



Professional Interpreters for Justice (PI4J)

Report of the Steering Committee

Date: Wednesday, 13th April 2016

Time: The meeting opened at 10:00 am

Venue: Unite House - Holborn - London

Present in person: A. Murray, Regional Officer of Unite (chairing the meeting); P. Wilson, ITI; K. Moffitt, CIoL; GW Parry, Cymdeithas Cyfieithwyr Cymru; D. Lawrence, NUBSLI; S. Bishop, NRPSI; L. White, NRPSI; A. Thompson, APCI; A. Minhas, APCI; G. Buckingham, EULITA; A. Naranjo, NUPIT; E. Ford, NUPIT; K. Slaney, SOMI.

The agenda was set as follows:

Notes of previous meeting

Mailing to agencies

Mailing to CCS

Mailings to police, including replies to messages received.

Letter from PAC

Future plans

AOB

Notes of previous meeting

It was noted that a name had been spelt incorrectly but the notes were approved subject to amendment of that detail.

Mailing to agencies

Following a decision taken at the previous meeting to make our position known to all agencies likely to be involved in the provision of interpreters to public authorities, a copy of the Aims and Objectives was sent under cover of an explanatory e-mail.

The message went to approximately 200 agencies, of which only one responded in a positive manner. Several messages were 'bounced', giving rise to the speculation that in some cases the agency had ceased trading although in many cases their websites were still extant. It was felt although researching contact details of agencies was very time-consuming, that revision and updating of the mailing list could be worthwhile on-going activity.

Mailings to Crown Commercial Service

Subsequently to the last meeting, it had come to our notice that the CCS had informed police forces that interpreters were supportive of the new outsourcing arrangements. A letter was produced to be sent to CCS, making clear to them our position has been misrepresented and interpreters were not, as it was termed it, 'on board'. The letter was copied to those police authorities involved in the procurement of language services, with as an attachment a copy of the PI4J Aims and Objectives document.

CCS informed us that our original e-mail had not been received. and sent a link to the procurement process feedback on their webpage. Committee members could find nothing on it that indicated that the CCS had the support of any of the interpreters' representative bodies. The committee decided to write to the CCS again stating this and asking them to respond and for an assurance that they will not continue to misrepresent our position.

The committee received a brief account of NUBSLI's exchanges with the CCS. Besides asking for the BSL package to be removed from the specifications, they have raised the issues of transparency as to the amount interpreters are paid in relation to what agencies receive, travel costs; specialisms and performance monitoring. NUBSLI have asked the CCS to consider other purchasing models but have not yet had a response.

GB expressed admiration for the solidarity of the BSL interpreting community a sentiment shared by the rest of the committee.

Mailings to the police

A letter was sent to the CC of Kent police expressing concern at the signing of a contract with TheBigWord and this letter was also attached to other e-mails.

[In mentioning TBW by name, it is not the Committee's intention to attack that company. The reason why it is so mentioned is simply that this is the company selected by Kent Police. PI4J is against any agency which exploits interpreters and TBW is but one of a number fitting that description].

It was suggested that although letters to PI4J go to all committee members simultaneously, it could be useful to nominate one member to act as point of contact. There was a brief discussion but no decision was taken.

The Committee wanted to put on record its thanks to KS for the not inconsiderable time and effort she had dedicated to drafting and circulating the letters and having them sent to their various recipients.

Letter from PAC

The committee regretted that an extract from a letter from PAC had been prematurely 'leaked' on Facebook before the committee had had a chance to discuss it and its possible implications. It accepted the apology of the person responsible for the posting, and agreed on a future policy for dealing with collective mailings.

The letter had been sent in reply to the Committee's own message to the PAC about the way the procurement process was being handled.

There were a number of different views on how to interpret the information it contained and what use could be made of it but most of the members agreed that despite the leak, if it was to appear in anything published by the Committee, it would be advisable to obtain permission from the writer first and that this should be our general policy in the future.

AOB

It was suggested that it was time we were specific about what we considered interpreters should be paid.

A question received by NUPIT from one of its members indicated that interpreters not wishing to work for agencies are experiencing problems now that Universal

Credit has been introduced because there is not enough non-agency work to give them sufficient income to qualify for UC. The alternative is to sign for Jobseeker's Allowance but if they do this they are not at liberty to accept random appointments and therefore are unable to continue as interpreters. This in turn makes it difficult for them to amass qualifying hours to remain on the National Register. It was decided that the topic and any possible action could be discussed at the next meeting.

There being no further matters for discussion, the meeting was brought to a close at 12.30.

The date of the next meeting will be Friday the 20th of May at 2 pm.

Report by E. Ford (NUPIT)