



Professional Interpreters for Justice (PI4J)

Report of the Steering Committee

Date: Thursday, March 2nd 2017

Time: The meeting commenced at 10 am

Venue: Unite House - Holborn - London

Present: A. Murray [chairing], S. Bishop [NRPSI], E. Ford [NUPIT], K Moffitt [CIoL], A. Naranjo [NUPIT], A. Thompson [APCI], K Slaney [SOMI], L. White [NRPSI] K. Stokes [CIoL], K. Newby [NUBSLI].

Apologies: P. Wilson [ITI], I. Norton [APCI], Geraint Wyn Parry [Cymdeithas Cyfieithwyr Cymru], G. Buckingham [EULITA].

The meeting opened at 10 am.

Agenda:

Approval of report on last meeting

Update on *thebigword* contract

Report on meeting with MoJ

Application for admission to SC

AOB

Approval of report on last meeting

The notes of the previous meeting were approved after a short discussion during which it was agreed to incorporate amendments.

Update on *thebigword* contract

The response to Unite's Research Department's survey was discussed. The main aim of the survey was to establish whether interpreters could be classified as workers or employees. The Union lawyers still need more information if they are to arrive at a firm opinion, but it was remarked that the fact that many people are refusing to work under the MoJ contract is bound to make the research department's task more difficult.

The survey was anonymous and any information received from respondents will remain strictly confidential; no names or any details which might lead to the individuals being identified will be divulged by the Union's lawyers to any third parties whatsoever and no information will be used without the respondents' prior permission.

Details of individuals' work are needed in order to determine the level of control exercised by agencies, since control was a key element in the cases brought by other workers such as the Uber drivers.

As to the illegality of some clauses in the contract, it is important to know the employment status of the interpreters in order to know which employment rights are not being recognized.

Report on meeting with MoJ

Members of the SC attended a meeting with the MoJ. Also at the meeting was the director of the Language Shop, which is responsible under the Language Services Contract for quality control.

It was felt that the MoJ's attitude to the provision of language services was a matter for grave concern. It continues to ignore the fact that court interpreting requires a much higher level of competence than that signified by possession of the low-grade qualifications it considers acceptable.

As a result, the SC agreed that raising awareness about standards would be a useful pursuit and some time was devoted to discussing which professional groups within the criminal justice system might find their work adversely affected by the lowering of standards in court interpreting, with a view to approaching these groups and sharing information.

It is also looking into ways of encouraging service users to make a formal complaint whenever they feel that the interpreting provided is not of a suitable standard.

The Committee will be maintaining contact with the Language Shop; it will be seeking a meeting with *thebigword* later in the year, after the first set of statistics under the new contract is available.

Application for admission to SC

An organization called ACCI asked to be admitted as a member of PI4J. After considering what was known about the former, based on exchange of correspondence with its founder and a study of its website, it was felt that as the aims of the organization were at variance with the those of PI4J, in that it admits under-qualified practitioners to membership and does not support the National Register but instead itself aspires to regulate the profession, the Committee felt it had no option but to refuse the request and therefore it was resolved that a letter to that effect should be sent to ACCI as soon as possible.

AOB

A request for a meeting has also been received from NPCC. This will be responded to in the near future.

KM announced that he was withdrawing from the PI4J Steering Committee.

On behalf of the whole committee, AM thanked him for all his work over the years, making this a successful steering committee in terms of providing a single voice for interpreters and involving all the organizations representing interpreters. The committee expressed its agreement with the sentiments expressed.

There being no further business the meeting closed at approximately 11.45 am and the time and date of the next meeting were set at 2 pm on 24th May.

Report by E. Ford, NUPIT