

# Media | Information



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Thank you for your interest in the **National Register of Public Service Interpreters (NRPSI)**. This document contains information for the media regarding NRPSI's role and responsibilities, its registration criteria, Code of Conduct, complaints process and Board/spokespeople. It also includes sections that outline the case for professional interpreting and state of the profession today. It concludes with some key NRPSI facts and figures.

Recent releases, statements and general news regarding NRPSI activities can be found in our online **News centre**, which is regularly updated with the latest information.

If you are looking for comment for an article, a thought piece on a particular issue, or further information on public service interpreting, please get in touch.

## Media contacts

For all media enquiries, please contact **Nina Croad**, Communications Consultant at Just Bee Comms, in the first instance:

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## About NRPSI

### Our history

The National Register of Public Service Interpreters (NRPSI) was founded in 1994. The organisation was established following a serious miscarriage of justice resulting from an untrained 'interpreter' being engaged for a murder trial. The 'interpreter' did not even speak the same dialect as the accused.

This event led to the 1993 Runciman Royal Commission on Criminal Justice recommendation that a national register of qualified interpreters be established with the aim of "using only interpreters with proven competence and skills, who are governed by a nationally recognised code of conduct".

In 1994, after an initial project funded by the Home Office, the Nuffield Foundation invited tenders to run an interpreting register. The Institute of Linguists (now the Chartered Institute of Linguists) was the successful bidder and the National Register was born. At the same time, the relevant graduate-level qualification, now called the Diploma in Public Service Interpreting (DPSI), was established. It continues to be offered by the Institute of Linguists Educational Trust today. Both the advent of the National Register and the development of the DPSI were designed from the outset to address the interpreting needs of all parts of the public services.

In 1998, the Trials Issues Group recommended the exclusive use of the National Register when selecting interpreters for criminal investigations and court proceedings.

The need for a national register was confirmed by Lord Justice Auld's 2001 Review of the Criminal Courts of England and Wales.

The National Agreement on Arrangements for the Use of Interpreters, Translators and Language Service Professionals in Investigations and Proceedings within the Criminal Justice System (the 'National Agreement'), published in revised form in 2007 by the Office for Criminal Justice Reform, standardised the working relationships with interpreters and specified that spoken-language interpreters should be sourced from NRPSI. This quality standard was

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dispensed with by the Ministry of Justice when it outsourced interpreting services to the commercial company ALS (now Capita TI) in 2012. This led to many problems and criticism from the UK Parliament.

NRPSI became independent of the Chartered Institute of Linguists in April 2011 and is now an independent not-for-profit organisation.

### Our role

NRPSI regulates the public service interpreting profession in the UK. We are a voluntary public interest body and our primary role is to protect the public. We do this by ensuring that interpreters working in a variety of public service environments meet the standards required of these exacting roles.

### Our responsibilities

#### Our core duties are:

1. Maintaining the UK's National Register of public service interpreters, which is publicly available and free to search online via the NRPSI website
2. Setting and maintaining the registration criteria, including the qualifications needed to become a professional interpreter
3. Ensuring that Registered Interpreters meet our standards for professional conduct and practice
4. Investigating complaints about a Registered Interpreter's conduct or competence
5. Promoting the role of NRPSI as Regulator of the public service interpreting profession, and the importance of registration to maintaining professional standards and protecting the public.

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## About registration

In order to prove their fitness to practise and be registered with NRPSI, spoken-language interpreters must provide proof of their identity and entitlement to work in the UK, a valid security clearance, appropriate qualifications and relevant experience. They must also agree to abide by the NRPSI Code of Conduct.



Registration requires a specific interpreting qualification (most commonly the DPSI) in the relevant second language and English. For registration at Full status, interpreters must provide evidence of more than 400 hours' relevant experience. Given the very large number of languages in existence, there is a Rare Language status of entry to the National Register for those languages where there is currently no interpreting qualification available.

Rare Language candidates are required to provide documented proof of their English language skills and second language ability. They must also provide evidence of carrying out Continuing Professional Development (CPD) at the point of renewing their registration each year.

Registration must be renewed on an annual basis. At which time, evidence of at least 10 hours' relevant experience must be provided to show continuing practice in the language.

