

Developing a 2012 Joint Interpreters' Campaign

Notes of the Meeting of the Campaign Steering Group

Date: Friday, 16th March 2012

Time: 11:00am to 12:30pm

Venue: Unite House, the offices of UNITE the Union in London

Present: Andrew Murray, Regional Manager, UNITE, also chaired the meeting; Amelia Naranjo, Secretary, NUPIT; Eileen Ford, Chair, NUPIT; Klasiena Slaney, Director and Company Secretary, SOMI UK; Paul Wilson, CEO, ITI; Eulalia (Lalia) Pessoa-White, Director, NRPSI (observer); and Keith Moffit, Chair, CIOL Council (observer); **Via phone link:** Tony Wilcox, WITS. **Apologies received:** Geoffrey Buckingham, Chairman, APCI; Aqil Minhas, treasurer, APCI; Madeleine Lee, PIA, Director

Privatisation of court interpreting 'had problems', admits Justice Minister

The Justice Minister Crispin Blunt has admitted there had been problems with the introduction of a private contract for court interpreters as translators prepare to stage a protest today.

The Telegraph 16th March 2012

Press Campaign Release

On 13th March 2012 the joint interpreters' campaign was announced in the press:

Campaign launched to reverse the privatisation of court interpreting, as service descends 'into chaos'

The privatisation of the court and tribunal interpreting service is hampering the justice system for those that don't have English as their first language.

http://www.uniteunion.org/news_events/latest_news/campaign_launched_to_reverse_t.aspx

Press releases should contain a short message with a clear focus which will catch the public's eye – they merely announce the changes and cannot include all the facts. With 6 organisations working together, it is sometimes difficult to achieve a consensus about the wording of a press release in a short period of time. Future press releases will be drafted and all organisations consulted in good time with a deadline for responses. Any suggested changes will be taken into consideration, but the final version will be decided on by the Unite press office and circulated to all organisations before publication. If, after passing comment and seeing how suggestions have been implemented, any one of the organizations involved does not agree to the content of a particular press release, that organisation will have the option of removing its name for that occasion.

Lobbying all political parties

Although this campaign was launched via Unite, which is the only body with the time and capability to move it forward, the organisations wish to avoid politicising this campaign as our aim is to establish a dialogue regular dialogue between interpreter organisations and government.

Unite has links and political connections with the Labour party and has introduced its contacts to several of the organisations, with special mention of the Shadow Justice Minister Andy Slaughter. Mr Slaughter has been extremely supportive and very active on behalf of the public service interpreters' cause. He was a speaker at the NUPIT seminar, raising awareness of the situation by asking many Parliamentary Questions about the issue and attended the recent demonstration in London.

However, the delivery of justice is a matter which transcends politics. This is not a war with the government – if we want a dialogue we need to involve ALL political parties and create an awareness and understanding about the subject, emphasising the interest of justice which will include the mandatory use of professional, qualified interpreters, without whom the CJS will grind to a halt.

It is important that organisations and individual interpreters lobby politicians from all parties. Individual interpreters have access to their own MPs, many of whom may still be unaware of our cause. We need to make clear that it is not in the interest of justice for the Ministry of Justice (MoJ) to pursue the Framework Agreement (FWA) and ignore experienced professional interpreters, many of whom are now leaving the profession due to the lowering of standards and qualifications and the unfavourable terms & conditions.

Further lobbying can be done by organising meetings on a larger scale and Unite can assist with this. A meeting with the Minister can also be requested.

<http://www.parliament.uk/get-involved/have-your-say/lobbying/>

Crispin Blunt MP's recent inaccurate comments about interpreters

In the Houses of Parliament [14 March 2012]

'Some of the problems, strangely enough, came from the interpreters who, on finding that under the new payment regime they could no longer earn six-figure salaries, as they could under the previous administration, did not co-operate.'

"There have been problems with the start of the new contract, but we are replacing a system that was administratively decrepit frankly, and very expensive and very open to abuse'.

Crispin Blunt on Today programme of Radio 4 [15 March 2012]

"We do have a problem with interpreters being unhappy with a system they no longer can take advantage of the way they have done before."

Both CIOL and ITI have written responses based on their recent joint survey:

http://www.iti.org.uk/uploadedFiles/news/MOJ_letter_140312.pdf, <http://www.iol.org.uk/ciol/LetterKMCP15.03.12.pdf>

Demonstrations

Two well organised and well attended demonstrations were held in the last week, bringing together colleagues from all over the country with a common aim in a great show of solidarity. The first one took place on the 8th March 2012 in Birmingham outside Police Headquarters, Magistrates Court and Crown Court and the second on 15th March 2012 in London outside Ministry of Justice (Petty France) and outside Parliament (Old Park Yard).

