or concern were identified and used to inform and set

the agenda for a group session meeting of translators and proofreaders, following on from an editorial board meeting.

Outcome Measures

Production of a report detailing direct and indirect outcomes of the Multikulti project, taking in issues including:

- the background to Multikulti
- the translation process from topic selection through to display on the website,
- skills development related to translation, advice-giving and technical abilities,
- practical matters related to usage of the website, including quality and usability of materials,
- quality issues about content, translation, technical aspects
- possible developments for the site, including different languages, content, audiences

User group survey results

User Groups - A total of 10 workers from user agencies were interviewed, with organisations ranging in size from very small (two paid workers, three volunteers) to quite large (18 paid staff), as well as the Refugee Council (see appendix 1 for full list of agencies). All agencies stated some form of advice provision as a core service, although often within a range of other services such as appeals representation, ESOL teaching, other training, drop-in groups, etc. Some agencies served specific BME communities, some specific areas of London whilst others served specific groups of people e.g. women, refugees.

The majority of agencies stated that all their workers could, or would, access Multikulti when needed. Access problems for agencies mainly centred on any combination of:

- a lack of suitable IT equipment/physical space;
- a lack of IT skills/management;
- a lack of time.

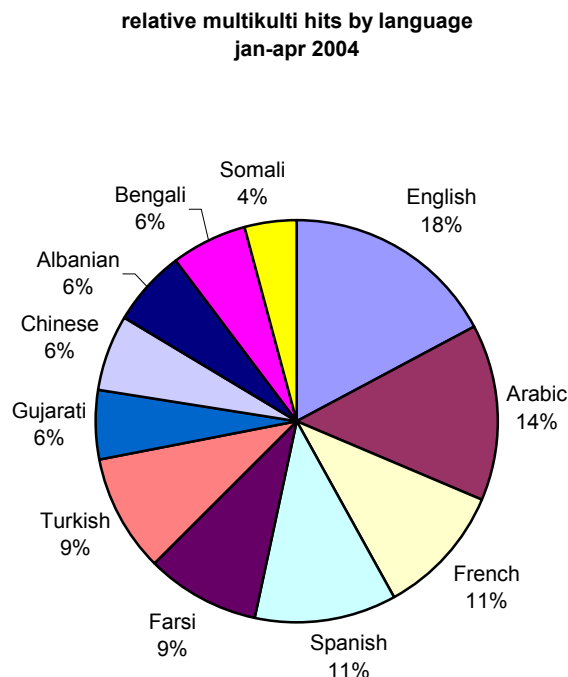
These findings would appear to indicate the perceived value of Multikulti to user agencies, in that despite some difficulties of access, they did make regular use of the site in dealing with clients.

Languages – Users were asked which were the most and least used languages on Multikulti. All languages were represented to some degree in the most used category (although Arabic and Gujarati were not identified specifically but under “All languages” as most useful) and only English received more than one nomination as least used language.

This would suggest that the languages selected are appropriate and relevant for the target audience – the absence of specific mentions of Arabic and Gujarati would appear to result from the small sample size of agencies, rather than indicating a lack of need for these languages.

The web site statistics (Figure 1) suggest that there is a balanced use of the languages on Multikulti. Some languages were chosen because they have a wide coverage of communities across the world: e.g. Arabic (the whole of the Middle East), French (France, Africa, parts of Asia) and Spanish (Spain and Latin America). As expected, the site statistics are larger for these languages.

Figure 3. Relative web site statistics by language, January to April 2003



Usage – Interviewees stated that they used Multikulti in a variety of ways:

- (A) As necessary for individual queries – 60%
- (B) Download leaflets as stock – 70%
- (C) Refer client directly to website – 50%
- (D) Refer other workers to website – 40%

Reasons for these methods of usage are mainly either because the client has no IT equipment or skills (A & B) , or because the client has a one-off query and can help themselves (A & C). Other issues raised affecting use of the website included lack of printer, the need to keep stock leaflets in reception and using the website for training clients in IT skills.

These findings demonstrate that Multikulti is used in a variety of ways by agencies, depending on the nature of the query and the abilities of the client.

Clients – Interviewees were asked in what ways they felt that suitably translated material on Multikulti could help their clients.