Registered Interpreters are able to use the letters RPSI after their name. They are also provided with the NRPSI Photo ID Card so that their registration can be checked at each assignment. A Registered Interpreter's identity can be checked via the NRPSI website.

## About the NRPSI Code of Conduct

NRPSI maintains the Professional Code of Conduct that all Registered Interpreters are required to sign and follow. Key components of the Code of Conduct include maintaining confidentiality about any information heard during the interpreted interview, remaining impartial (public service interpreters do not act for either party but enable communication between them) and interpreting faithfully what is said in both languages.

## About our professional complaints process

NRPSI provides a free professional complaints process for anyone who feels that a Registrant has not followed the Code of Conduct. NRPSI follows a defined procedure for all complaints, which are heard by panels comprising a majority of Lay Members to represent the interests of the public. If a complaint against an interpreter is upheld, they can face a range of sanctions. These include suspension and expulsion from the Register. NRPSI publishes data on complaints heard and the outcome of all complaints.

## About the NRPSI Board

NRPSI is a not-for-profit organisation governed by its Board of Directors, which sets policy, strategic direction and financial priorities. The NRPSI Board consists of seven Non-Executive Directors: four Lay Members, including the Chair, and three Registered Interpreters. All seven Directors were selected through a competitive process following open calls for applications.

NRPSI's Executive Director is an advisor to the NRPSI Board on matters of policy, strategy and financial priorities, with responsibility for the day-to-day operations of the organisation.

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## About our spokespeople

### NRPSI Chair

**Ted Sangster's** career has spanned both public and private sectors, large and small companies, as well as commercial and not-for-profit organisations. He spent 20 years with Sealink and its privatised successors (Sea Containers then Stena), becoming Operations Director in Scotland for ferry operator Caledonian MacBrayne and Director General in London for BIFA – the trade association and professional institute for the UK's freight forwarding industry. Ted returned to Wales in 1998 as Chief Executive of Milford Haven Port Authority, where he remained until retiring in April 2010. He has been a chair and non-executive director of a number of organisations. Current positions held include Chair of the enterprise company PBI, the science and education charity the Darwin Centre, the Pembrokeshire Haven Business Group, as well as the National Register of Public Service Interpreters (NRPSI). He is a Chartered Director and a FCILT and FCMI.



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### NRPSI Executive Director

**Stephen Bishop** joined NRPSI in April 2013 as Executive Director and Registrar. With a background in educational and professional publishing, he is experienced in working with professionals who have a desire to maintain and develop their professional skills. As General Manager at the British Editorial Society of Bone and Joint Surgery (1997-2010) he played a central role in moving delivery of its CPD programme online. He also oversaw a local language translation programme that included new Spanish, Greek, Portuguese and Japanese editions.



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### Practitioner Board Members

**Silvina Katz** has more than 30 years' experience working as an interpreter and translator for a range of organisations and sectors including the Police, Courts, Prison Service and Health. Silvina has worked as a language tutor for many years and as an associate university lecturer on the Diploma in Public Service Interpreting (DPSI) courses specialising in Law and Health. During a career spanning over 25 years in local government, she was responsible for Corporate Policy, Consultation and Governance for a large district council.



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**M<sup>a</sup> Eulália Pessoa-White** (also known as **Lalia White**) has been a Director of the National Register of Public Service Interpreters (NRPSI) since April 2011 and is a member of its Professional Conduct Committee. An experienced freelance interpreter with more than 25 years' experience, she has worked for a variety of public services including The Metropolitan Police Service, UK Police Forces, Her Majesty's Court and Tribunal Services, HMRC, Immigration Services, and the Department for Work and Pensions. She has undertaken extensive voluntary work to help raise the profile of public service interpreters and improve their working conditions. She was instrumental in setting up the Society of Metropolitan Interpreters (SOMI), served on the Association of Police and Court Interpreters (APCI) committee, and was Chair of the National Union of Professional Interpreters and Translators (NUPIT). Before working in the Criminal Justice sector, M<sup>a</sup> Eulália worked as secretary, translator and interpreter for industries ranging from engineering to commodities.



