



Professional Interpreters for Justice (PI4J)

Report of the Steering Committee

Date: Wednesday, May 24th 2017

Time: The meeting commenced at 2.00 pm

Venue: Unite House - Holborn - London

Present: A. Murray [chairing], S. Bishop [NRPSI], L. White [NRPSI], K. Stokes [CIoL], A. Carlisle [CIoL], K. P. Slaney [SOMI], Geraint Wyn Parry [Cymdeithas Cyfieithwyr Cymru], Paul Wilson [ITI], G. Buckingham [EULITA], A. Thompson [APCI], E. Ford, [NUPIT].

Apologies: A. Naranjo [NUPIT], I. Norton [APCI], K. Newby [NUBSLI].

The Meeting opened at 2 pm in Unite House, Theobald's Road, Holborn.

The agenda was as follows:

Notes of previous meeting;
Status of interpreters under TBW contract
Meeting with NPCC
IRS regulations
Update on WITS
AOB

Previous meeting notes

The notes were approved.

Status of interpreters under the bigword Contract

Although interpreters in general have shown little interest in the question of their status as workers or otherwise, the SC felt that the recent experience with Pearl Linguistics, where interpreters were unlikely to be paid for work done just before it went into liquidation, highlights the importance of knowing one's status. When a firm goes into liquidation and cannot pay its employees, there is a government fund to which employees can apply but this is not the case for self-employed interpreters, who merely become creditors and stand little chance of receiving what is owed to them.

The SC is concerned that many of NUBSLI'S members have been adversely affected by the collapse of Pearl Linguistics and decided that a letter to Matthew Taylor quoting it as a classic example of the risks to interpreters working for a government service, would be in order.

Action Point:

The topic of bad payment practices was touched upon. Interpreters have reported to SC members and online that some work providers, including solicitors and a number of agencies operating in the public sector, are known to pay late and to make short payments. Through lack of experience, many interpreters let them get away with it because they are ignorant of their rights and do not know how to complain or protect themselves, despite the fact that the topic is extensively aired on innumerable websites and forums.

Meeting with NPCC

The report on the meeting with NPCC Strategic Language Group had been circulated on the morning of the meeting but as most members had not had a chance to study its contents, it was read out to those present.

At the NPCC meeting, procurement arrangements and outsourcing were discussed, as well as rates of pay on offer, which are far below what the SC feels would be acceptable. The problems of vetting were discussed and the PI4J representatives stressed the importance of NPCC facilitating vetting to NPPV level 3 for NRPSI interpreters who refuse to work for low-paying agencies.

[A fuller version of this report will be posted separately]

Further to a question asked at the above meeting, the SC discussed the possibility of drawing up a suggested scale of payments. Those who had attended the NPCC

meeting had already given some thought to the matter and drafted some figures. There were five key points on which to work:

- i There should be an enhanced rate of payment for work done at night or at weekends. Double time should apply on Sunday and time and a half on Saturdays and evenings.
- ii The working day should be considered to start at 8 am. Although some rates lists deem 7 am to be the start of the day. Some strongly disagrees because a 7 am start means that people have to get up earlier than usual. Furthermore, public transport is not always available at that time.
- iii Travel time should be calculated separately from attendance time
- iv Travel expenses should also be separately calculated.
- v Travel time should be deemed to start at the moment of leaving home.

It was felt that existing BSL guidelines would provide a good starting point for drafting a scale of rates for foreign language interpreting. Since the three-hour minimum was a bone of contention, it was decided to reduce the minimum to two hours. The rates paid and benefits provided by other bodies were briefly discussed. It was decided that the minimum acceptable rate should be set at a level which would encourage qualified people to join or remain in the profession.

The NPCC have agreed to a further meeting with PI4J which will be arranged in due course. This topic will be discussed at that meeting.

Action point:

Update on WITS

TS and SB of NRPSI met with the Corporate Services Manager of Cardiff Council under whose wing WITS will be operating next month. The council have decided that their interpreters will come under the IR35 rules and will in future have tax deducted at source. The service still has possibilities for expansion as there are still local authorities which do not use it. WITS pay a premium to NRPSI interpreters. They are keen for interpreters to have their own professional indemnity insurance.

IR35 Rules

It was noted that interpreters are confused about whether the IR35 rule applies to them or not. There have been examples of companies informing their interpreters that they will be treating them as employed for tax purposes, without giving the

interpreters any say in the matter. Unite is already studying the question but it was suggested that as a useful yardstick, interpreters should consider whether they work largely for one company, to the extent that they could almost consider themselves full-time, or whether they distribute their time among several different companies, spending a small percentage of their time with each company. In the latter case, if a company writes to an interpreter saying that in future the rule will be applied to him/her, an interpreter can write back asking for specific reasons why the company is doing this, as it could be simply because it finds it simpler to do things that way.

AM will keep the SC informed of any findings arrived at by the Union. The member organizations will keep him informed of the effect the regulations are having on their members.

AOB

The SC is concerned that the association calling itself ACCI continues to use a misleading title. It has moreover used registered interpreters' details on its public list without the prior consent of the interpreters. The matter has been brought to the attention of the Privy Council and Trading Standards.

There being no further business, the meeting was brought to a close at 3.45 pm.

The date of the next meeting was set as 12th July at 2.00 pm.

Report by E. Ford, NUPIT