

Mary's Letter to the editor: 7 June 2010

Madam

When stroke victim Stuart Robinson called emergency services to report a crime, he was told to Get someone who could speak English on the line (May 31st). Mr Robinson suggests that a text service would be very useful for him and for deaf people. We agree, but there is also an urgent need for an emergency interpreting service for people who don't speak English. As the Garda currently have a contract with a telephone interpreting company, it is surprising that there was no attempt to use this service.

Last year a Romanian woman, Marioara Rostas, was abducted in Dublin. Her father wanted to report her missing but valuable time was lost while he looked for someone in his community who could speak English. He ended up going to the Four Courts the next morning to find an interpreter.

Like the rest of the community, people with limited English need to access emergency services to report a crime or an accident, because their house is on fire, because someone has had a heart attack. Time is of the essence in these cases and people need speedy access to a telephone interpreter. The service has to exist, people have to know it exists and staff have to be trained.

Yours, etc,

MARY PHELAN, PRO,
Irish Translators' and Interpreters' Association