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**Dr Hassan Sobati** is a scientist by way of his formal education, a barrister by way of his most recent academic work and a linguist by way of his main profession. He achieved his scientific education in the UK (MSc in Biotechnology, Imperial College London; PhD in Molecular Biology, King's College London, 2001). He then went on to study law part time in London (Postgraduate Diploma in Law, Westminster University; Bar Vocational Course, BPP, 2006). He was called to the General Council of the Bar by the Honourable Society of the Middle Temple in 2006. He is a linguist who speaks six languages at various levels of fluency. He achieved his lingual skills and qualifications from 1983 to 2004. Dr Sobati is a fully qualified, full-time interpreter and translator. He has been working full time as an interpreter in the field of law using his two native languages of Dari and Farsi, specialising in crime, immigration and family law since 2000. He is also affiliated with NRPSI, CioL, the Metropolitan Police Service, CPS, AIT, Crown, Magistrates' and County Courts, Home Office, and other professional bodies and organisations. He is an examiner and tutor for degree level lingual exams and also an author of lingual expert reports for the Crown Courts and Tribunals. Dr Sobati was elected to the position of Board Member at NRPSI in March 2011 and is dedicated to the principles of regulation through fair play and maintaining high standards. This is to say that there should be no monopoly of contracts in the public sector or compromise on qualifications, experience and the interest of justice for financial reasons. No disregard for quality and professionalism should be tolerated at any cost.



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### Lay Board Members

**Ann Meador** is Chief Executive of WilliamJack, an independent public relations consultancy, and Associate Lecturer at the London College of Communication, University of the Arts. She is also Head of Communications and Business Development for the International Travel Writers Alliance, the world's largest association of professional travel journalists, and Managing Editor of Always Traveller. Ann began her career in local government PR, advancing to Head of Communications at the London Borough of Tower Hamlets. In 1997, she joined the then Institute of Public Relations (IPR). As Head of PR, Deputy Director General and, finally, Interim Chief Executive, she supported the development of the Institute through to it achieving Chartered status, and played a key role in helping the CIPR to more than double its membership to over 9,500 and quadruple its turnover to over £4m. An experienced and effective communicator with senior management and board level experience, she is committed to best practice and encouraging it in others. Ann is a CIPR Fellow and Accredited Practitioner.



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**Steven Thacker** is Managing Director of Sigma Consulting (UK) Ltd. He is also on the Board of four organisations, which includes being Vice Chair of the National Register of Public Service Interpreters (NRPSI). Formerly a police Chief Superintendent, Stephen has held senior strategic positions as Divisional Commander, Deputy Director of HR and Head of Executive Support, as well as posts that include Head of Training and Career Development. He has chaired discipline proceedings for the Secretary of State for Health, Health Care Commission and Institute for Learning as well as NRPSI, and is a member of the discipline committees for the Chartered Institute of Public Relations and Chartered Institute of Management Accountants. Stephen has extensive HR and talent management experience, and holds an MA in Educational Research and Evaluation (M. Ed.). He conducted four years post graduate PhD research at the University of East Anglia Centre for Applied Research in Education, and is a Fellow of the Institute for Learning and Institute of Leadership and Management.



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**Nick Whitaker** was formerly a Partner at BDO LLP, one of the UK's leading accountancy and business advisory firms. A Fellow of the Institute of Chartered Accountants in England and Wales (ICAEW), he has a background in corporate finance. During the course of his career he has provided expert counsel on corporate governance and finance to organisations in a wide range of sectors, both in the UK and internationally. Nick has been an advisor to various government departments including the Department of Industry, Department for Transport, Cabinet Office, National Audit Office (NAO) and HM Treasury. His experience of working with central government is extensive and includes working on privatisations as well as being engaged by the NAO to evaluate the financial cost of government using consultants. Nick has also been an expert witness in a variety of commercial disputes and professional negligence cases, and has High Court experience. He is a qualified mediator, working primarily on behalf of ICAEW, and has been Treasurer of a number of not-for-profits including the charity Peaceworkers UK, now part of the larger agency International Alert.



## Protection of the public: The case for professional interpreting

A number of tragic cases have resulted in government reports indicating the importance of professional interpreting.

