

Developing a 2012 Joint Interpreters' Campaign

Notes of the Meeting of the Campaign Steering Group

Date: Monday, 5th March 2012

Time: 16:00am to 18:00pm

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; Geoffrey Buckingham, Chairman, APCI; Aqil Minhas, treasurer, APCI; Klasiena Slaney, Director and Company Secretary, SOMI UK; Guillermo (Willie) Makin, Chairman, SPSI; Paul Wilson, CEO, ITI; Eulalia (Lalia) Pessoa-White, Director, NRPSI (observer); and Keith Moffit, Chair, CIOL Council (observer); **Via phone link:** Madeleine Lee, PIA, Director and J. Podvoiskis, PIA, Director; and Tony Wilcox, WITS.

"Interpreters are a highly skilled and essential part of the justice system. This scheme sacrifices that in favour of unachievable savings and private profit. The result is confusion and delay in the courts, the potential for serious miscarriages of justice, huge wasted costs and risks to public safety".

The shadow justice minister Andy Slaughter, in The Guardian 02/03/2012

The terms of reference of this Steering Group are:

- 1 – To develop the campaign plan and coordinate activities to deal with the FWA.
- 2 – Collate information about organisations.

The previous meeting identified the short, medium and long-term aims of the campaign which were included in the notes of that meeting. This campaign will run in parallel with the Unite 'Speak Up, Speak Out' and the APCI/SPSI 'Justice for Interpreters' campaigns, and the activities should complement and not replace each other. British Sign Language (BSL) organisations have been invited to join our campaign with the aim of achieving statutory protection of title for all professional interpreters.

This new campaign will help to give a sense of purpose, courage and hope as interpreters and their organisations stand united against the Ministry of Justice's (MoJ) Framework Agreement. There is currently a strong movement within the professional interpreting community, who wish to keep the National Agreement and the National Register of Public Service Interpreters (NRPSI) to maintain quality and standards, against the cut-price employment terms imposed by the FWA. A recent survey indicates that 90% of the 1,206 interpreters who took part in an online survey by the 'Justice for Interpreters' campaign have not and will not register for the new system administered by Applied Language Solutions (ALS) and its subsidiary agencies. The majority of interpreters are also refusing requests from court officials who have been given permission by the MoJ to revert to the NRPSI, as this is only a temporary measure designed to prop up the FWA and its contractor. Under the current circumstances, Wales Interpretation and Translation Service (WITS) is also unable to supply any interpreters to service the courts whilst the FWA remains in place.

It was decided that it is of utmost importance to put the campaign plan together as soon as possible in a practical way, as other police forces may join the FWA within the next three months.

A 'draft paper' similar to the one made by UNITE for the Legal Aid "Justice for All" campaign was used as an example, for the organisations to add to and to contribute to key activities.

A systematic approach was decided upon, based on this document – as follows:

Key Issues

Key Campaign Aims

- 1) A return from outsourcing, back to direct employment of free-lance interpreters
- 2) Regular dialogue between interpreter organisations and government
- 3) Statutory regulation and protection of title of professional legal interpreters

Target Audiences

- The "family" of interpreters
- Politicians (MEPs & MPs and local councillors)
- Government – MOJ
- Police Forces/Chief Constables/Police Custody Leads
- Judiciary including:
 - Council of Circuit Judges
 - Magistrates Association
 - Criminal Bar Association
- Probation and CPS
- Service user providers especially within the justice system
- Solicitors and barristers
- General public
- Community organisations
- Local foreign language communities

Potential Partners

- Solicitors and barristers' groups
- Some of the targets can also be partners, such as the Magistrates' Association
- EULITA, FIT and FIT Europe
- Human rights groups, such as Amnesty International, Fair Trials International and Liberty
- Embassies and Consulates (alerting them that their nationals were being treated discriminatorily)

Central Message

- This needs to be kept simple, with a slogan and a clarifying explanation underneath, such as for example 'Professional Interpreters for Justice', 'Professional Interpreters Speak Up for Justice', 'Professional Interpreters Restore Justice'.

Resources

Unite – Possible

- Contacts - Unite members, Unite MPs and Councillors, Other Trade Unions, Large National Charities
- Campaigns and Communications Dept services
 - IT/Social media – e.g. Unite Website, Facebook, Twitter etc
 - News media
- Political Department contacts - Parliamentary lobbying (mainly Labour)
- Research Department
- Design and Printing facilities* Co-ordination
- Staff to co-ordinate activities and communicate key campaign messages (AM & others)

Other organisations

- PIA, APCI, SPSI, ITI, SOMI and NUPIT have their own media contacts.
- UNITE has Labour Party contacts
- APCI and SPSI have Conservative and Lib/Dem MPs contacts from their present campaign, and so do individual interpreters through their own MPs.
- PIA and SOMI have developed access to all NRPSI interpreters via email systems.
- All organisations need to continue with the collection of evidence, such as ALS failings, which is already being done by PIA and ITI.
- New surveys can be developed with access to the UNITE research department, which can be circulated to the media.
- Individual interpreters used their own initiatives, such as the survey 'Say No to ALS' and the setting up of a Facebook Groups and Twitter accounts to spread awareness.
- The 'Say No to ALS' list could be formally presented to the MoJ and publicised to the media, together with the best data and evidence about collapsed trials and ALS failures collected by PIA (although this is now done informally via the 'Alternative Linguist Lounge' set up by interpreters)
- PIA has a member who may be able to look into the mechanics of a white paper for statutory regulation.

Individual interpreters

The great majority (up to 90%) of professional self-employed interpreters are refusing to sign up with ALS or to cooperate with the direct bookings offered on a temporary basis by the MoJ which had indicated 'it will withdraw from the contract if the level of performance did not improve rapidly'. This has resulted in postponed hearings, suspects being released and compensation claims. The boycott is spreading amid criticism of the quality of interpreting supplied by ALS. Although organisations cannot advise members on such collective action, this campaign can ensure that all interpreters are kept updated to inform their decision and encouraged by the united front colleagues are showing.

Key Dates for any future campaign

Milestone dates for the FWA, such as:

- 14 March 2012 - Avon & Somerset consultation
- 01 April 2012 - Other constabularies may be joining ALS
- 27 April 2012 - 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.
- June 2012 - CPS has signed a contract with ALS on 01 February 2012 and there is unofficial information that they will start to use them in June 2012
- According to the MoJ, the FWA contract can be terminated on default in the event of inadequate performance.
- 27 October 2013 – Implementation of the EU Directive of the European Parliament and of the Council on the right to interpretation and translation in criminal proceedings.
- October 2013 - Handover of the ALS List of Registered LITS to the MoJ (this coincides with the above Directive).

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	Asap
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.	Draft to be ready by 09/03/2012, send to TW to revise and orgs to indicate if they wish to sign up. Interpreters to write individually
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
National Event	London Demo organised by Bradford Professional Interpreters (BPI) and Justice for Interpreters Northwest (JIN)	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 Friday 16th March 2012 at 10:30am at the same location.

The meeting ended at 6pm.

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

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