- Eight agencies felt that the material helped their clients become more empowered to deal with their situations;
- Seven agencies felt that providing clients with suitably translated material stopped the client's problems becoming bigger and more difficult to solve;
- Five agencies felt that their clients were helped to become more independent;

Other ways in which Multikulti helped agencies in dealing with their clients included:

- Five agencies stated that their clients could find out more about their rights and entitlements, and thus integrate better;
- Three agencies thought it helped increase client confidence in dealing with situations on their own;
- Three agencies said that it meant they had to spend less time with individual clients, and could thus see more clients overall, helping to deliver services more efficiently;
- Two agencies felt that material on Multikulti helps them to engage with BME communities more effectively.

Additionally, prevention of duplication of resources and cost saving with regards to the need for translating materials was mentioned, along with overcoming the effects of the government policy of dispersal around the UK for asylum seekers and helping to identify unmet needs in this group.

All but the two second-tier agencies (Greenwich WRU and Refugee Council) stated that Multikulti enabled the agency to deal with more clients, mainly because of knowing where to find suitably translated information quickly and easily that clients can understand and act on, without the need for further assistance from the agency.

These findings would suggest that Multikulti actually serves a dual purpose:

- (1) it is seen by agencies as empowering individual clients to better understand their situation by way of providing suitable, appropriate and comprehensible information in simple language relevant to their clients;***
- (2) it is a valuable resource for agencies that enables them to target their services at those clients who need the most help and assistance, whilst also providing basic information for those clients who can assist themselves.***

Website – Agencies stated that they found out about Multikulti in a variety of ways, the most common being through a Lasa mailshot (3), and the Multikulti co-ordinator (2). Other ways mentioned were through Lasa's Circuitriders project, a local Citizens Advice Bureau, an e-group, a community translation course and by being involved in the pilot.

As far as layout is concerned, most agencies felt that the site was clear (6), and easy to understand (3). Also, the move to Unicode documents, rather than using pdf files, seems to have had a positive impact. However, criticisms included a need to clearly identify which language individual pages relate to (2), to specialise information (2), the fact that the agency search function is only in English (2), and that long lists could be better presented (2).

These findings would seem to indicate that there is some work that needs to be done to improve the layout and look of the website. Whilst most users found the site easy to navigate and clearly presented, this could be because of their own familiarity with the site.

Materials – Users were asked which areas and functions of Multikulti they found to be most and least useful to them.

Most useful (users able to select more than one option)

- Welfare Benefits information – 8
- Immigration information – 4
- Health information – 4
- Housing information – 4
- Education information – 2
- Employment information – 4
- Everything – 1
- All leaflets – 1
- Agency search – 1

Least useful (users able to select more than one option)

- Debt information – 3
- Immigration information – 3 (see footnote ¹)
- Agency search – 2
- None – 2
- Education information - 1

Half of the agencies were aware of the existence, and made use of, other multilingual websites. In comparison to other websites with multilingual information, it was noted that Multikulti uses better language and has better content, is more specialised, has good quality, is accessible and reliable. One agency commented that it did not know of any other multilingual websites and another said that they couldn't find any others. One agency felt that the multilingual information available on Multikulti was comparable to that on the website of the Office of the Immigration Services Commissioner (OISC).

With immigration materials, the Refugee Council felt that Multikulti can help to overcome problems caused by the government's dispersal programme for asylum seekers and could be a valuable tool in helping newly arrived communities to integrate. They raised questions around the level of complexity of some information and the fact that some details were out of date, due to the rapid changes in law affecting asylum and immigration. Further, there was confusion in translated materials between what services an agency authoring a leaflet could, or would, provide and what was actually available when that leaflet is used by another advice agency.

All of the content of Multikulti would seem to be well used and valued by agencies, except for the materials relating to "Debt". This may be due to the nature of money advice work, which is a very specialised field that often requires more in-depth work than basic information provision. Alternatively, it

¹ The reason given that immigration materials were not useful was because agencies are not allowed to advise on this subject unless they have specific authorisation from the OISC.

may be that the “Debt” label is misleading and that an alternative title (“Money” or “Financial”) would encourage usage.

Where agencies use other similar sites, Multikulti was generally regarded as being having better quality and more relevance. Although there was an issue raised about the clarity and content of some of Multikulti’s immigration materials, these would seem to be related to (1) the speed of change to immigration law and (2) the pressure on the Multikulti project team to keep up with such changes.