One such case was the death of seven-year-old Victoria Climbié in February 2000. This resulted from failures in child protection and led to the public inquiry by Lord Laming. Lord Laming's report highlighted failures on the part of various public services, including health services, social services and the police. Victoria's first language was not English and at no time was she interviewed alone with the aid of an interpreter. Instead, language mediation between Victoria and the English-speaking public services was provided by a member of her family who was ultimately found to be jointly responsible for her death.

The lack of "suitable interpreters" is also highlighted as an issue in a major maternal deaths study (now called 'Confidential Enquiry into Maternal Deaths in the UK'): "A lack of availability of suitable interpreters is one of the key findings running throughout this Report. The use of family members... or members of their own, usually tight-knit, community as translators causes concern."

Reinforcing the dangers of using a family member to interpret when they could be the perpetrator of abuse against the party they are interpreting for, the study reports a victim as saying: "Even if the perpetrator isn't with you, he sends one of his family members with you. And in the name of honour you can't ever talk about it. Especially if they say 'I'm going to interpret because she can't speak English'."

The absence of professional language services occurred in the events leading to the death of five-year-old Daniel Pelka in March 2012. Family members and perpetrators of the crime were the ones used to interpret between the victim and the public services. Reporting in the Serious Case Review for the Coventry Safeguarding Children Board in September 2013, Dr Neil Fraser said about Daniel Pelka: "Without proactive or

consistent action by any professional to engage with him via an interpreter, then his lack of language and low confidence would likely have made it almost impossible for him to reveal the abuse he was suffering at home."

Ironically, the government's own procurement practices have increased the risk to the public from poor interpreting. The Independent Review of Quality Arrangements under the Ministry of Justice Language Services Framework Agreement (the 'Matrix Report') in December 2014 reported that 50% of respondents working for Capita TI (formerly ALS) did not hold any of the top ten qualifications needed for interpreting in the justice sector. Capita TI held the Ministry of Justice contract to provide interpreters and translators in courts, tribunals and prisons until October 2016. The Matrix Report supported independent regulation of the interpreting profession.

In addition to the Ministry of Justice contracts, two other major language frameworks were launched or revised in 2016: the Crown Commercial Service and the NHS Shared Business Services. NRPSI will be observing the impact on the standard of interpreting of these new government procurements.

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## The interpreting profession today

Most interpreters are self-employed and hired on a job by job basis, not knowing when or where their next assignment may take them.

The availability of Registered Interpreters varies across the UK. There is a range of ways an interpreter may be engaged by public service users: by direct contact using the National Register, via the interpreter's own website and interpreting agencies, or as part of a government framework covering departmental or regional requirements.

There is a strong drive for recognition of interpreting as a profession. Increased immigration as a result of EU policies has led to greater recognition of the need for governments to facilitate communication between different language speakers and provide entitlement to interpreting and translation services. To aid cross-border interpreting requirements, NRPSI has taken part in the LIT Search pilot project, funded by the Criminal Justice Programme of the European Commission Directorate General Justice, which aims to link the European national registers.

Due to the voluntary nature of regulation by the National Register, many interpreters work in the UK without registration and appropriate qualifications. It is therefore not known how many interpreters are working regularly, or how many assignments they are completing. The Ministry of Justice reported that in the courts system (probably the largest user of interpreting services in the UK) there were 153,500 language requests during the year 2015.

NRPSI has identified **eight key challenges** facing the interpreting profession. These include the downward pressure on quality standards as a result of financial constraints on public services, ensuring that qualified interpreters maintain their skills throughout their career and the lack of a clear career path. NRPSI's stated long-term aims are protection of title (i.e. the professional title and status of public service interpreter) and statutory regulation of public service interpreting to better protect the public.

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### The challenges facing the public service interpreting profession

The provision of language services to the public services is facing many challenges, including:

- Financial constraints on the public services putting downward pressure on quality standards
- Government's policy of outsourcing language services to major contractors with little quality control
- Attracting new entrants to a highly demanding but relatively poorly paid profession
- Making those with the appropriate skills and required languages available at the right place and the right time
- The multiplicity of languages that could be required, and the limitations on ensuring qualifications are available for all these languages
- Ensuring that interpreters are appropriately security vetted in a timely fashion
- Implementing a "career ladder" for interpreters, from first qualification to recognition of higher levels of skill
- Ensuring that qualified interpreters maintain their skills throughout their career, responding to changes in language, technology and sector-specific procedures.

