



Professional Interpreters for Justice Report of the Steering Committee

Date: Tuesday, 30th July 2013

Time: 3.00 pm

Venue: Unite House - Holborn - London

Present at the meeting: Andrew Murray, Regional Officer of Unite, presiding over the meeting; Amelia Naranjo, Secretary, NUPIT Branch; Eileen Ford, Chair, NUPIT Branch; Penny Arbuthnot, Involvis; Keith Moffitt, Chair, CloL Council; Ben Jones on behalf of ITI; Geoffrey Buckingham, Chairman, APCI; Aqil Minhas, Treasurer, APCI; Klasiena Slaney, Director, SOMI UK; Magdy Abbas, Director, SOMI UK; Eulalia (Lalia) Pessoa-White, Director, NRPSI;

By telephone: Madeleine Lee, Director, PIA; Guillermo (Willie) Makin, Chairman, SPSI; Tony Wilcox, WITS.

Apologies: John Podvoiskis, Director, PIA.

The agenda was as follows:

Approval of report,

Communication

Meeting with MoJ

Alternative Proposal.

The minutes were approved and it was agreed to post the report on the Website.

Communication

SC members were reminded that if there is any urgency about a communication, a deadline will be set and failure to respond by the deadline will be taken as approval.

Meeting with MoJ officials

KM had attended a meeting with MoJ officials, accompanied by PA.

It had originally been intended that three other people would attend but this had to be altered at the last moment.

KM and PS reported that the atmosphere of the meeting had been business-like, friendly and to the point. The interpreting project is now in the hands of the Justice Reform group so there is a new team in charge and they are hoping for a fresh start; the person overseeing the project is also in charge of that dealing with the European Directive.

PI4J were asked whether they wanted to be involved in the workshops on quality and how we envisage doing this, and the MoJ team is hoping to hear from us by the end of the week.

The officials made it clear that the workshops would involve other stakeholders as well as PI4J and also that complete confidentiality must be observed by those attending the workshops.

The Steering committee can see the sense of this, as ideas and proposals would be discussed, and possibilities explored which it was not appropriate to make public as this could lead to people forming false impressions of what they could expect since those ideas might never come to fruition.

It was thought by the committee that such confidentiality would apply to the project's meetings and workshops but not to the other activities of PI4J, such as exposing the failings of Capita but this will be clarified in the reply to the MoJ's invitation to participate in the project.

The project's first workshop is to take place in September. We do not yet know who else will be attending, but feel it will be useful to be 'on the inside'.

PI4J feel that it is important that decisions made on the basis of the quality study should be used to set standards for the future and made applicable to criminal justice interpreting under not only the FWA agreement but also any other regime that is instituted for the engagement of interpreters in courts and related environments. This could be a first step towards statutory regulation which is one of the avowed aims of PI4J.

The issues that the committee would like to see dealt with are briefly: the question of what is an acceptable qualification for interpreters whose language is not covered by the DPSI and Met test;

CPD;

The need to abolish the tier system;

The reinstatement of the National Agreement;

The requirement that interpreters be on the NRPSI.

It was pointed out that the contract and the FWA contain quality elements which are simply not being implemented.

Alternative Proposal

Committee members had been looking at those proposals and models which were already in existence. A substantial amount of time was spent discussing them and it was felt that they were all good in their different ways but also that none of them had everything needed to make them workable in the particular context in which they were to be used.

The first question would be where to find funds to start the company and clients to keep it going thereafter. It was suggested that solicitors were likely clients and a way of approaching could be looked at in the future. Turnover is a criterion when bidding for a contract and account has to be taken of timescale when making any plans, as the procurement process could be starting again before very long.

One thing was abundantly clear, namely that PI4J can do nothing without the full support of the whole of the PSI profession. No matter how much the MoJ likes a proposal, it will come to nothing if the interpreters refuse to cooperate. For this reason a survey will be made to find out what interpreters will or will not find acceptable, so that any proposal we make will be based on the known wishes of the profession.

The meeting closed at 5.00pm, the date of the next meeting having been set at 9th (subject to confirmation) September at 3pm.

Report by Eileen Ford (NUPIT)