



# Committee of Public Accounts

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2 September 2013

## THE MINISTRY OF JUSTICE'S LANGUAGE SERVICE CONTRACT

Thank you for writing to me about the Ministry of Justice's language service contract. As you know, both I and the committee which I chair have devoted considerable time to understanding what went wrong with this contract and we are keen to see the provision of interpretation services improve.

When I received your letter and the accompanying information, I forwarded them to the National Audit Office (NAO) and asked it to conduct preliminary investigations. You may be interested to know that, in addition to this, I had already written to the Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Justice, in March, to inform her that the Ministry's response to our recommendations was inadequate. I asked her to provide further details about their actions in certain areas and to reconsider what they proposed doing in others. Following receipt of her response, I still have some concerns and I have now asked the National Audit Office to look into these, too.

In total, the issues that the NAO is now investigating are:

- the amount of interpretation work not currently covered by the Capita contract;
- the extent to which Tier 3 interpreters continue to be used in the courts;
- the accuracy of cancellations data;
- the extent to which the Ministry is now exercising its contractual audit and inspection rights over Capita;
- the number and size of wasted cost and other orders awarded against Capita for interpretation problems;
- further information about the 219 interpreters the Ministry has told us were removed from the Capita register in November 2012 for not having proper security clearance; and
- the Ministry's review of assessment and qualification requirements.

The NAO has told me that it will raise these issues with the Ministry and, following a short period of analysis, brief me on the outcome of its work and any fresh developments; I will then provide an update to you and decide what, if any, further action to take.

I hope this gives you confidence that we continue to take the problems with Criminal Justice System interpreter services very seriously. Thank you again for bringing this matter to my attention.

**RT HON MARGARET HODGE MP**  
**CHAIR OF THE COMMITTEE OF PUBLIC ACCOUNTS**