No interpreters' organisations were involved, but everyone supported it. NUPIT is happy to help organise future events if its members request so.

Response to Consultations

The Framework Agreement is unfit for purpose, which can be evidenced by the chaos in the courts as a result of the MoJ outsourcing of court interpreting services. It was also not designed for police use.

On 14th March 2012 an email was forwarded to Chief Superintendent Kay Wozniak of Avon and Somerset Constabulary in response to the consultation about their proposals to enter into a contract with Applied Language Solutions (ALS) for their language services provision, along with the other Forces in the South West. These submissions were made jointly by the organisations of the Campaign Steering Group, as had been agreed at the meeting on 05.03.2012 (copy attached).

This letter can be used as a basis for the response to the Home Office Police Procurement Consultation which includes a clause about national procurement of interpreting services and the mandatory use of the FWA for those police forces that chose to outsource or come out of their current FWAs. The consultation closes on 27th April 2012.

A draft will be prepared in good time and brought to the next meeting for discussion and approval.

Website for the new campaign 'Professional Interpreters for Justice'

The initial page will be linked to UNITE's, although housed separately. The logo designed by John Podvoiski can be adapted. The initial page should contain the aims of the joint campaign and links to the websites of the organisations taking part and to other WebPages with activities such as the demonstrations and media stories. It should show concrete examples of ALS failures and the effects of the boycott.

It should also contain links to the campaigns running in parallel to this one, namely APCI/SPSI's 'Justice for All' and NUPIT's 'Speak Up, Speak Out'.

Statutory regulation and protection of title of professional legal interpreters

This is the long term Key Campaign Aim, but we need to start now. The European Commission paper 'Reflection Forum on Multilingualism and Interpreter Training' highlight this important aspect among other relevant good practice recommendations aiming to achieve quality in legal interpreting in the EU. ***It is recommended that legal interpreters have protection of title and that their status be defined in the law'*** <http://www.eulita.eu/sites/default/files/Reflection%20Forum%20Final%20Report.pdf>

CIOL, ITI and NRPSI will look further into what needs to be done to initiate this.

Next steps

The government will be reluctant to reverse the FWA and terminate the contract with ALS in spite of the escalation of the problems caused by significant failures of the system which has left the justice process in shambles. Collapsed trials and miscarriages of justice are on the cards. The cost of this outsourced shambles will, in the end, far outweigh any possible financial savings.

This campaign will focus on:

- Continue the lobbying for the government to enter into a dialogue with us.
- Monitor Avon & Somerset and other constabularies such as to check if they have signed up to ALS by 1st April 2012 (including Warwickshire and West Mercia)
- From week beginning 16th April – organise a lobbying event and are to contact political department and write a model letter of invitation. Organisations are to provide speakers and one suggestion was to invite the Magistrates' Association (contact the Junior Legal Rep of the Unite Magistrates' Branch?)
- Unite will be looking into the possibility of an event at the House of Commons
- All interpreters are to be encouraged to write to their MPs and raise awareness and most especially to **keep up the boycott**

“Registered Public Service Interpreters are self-employed freelancers and are free to take or leave any T&Cs they are offered. Hence you cannot call this strike action. The present boycott comes from grass-roots campaigners, i.e. interpreters themselves, and each individual makes his or her own choice. Professional membership organisations have never advocated striking or boycotting; however we have consistently provided our members with all the available information to allow them to make their own informed choice. Interpreters did the maths themselves, and moreover, they considered the damage to the profession that ALS's lowered standards engender, and they decided they want no part in it. 60% of RPSIs expressly say No to this Framework Agreement, as individuals. <http://goo.gl/q9WHM> Six organisations are lobbying for the government to talk to us. If the main thrust of our cause/campaign is professionalism and professional standards, then we owe it to ourselves that we act accordingly at all times.” *ML*

Key Activities – Who and by when?