These findings suggest some follow-up work needs to be done:

- (1) to identify the worth, value and scope of the Debt materials, by way of liaison with money advice providers, plus consideration of alternative title for section;**
- (2) with the Refugee Council on immigration materials, to ensure a complementary service exists that helps meet the needs of agencies and their clients, and possibly reduce the pressures on the project team.**

Other features – Agencies were asked whether there were other functions, languages or materials they would like to see made available on Multikulti.

The **most common request** was contained in five responses from interviewees that they would like to see layers of information, from basic level to more advanced “adviser” level information, to assist with dealing with the range of queries that clients arrive with, as well as allowing clients to progressively learn and understand their situation. There were many other one-off suggestions including:

- more languages – Portugese, Urdu, Italian, Kurdish, Vietnamese, Russian;
- Frequently Asked Questions;
- student information;
- funding information;
- more health related topics;
- social information relevant to particular communities.

In terms of how agencies would like to see Multikulti develop in the future, there were **two main requests:**

- improved publicity/marketing of website, as well as news on updates/developments;
- links to other community/BME websites.

Other suggestions included:

- more subject information;
- specialised subjects relevant to specific communities e.g. female mutilation for Somali community;
- eastern European languages/more languages;
- assistance with new IT equipment;
- links with libraries;

- quality mark
- IT training

All of the above suggests that, in the main, users are happy with what Multikulti currently offers in terms of content and features, although quite naturally there is a desire for more languages. The variety of methods that agencies found out about Multikulti (see “website” above), along with the request above for improved publicity/marketing would suggest that some work needs to be done in this area. It is not clear if the requests for links to other websites are in addition to those links already available on Multikulti. Either way, it would seem that work could be done to highlight what is already available as well as investigating what other websites it may be useful to link up with, maybe as part of the marketing promotion.

What if Multikulti did not exist?

Some strong common themes emerged in response to this question:

- Advice work would be more difficult/time consuming (4);
- Agency costs would increase through use of translators/interpreters (4);
- Multikulti would be badly missed as it is a very valuable/important information resource (5);
- Agencies would find it more difficult to access relevant information/local authorities don't provide such information (5);

There was a real sense gained from this section of the evaluation of the desire from all agencies for Multikulti to continue to develop and provide multilingual materials which assist agencies, their workers and their clients with resolving queries and helping people to help themselves. Both in terms of reducing direct costs i.e. translating/interpreting, as well as more indirect costs i.e. numbers of clients seen, Multikulti was valued for the services provided.

Translators' survey results

Initially, all translators were sent a short anonymous questionnaire to gather some background thoughts on the translation process, the website and skills development. A total of seven replies were received.

Questionnaire findings - Translators work on a freelance basis, usually also working in the community in some capacity as a day job or main job. Translators come from a variety of backgrounds, with their main jobs in areas including advisers, community workers and translators, NHS and local authority staff and a volunteer co-ordinator.

Translation process - Over half of the respondents thought that the Multikulti translation process was much better than other similar translation processes, with one saying it was no different and two stating that they did not know. The keywords scheme was thought to provide consistency and a quick reference point by over half of respondents, whilst proofreaders were valued as very useful as translators could explore ideas, gather a second opinion and improve quality.

Three respondents did not request any changes to the translation process, two asked for more time for translations, one asked to be involved in selection of materials at an earlier stage and one asked about an auto-keyword feature.

As far as the website itself is concerned, five respondents did not want to see any changes to the site itself, with better advertising to spread awareness of the site and an improved search function being the only enhancements suggested.

Skills development - As a result of taking part in the Multikulti project, the majority of translators stated that their ability to carry out their main job was enhanced, because of an increased knowledge, confidence or understanding of key topics covered on Multikulti. Similarly, skills as a community translator were thought to have been enhanced by taking part, as were technical skills related to IT usage.

In terms of gaining other work as the result of taking part in Multikulti, there was almost universal agreement that this was a possibility due to experience and skills gained, with one example given of actually securing work from another agency.

