

NRPSI wins interpreters' approval to regulate the profession – as £17 million cost to taxpayer of unregulated court interpreting services is revealed

18 December 2013: The National Register of Public Service Interpreters (NRPSI) welcomes the findings of a recently published industry report that indicate that the majority of interpreters surveyed (91%) believe in the benefit of industry regulation – and the majority of these (85%) think NRPSI is the body to carry this out.

The survey of 1,172 public service interpreters* about the quality of professional standards and regulation was commissioned by the interpreting organisations' umbrella group Professional Interpreters for Justice (PI4J), of which NRPSI is a member. It was undertaken in light of the mounting threat to professional interpreting standards and public protection posed by the Ministry of Justice (MoJ) outsourcing its interpreting requirements to language agency Capita TI under the MoJ's Framework Agreement (FWA) – an arrangement that unlike the previous system doesn't require the use of qualified and quality assured interpreters who are on the National Register.

The profession's overwhelming support for regulation by NRPSI follows a MoJ report that indicates that almost 10,000 complaints were received about the court interpreting services supplied by Capita TI between 31 January 2012 (the start of its contract) and 30 June 2013.

The MoJ report also shows that more than one third (39%) of all complaints received during this period related to interpreters not being available for court or tribunal cases. A situation that PI4J conservatively estimates has cost the taxpayer more than £17 million from the start of the contract with Capita TI up until November 2013*.

NRPSI Chair Ted Sangster said: "We have been campaigning since the appointment of Capita TI and the introduction of the FWA to have government recognise the need for independent regulation of public service interpreting. Confirmation from the professionals we regulate that we are the body to carry this out refreshes our determination to continue our regulatory work. The evidence being presented by the profession that the current arrangement with Capita TI is eroding professional interpreting standards and ultimately failing the public is overwhelming. The MoJ must take steps to address this by formally

acknowledging NRPSI as the regulator of public service interpreting in the UK and stipulating that only registered interpreters who are appropriately qualified and quality assured be used for court and legal proceedings.”

ENDS

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Editors' Notes:

*About the PI4J survey

This survey was commissioned by the interpreting organisations' umbrella group Professional Interpreters for Justice (PI4J), of which NRPSI is a member. It was carried out online by Involvis in October 2013. There were 1,172 respondents. 71% of these are registered with NRPSI. [Read the PI4J Survey.](#)

*[Read the PI4J release '£17 million lost in translation'.](#)

About the MoJ report

For more information about the MoJ's quarterly statistics on the use of language services in courts and tribunals, published on 31 October 2013, visit:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/quarterly-statistics-on-the-use-of-language-services-in-courts-and-tribunals-june-2013>

About National Register of Public Service Interpreters (NRPSI):

The National Register of Public Service Interpreters (NRPSI) is the UK's independent voluntary regulator of professional interpreters. Funded by Registrants' fees, it is a not-for-profit organisation. By maintaining interpreting standards it safeguards the public. All NRPSI registered interpreters, there are currently more than 2,000 covering 100 languages, satisfy rigorous entry criteria in terms of qualifications and experience, and demonstrate their commitment to professional standards by signing NRPSI's Code of Professional Conduct. While NRPSI is a voluntary regulator, its powers allow it to discipline and, ultimately, exclude someone who breaks its Code of Conduct. In this way it can ensure interpreters on the

Register, which is publicly available and searchable online for free, are appropriately qualified, have the level of competence claimed and employ best practice.

<http://www.nrpsi.org.uk/>

Background on the MoJ / Capita TI issue

NRPSI has been working with other interpreting bodies through the umbrella group Professional Interpreters for Justice (PI4J) to bring the concerns of registered interpreters about the outsourcing of the MoJ contract to Capita TI under the Framework Agreement to government since January 2012. The resulting three successive parliamentary inquiries (National Audit Office, Public Accounts and Justice Select Committee) have been highly critical of the MoJ/Capita TI arrangement and the Public Accounts Committee has begun further investigations.

Until 30 January 2012 and the appointment of Capita TI under the Framework Agreement, the MoJ sourced qualified interpreters using the National Register of Public Services Interpreters (NRPSI).

The value of the National Register was endorsed by the Justice Select Committee report in its conclusions and recommendations (no.4): *“there do not appear to have been any fundamental problems with the quality of services, where they were properly sourced i.e. through arrangements that were underpinned by the National Register of Public Service Interpreters.”*