Activities	Who will do it	By when
Establish a Co-ordinating Committee and committee cycle	The Steering Group	Done
Write press release for the launch of the new joint campaign	UNITE	Done
Setting up a central separate website (like the 'Justice for All', can be linked to NUPIT/UNITE) and Social media	UNITE and other orgs. Existing Face Book groups could perhaps be used or a new one set up, linked to a Twitter account	Asap
Questionnaire to service users – has to be carefully worded, structured and analysed, with control questions to check previous answers	Other orgs and UNITE. APCI, SPSI and PIA to lead and put them together for UNITE's input	When required
Web site petition	These have been done in the past (Tribunals/Say No to ALS), but surveys achieve more	When required
Collate client case studies and outcome measures	Cooperation between orgs.	When required
Desk research, collate evidence	UNITE can help APCI/SPSI	When required
Co-ordinating national or local events	NUPIT/PIA/SOMI	When required
Briefing Paper for Politicians and Media	UNITE and APCI/SPSI. APCI has sent theirs to AM, who will read it and put it into a briefing paper like the one for the 'Speak up, Speak out' campaign.	Asap
Briefing meetings for Parliament and Local councils, groups of solicitors, small social groups	UNITE	When required
Key Target Event 1: Response to consultations docs for Avon & Somerset and HO Police Procurement closing 14 March 2012	APCI (Alan Thompson already working on a letter) and orgs can decide to sign up to it. Letter can include some lines from CIOL December 2011 letter. A&S already contacted individual interpreters.	Sent on 14/03/12

Key Target Event 2: Response to Home Office Police Procurement Consultation closing on 27 April 2012	The same letter can be adapted for a coordinated response for orgs and individual interpreters	Draft to be ready by 27/03/2012 and orgs to indicate if they wish to sign up. Interpreters to write individually
National Event	London Demo organised by Bradford Professional Interpreters (BPI) and Justice for Interpreters Northwest (JIN)	Done on 15/03/2012
Identify friendly MPs for PMQ's – early day motions etc	UNITE and other orgs	Ongoing

The next meeting for the steering group of organisations was set for Thursday 29th or Friday 30th March 2012 at 3pm at the same location.

The meeting ended at 12:30pm.

Report by Klasiena Slaney (SOMI), with support from Eileen Ford (NUPIT)

APCI – Association of Police and Court Interpreters

CIOL – Chartered Institute of Linguists

ITI – Institute of Translation and Interpreting

NRPSI – National Register of Public Service Interpreters

NUPIT – National Union of Professional Interpreters and Translators, part of UNITE the Union

PIA – Professional Interpreters' Alliance

SOMI – Society of Official Metropolitan Interpreters UK

SPSI – Society for Professional Public Service Interpreters

WITS – Wales Interpretation and Translation Service

http://www.uniteunion.org/news_events/latest_news/campaign_launched_to_reverse_t.aspx

Campaign launched to reverse the privatisation of court interpreting, as service descends 'into chaos'

13 March 2012

The privatisation of the court and tribunal interpreting service is hampering the justice system for those that don't have English as their first language.

Delays in court appearances have soared as the majority of registered interpreters are refusing to work for a cost-cutting subsidiary of the controversial outsourcing company, Capita.

Now Unite, the largest union in the county, and five other professional interpreting organisations, representing 2,343 registered public service interpreters, will be launching a campaign this week to get the service brought back in-house by the Ministry of Justice (MoJ).

Since the agreement between the MoJ and Applied Language Solutions (ALS) earlier this year - aimed at making £18 million in savings - 90 per cent of registered public service interpreters (RPSIs) have refused to sign up to ALS because of their concerns about the interests of justice, pay cuts and the imposition of unfavourable terms and conditions.

Unite national officer, Sally Kosky said: "The courts' system is descending into chaos, as suspects are not being informed of their rights and defendants are unable to instruct their barristers. Collapsed trials and miscarriages of justice are on the cards.

"The cost of this outsourced shambles will, in the end, far outweigh any possible financial savings. ALS just does not have the skilled linguists to facilitate the smooth-running of the justice system.

"It is time that justice secretary Kenneth Clarke got a grip of his 'Dad's Army Captain Mainwaring' department and brought the interpreting service back in-house as a matter of urgency."

The campaign's three aims are:

- Reversing the outsourcing to ALS or other commercial agencies, and the reintroduction of direct employment of freelance interpreters by the courts and police services
- Establish regular dialogue between interpreter organisations and government
- Persuade government to provide statutory regulation of the interpreting profession and protection of the title of Legal Interpreter.

ENDS

Notes to news editors:

For further information please contact Unite communications officer Shaun Noble on 07768 693940

The six organisations taking part in the campaign are: NUPIT (Unite), APCI (Association of Police and Court Interpreters), SPSI (Society for Public Service Interpreting), PIA (Professional Interpreters Alliance), ITI (Institute of Translation and Interpreting) and SOMI (Society of Official Metropolitan Interpreters).