Three respondents stated that the training they received when joining Multikulti was sufficient, with one undecided and three respondents asked for more IT training. A suggestion was made to combine morning editorial meetings with afternoon training sessions on translation theory and technique. Finally, comments on taking part as a translator included:

- Very professional, high standards
- Feel valued
- First time as translator that material has been proof read
- Very stimulating, enjoy it a lot
- Great experience
- Very creative way of supporting citizenship

Group feedback session - Following up to the questionnaires, a group feedback session was held following an editorial meeting to further investigate some key points arising from the questionnaires. A total of 14 translators and proofreaders were present at the meeting held on 1.4.04.

It was explained that the purpose of the group session was to gather feedback following on from the questionnaires previously returned, and that both good and bad experiences would be useful to hear. Further, thoughts on how the Multikulti website and/or translation process could/should develop would be valuable, although no promises could be given that ideas or issues would necessarily be taken up (obviously this depends on the project group and editorial board).

Three main areas were flagged up as relevant following analysis of questionnaires returned:

- quality of translation process;
- skills development;
- training and work.

Translation process - On the relationship between translators and proofreaders, it was acknowledged that being able to access proofreaders provides an important safety net for translators. **As proofreaders and translators usually also work within their respective communities, they can help to ensure that translated material is technically correct, both in terms of language and content, as well as appropriate and relevant to their communities.** An understanding of both subject matter and language helps with translation of “difficult” technical terms and words/phrases that do not exist in other languages e.g. “income support”. A translator having the opportunity to discuss issues with a proofreader helps to ensure the use of appropriate language that will be understood by the target audience and aids the production of robust translations. There was some concern raised about how much proofreaders are expected to simplify language that they feel is too technical – **clarification of whether proofreading is simply expected to ensure technical correctness in terms of content and language, or to take a more active role in ensuring comprehensibility was requested.**

Quarterly editorial group meetings are valuable as issues can be discussed as they arise, whether in relation to specific subjects/documents for translation, or wider issues to do with deadlines, translation process, community issues, etc. **There was general consensus that communication with, and support from, Lasa’s project group was very good, in terms of both translation and technical questions.** In terms of technical support, there was a request for financial assistance with software which is often expensive and can lead to a need for improved hardware also.

Asked about specific problems or difficulties connected with the translation process, there was almost universal agreement that adherence to deadlines was the only enduring inconvenience. This was because of a combination of:

- the number of people involved in translating a document, both translators and proofreaders;

- other work commitments i.e. day jobs, taking up time;
- no work planning within or following editorial board meetings so uncertainty about when materials will arrive for translation/proofreading;
- size of some documents;
- for proofreaders, more than two weeks turnaround would help;

General agreement was that a minimum of three monthly work plans, with clear dates that materials will be sent out, deadlines for translation/proofreading, etc agreed in advance. The quantity of documents for translation was not felt to be a problem, in and of itself.

Training – there was a request for training sessions in the afternoon, following on from the editorial board meetings in the mornings, around translation technique and theory, to deal with some of the issues identified above. **Further, a number of the translators felt that it would be good if they could work towards some type of formal qualification, such as an NVQ, to recognise the skills developments that have arisen from taking part in Multikulti.**

The initial training provided when translators joined the Multikulti project was universally seen as useful and comprehensive, but it was felt that refresher training days would be useful, especially in relation to technical IT skills as this is an area that is subject to rapid change. Differing views were put forward about whether such follow-up training should be of a compulsory nature or not, mainly due to concerns about fitting in such training with day jobs. Again, the possibility of training sessions following editorial board meetings was raised as a possible solution.

Skills development – there was universal agreement that, by taking part in Multikulti, peoples’ abilities in their day jobs had been improved. This was due to a variety of reasons, including:

- skills improvements in translation, interpretation and computer use;
- better informed about knowledge/information relevant to day job;
- signposting clients to website;
- improved confidence in advising own clients, through using materials available on Multikulti which are known to be of good quality;
- improved research skills and knowledge of information resources.

There was also general agreement that taking part in the Multikulti project could help in gaining other work in the fields of translation, interpretation and proofreading. This was in part down to personal skills development and partly because of the quality of the Multikulti website and content available. Again, the possibility of formal recognition of skills development was raised as desirable. Further, people wondered whether biographical details of those taking part in the project could be included on the website to promote their involvement, as well as details outlining the process behind translation production to highlight the quality of materials.