Source: NRPSI, Our Strategy for 2016-2018

**NRPSI**

## Key facts and figures (FAQ)

### Q: How many interpreters are currently on the National Register?

A: There are about 1,900 interpreters on the National Register spread across the UK, offering around 100 different languages. Further analysis of the National Register is published in the [NRPSI Annual Review](#).

### Q. What are the most popular languages?

A: The most common languages offered by Registrants are Polish, Urdu, Russian, Spanish, Arabic, Romanian, French, Farsi, Mandarin and Portuguese.

### Q. What is a public service interpreter? What's the difference between a public service interpreter and an interpreter who works for private sector businesses?

A: Public service interpreters work with a full range of public service organisations spanning Health, Police, Government and Legal sectors and adhere to the impartial model of interpreting. Each of these sectors requires specialist knowledge and has its own terminology. Interpreters working within them face challenging situations that demand training, experience and professional competence.

### Q: Why should people use the National Register?

A: Using the National Register provides access to interpreters who:

1. Are qualified, accredited and security vetted
2. Have agreed to abide by a Code of Professional Conduct
3. Can be held accountable if they break that code

People can use the National Register to check if an interpreter is registered. All Registered Interpreters are also required to carry and present on request their NRPSI Photo ID card.

### Q: How much does it cost to use?

A: It doesn't cost anything to use the National Register to source a qualified, Registered Interpreter.

### Q: How is the National Register funded?

A: It is entirely funded by the registration fees that interpreters pay to register and to remain on the National Register.

### Q: How much does registration cost?

A: The application fee for one language is £215.00 for new applications and renewals. Interpreters who are already registered in one language can pay a one-off additional fee of £76.50 to register for each additional language (subject to meeting the registration requirements for each language). All interpreters are required to renew their listing on an annual basis. The renewal fee (regardless of the number of languages registered) is £215.00. All fees quoted include VAT. Visit the [NRPSI website](#) for a full list of up-to-date fees.

### Q: How can people access the National Register?

A: By visiting the NRPSI website and using the search engine on the right-hand side of the screen. You search by selecting the language you require and the postcode where the interpreter is required to carry out the job. You will be asked to register as a user of the National Register before running a search for the first time. Registration is simple, free and a one-off process.

### Q: Can anyone be listed on the National Register?

A: Interpreters need to successfully meet NRPSI's entry criteria in terms of qualification and experience to become a Registrant and be listed on the National Register. An interpreter with a language for which there is no recognised qualification may be eligible to join under the Rare Language category.

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## Related reports/ documents:

[NRPSI Annual Review of Public Service Interpreting in the UK 2015](#), published in September 2016

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**Q. How many complaints are brought each year?**

A: We typically receive 20-30 complaints per year. Of these around 80% are referred to our Professional Conduct Committee, and 20% of these go on to be heard by the Disciplinary Committee.

**Q. How should a complaint be made?**

A: A complaint must be made in writing to the National Register Professional Standards Department. See online under 'Clients of Interpreters' and 'Complaints about interpreters' for further information.

**Q. What happens if a complaint is upheld?**

A: Depending on the nature of the complaint, a Registrant can face a range of sanctions (see **Indicative Sanctions Guidance**) if found in breach of the NRPSI Code of Conduct. The most severe sanctions entail Registrants being suspended from registration for a period determined by the Disciplinary Committee; or excluded from registration with the possibility of application for reinstatement after a period and subject to conditions determined by the Disciplinary Committee. The minimum period of exclusion is normally two years. The outcomes of complaints are published on the NRPSI website and a statistical analysis of the complaints is published in the **NRPSI Annual Review**.

**Q. Can NRPSI investigate complaints about interpreters who are not registered?**

A: No, NRPSI cannot review complaints about an interpreter who is not registered. Only interpreters on the National Register have demonstrated their commitment to best practice by signing the Code of Conduct and can be held accountable.

For further information, please visit the NRPSI website [www.nrpsi.org.uk](http://www.nrpsi.org.uk) or get in touch.

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