



PI4J AIMS

Professional Interpreters for Justice (PI4J) is an umbrella group representing over 1,900 interpreters from the National Register of Public Service Interpreters (NRPSI) and 340 British Sign Language interpreters. Our aim is to work with government to ensure the quality of interpreting available to the Justice System.

Reliable communication provided by qualified professional interpreters and translators is an essential resource which ensures that justice and human rights are upheld for non-English speakers and deaf people. This is put at risk if standards are dropped and quality is sacrificed for profit.

Current Government Policy and Problems with Interpreting Contracts and Frameworks:

Current government policy is to reduce costs by outsourcing services. The introduction of the Ministry of Justice's Framework Agreement (FWA) covering interpreting and translation across the justice sector in 2012, and consequent changes in the terms and conditions of interpreters working in this sector, has profoundly compromised the quality of services provided to the police and court services, with the majority of the most appropriately qualified interpreters refusing to work in the sector.

It is our view that the Framework Agreement does not satisfy the requirements of the EU Directive on the right to interpretation and translation in criminal proceedings and is resulting in costly delays, collapsed trials, miscarriages of justice and a huge waste of taxpayers' money when factoring in the consequent effects of a lack of provision of qualified interpreters.

Under the previous arrangements interpreters were booked directly under the Terms and Conditions of the National Agreement (NA)¹ for the use of interpreters in the criminal justice system; interpreters used in criminal proceedings were primarily drawn from the NRPSI and the National Registers of Communication Professionals working with Deaf and Deaf Blind People (NRCPD).

This ensured interpreters' competence, reliability, accountability and security vetting by independently verifying their credentials and qualifications. These interpreters are bound by stringent and robust codes of practice and conduct.

The current MoJ Framework which replaced this system has disregarded the NA and, implemented without consultation with the interpreting profession, has lost its confidence as well as that of other legal personnel and stakeholders.

There have been Parliamentary enquiries and debates, with reports by the National Audit Office, the Public Accounts Committee and the Justice Select Committee on the current MoJ Framework. All have pointed to serious shortcomings in the new system. These reports have indicated a lowering of quality provision and that deteriorating terms and conditions have discouraged recruitment and retention of qualified interpreters.

The current FWA expires in October 2016. The Ministry of Justice has published an invitation to tender relating to the provision of language services across the justice system, with the services being procured in four lots, including a lot on the quality assurance of language services. A second invitation to tender has been published

¹ National Agreement on Arrangements for the use of Interpreters, Translators and Language Service Professionals in Investigations and Proceedings within the Criminal Justice System

by the Crown Commercial Service for the provision of language services across the public sector. The following must be addressed to avoid a repeat of the current unacceptable situation.

PI4J: What are we asking for?

- 1. The use of qualified interpreters:** Only qualified and experienced Public Service Interpreters to be used within the current MoJ Languages Services Framework Agreement and in any future arrangements.
- 2. Full consultation with the interpreting profession:** Future arrangements cannot succeed without the support of professional interpreters.
- 3. Sustainable terms and conditions to be offered to interpreters:** to ensure the success of any contract and quality of service.
- 4. Independent auditing of quality and performance:** Credible scrutiny of contract management and adherence to its provisions is essential. The establishment of an independent Quality Assurance and Quality Management body should form part of the quality assurance lot of the new MoJ contract.
- 5. Independent regulators: Regulation and the maintenance of registers should not be in the hands of private providers.** In line with government guidance, with effect from 1 April 2011 the NRPSI is a fully independent regulator of the profession, paid for by the interpreters and run solely in the public interest. PI4J is of the view that the NRCPD should be similarly independent.
- 6. Minimum levels of interpreter qualification:** Interpreter training as well as language fluency with a minimum level of entry-level qualification must be required with skills maintained and developed through a programme of Continuing Professional Development (CPD). Provision should be put in place to encourage the supply of Rare Language interpreters.
- 7. Statutory protection of title:** A working group must be set up to examine the feasibility of the introduction of statutory protection for the title of Public Service Interpreter.

Professional Interpreters for Justice (PI4J) Member Organisations:

Association of Police and Court Interpreters (APCI) – chairman@apciinterpreters.org.uk

Cymdeithas Cyfieithwyr Cymru; (CCC) - geraint@cyfieithwycymru.org.uk

Institute of Translation and Interpreting (ITI) – chiefexec@iti.org.uk

National Register of Public Service Interpreters (NRPSI) – chairman@nrpsi.org.uk

National Union of Professional Interpreters and Translators, part of Unite the Union (NUPIT) – nupit@unitetheunion.org

National Union of British Sign Language Interpreters part of Unite the Union (NUBSLI) – branchsecretary@nubsli.com

Society of Official Metropolitan Interpreters UK Ltd (SOMI) – board@somiukltd.com

The Chartered Institute of Linguists (CIOL) – keith.moffitt@ciol.org.uk