Website - Compared to other multilingual websites (e.g. DWP, CLS), there was agreement that MK material and content is more useful and relevant to advisors

because the translations have been carried out by people with the dual role mentioned above. Other thoughts on the website included:

- suggested improvements to the layout for clarity so that material is easier to locate;
- some tidying up of content presentation;
- improvement to classification of topics i.e. certain materials relate to more than one area;
- more health issues of relevance to communities;
- links to other websites containing multilingual information (with disclaimer to clarify that Multikulti is not necessarily endorsing quality of such sites or materials available).

There is a real sense from this section of the evaluation that translators and proofreaders greatly value their participation in the Multikulti project because:

- ***it is an opportunity to be involved in an innovative, unique project of good quality and real worth;***
- ***it enables them to develop skills that promote professional and personal development;***
- ***their respective inputs are valued and contribute to a product that is going some way in achieving it's wider aims.***

With respect to the translation process, it was generally stated that the process works well, is robust and ensures quality of output – the main problem highlighted was around deadline compliance and this is an issue that the Multikulti project team should investigate further, in conjunction with the Editorial Group.

On skills developments, both with respect to the day jobs of translators and in working as translators with the project, there was agreement that taking part in Multikulti had enhanced skills in various ways and could be useful in gaining other similar work (indeed, there was one example of other work being procured as a result of involvement in the project). Recognition of skills developments through a formal qualification of some description was consistently raised as being desirable, and again, is an issue for the project team to consider and investigate whether this is a viable option. This could link into the requests for training provision on translation theory and technique and IT issues.

The materials produced for the website were thought to be of a high quality, due to the rigorous translation process and the involvement of community workers who understand the issues for their communities, and of relevance to the target audience. There was a feeling that more needs to be done to promote the website to organisations who would benefit from knowledge of what is available on the site.

Conclusions

The **value and importance of Multikulti as an information resource** is something that has stood out strongly throughout the evaluation process:

- *“We are very pleased with the information we get from Multikulti. Hope it continues giving us the information we can access freely and free”* – Turkish Cypriots Women’s Project (User group survey)
- *“I think it’s a great experience and also a very creative way in supporting citizenship”* – anonymous translator (translator survey)
- *“Multikulti... is an excellent service and an inspired idea by the way”* - Information Centre about Asylum and Refugees in the UK (website feedback)

It is perceived to be **valuable to both the clients of agencies**, in providing them with relevant information about social welfare issues that empowers individuals to understand their rights and entitlements, **and to agencies themselves** as a resource that saves time and money, due to the ability to assist more people and reducing reliance on translation/interpretation services.

The **choice of languages** appears to be generally **acceptable**, although there is almost inevitably a desire for a wider range to be made available. The ability of the project team to increase the number of languages available requires attention to resourcing issues for the project, specifically whether one person can oversee the whole translation process as currently occurs. The **subject areas** also seem to have **general support** from users, although there needs to be some **attention** paid to the areas of debt and immigration – again, this raises resource issues for the project team. Users typically reported that they found the site to be **easy to use and navigate**, although some stylistic improvements have been suggested.

The value of a resource such as Multikulti depends to a large degree on the **quality of the information** presented – in this respect, both those involved with the project and user agencies reported **very high satisfaction** with the quality of materials available. There are presently very few comparable websites offering information such as that available on Multikulti, and feedback has indicated that even those websites that do provide multilingual information generally fail to produce such robust and relevant material. The project team **need to consider whether information could be layered**, from basic through to more specialised information, as this was a consistent feature of feedback.

As a **model for the effective translation of documents**, the process developed by the project team garnered support for the way in which those involved in the process felt **very confident** in the material being produced, and the way in which the **quality** of output was assured. **Skills development** of translators and proofreaders is an area that the project team should investigate further, especially with regards to formal qualifications and training opportunities, possibly as part of the Learning and Skills agenda. Further, some **work planning** with dates for dispatch of materials, deadlines, etc is recommended as part of the editorial group meetings.

With regards to **information technology, changes to information presentation** have been well received and have **increased the users and usability** of the site. Some agencies reported **IT resource problems** but usually managed to overcome difficulties to ensure access to the site was possible one way or another. Some translators also felt that **assistance with IT resources** such as software and training would be useful.

For the future, I would make 4 main recommendations to the project team:

- look at ways to **improve marketing/publicity** of the website – many of those who commented on the site during the evaluation stated that they were surprised that not more agencies knew about the existence of the site;
- consider how to **work more in partnership** with relevant agencies e.g. Refugee Council, to reduce duplication of output where it does exist, and improve quantity of information without necessarily increasing workload;
- work towards **formal skills development and qualifications** for translators taking part in the project, byway of the Learning and Skills Council programmes;
- **improve links** with projects such as Lasa's Circuitriders project and BT's Community Connections program, to overcome some of the IT issues that user agencies and translators experience.

Finally, **any increase in quantity of either languages or materials** available, whether in existing or new areas, **must take account of the additional burden that would be placed on the project coordinator** as a primary consideration. I conclude that, primarily, **Multikulti is seen as valuable for the quality of it's information provision** and therefore, this **quality should be maintained at all costs**. As is demonstrated in the background interview, the project group have evolved the website and processes behind it over time, by listening to all those who have a stake in the project – **listening to the project group about what can be reasonably achieved** in the field of multilingual translation would be a valuable first step towards the future development of Multikulti and similar websites.

Paul Treloar
Policy Officer
London Advice Services Alliance
May 2004

USER GROUP QUESTIONNAIRE

About the agency

Agency name _____

Worker's name _____

What services does the agency provide? Do they serve a particular community?

How many people work in the agency?

	Paid	Volunteer
Full-time	[]	[]
Part-time	[]	[]

How many people working in the agency use the Multikulti website?

	Paid	Volunteer
Full-time	[]	[]
Part-time	[]	[]

Are there any access problems for people wanting to use Multikulti (this includes lack of suitable equipment, lack of skills, lack of time, etc)?

Have you experienced any technical problems when using the site? Have the problems been solved, and how?

How Multikulti is used by the agency

Which language(s) do you use:

(a) the most _____

(b) the least _____

How does the agency make use of Multikulti (tick all that apply)?

As necessary Download and print stock leaflets Refer clients to site

Other combination (please specify) _____

Why is Multikulti used in this way?

Has Multikulti raised any wider community issues (e.g. literacy, appropriate information, etc), what were these, and how have they been resolved?

Multikulti and clients of the agency

Does material from Multikulti assist clients to (tick all that apply):

(a) avoid bigger problems

(b) become more independent

(c) become empowered to better deal with their problems

(d) any other way (please specify)

Has Multikulti helped workers and/or the agency in dealing with clients?

Has Multikulti helped agency deal with *more* clients?

The website

How did you find out about Multikulti?

What do you think of the design and layout of Multikulti?

What areas/functions of Multikulti do you think are:

(a) most useful _____

(b) least useful _____

Does the agency use any other multilingual websites? Yes No

What do you think of the quality and range of materials on Multikulti (compared to other multilingual websites and material)?

Are there other languages/materials/functions, that you would like to see made available on Multikulti?

Would it affect the agency if Multikulti did not exist?

How would you like to see Multikulti develop in the future?

Any other comments?

Translator questionnaire

1) Other than working as a translator for Multikulti, what is your main job?

Adviser Community worker Community Translator/Interpreter

Social Worker Other (please specify) _____

2) Compared with other translations you may have done, what do you think of the Multikulti translation process?

Much better Slightly better Same Slightly worse Much worse
Don't know/Not applicable

3) How have keywords made a difference when you are translating material for Multikulti?

4) How have proofreaders made a difference when you are translating material for Multikulti?

5) As a result of taking part in Multikulti, have you improved your skills and abilities:

(a) working in your community in your main job, and/or

(b) as a community translator?

6) Has working with Multikulti improved your technical skills?

7) Do you think taking part in Multikulti has, or could, help you with gaining other work?

8) Is there any training you feel could have helped you with Multikulti?

9) Would you like to see any changes to:

(a) the translation process

(b) the website?

10) What do you think is the purpose of the Multikulti project?

11) Do you have any other suggestions, comments or criticisms about your experience of working with Multikulti?

Thank you for your time in completing this questionnaire, your views and opinions will be extremely valuable to us.

Appendix One

User agencies interviewed were:

- Columbian Refugee Service (CORAS)
- Somali Welfare Association
- Carila Latin American Welfare Group
- CARIS, Haringey
- Greenwich Welfare Rights Unit
- Haringey Chinese Centre
- Turkish Cypriot Women's Project
- Asylum Aid
- Islington People's Rights
- Refugee Council