

MIDDLESEX EVENTS – PROFESSIONAL ISSUES



INTERPRETING YOUR NEEDS

Reading the President's Review section in the Last Bill of Middlesex highlighted the ever-evolving and challenging context in which solicitors operate. Consequently, the last thing you need to contend with are barriers to communicating complex information that can have life-changing implications for your client.

But that is exactly what many of you do face. With the largest number of immigration practitioners in SE England, your constituency's need for high-quality interpreting services is clear.

That is where we, the National Register of Public Service Interpreters (NRPSI), can help. We are the voluntary regulator of the UK's public service interpreting (PSI) profession and a not-for-profit. We maintain PSI standards by managing the National Register, setting the professional principles that all Registered Interpreters must adhere to, and investigating any complaints concerning a Registered Interpreter's professional conduct.

The National Register is free to search via NRPSI's website (www.nrpsi.org.uk). You can search this online database comprising around 1,800 interpreting professionals, who between them speak more than 100 different languages, by language and postcode.

All Registered Interpreters have had their credentials checked and meet our strict entry criteria in terms of their qualifications, experience and security clearance. All carry a photo ID card that should be presented at the start of any assignment. They are recognised as the 'gold standard' of interpreters. Indeed, in a recent survey of the users of the National Register, 92% of respondents claimed to be very or quite satisfied with their services (only 44% reported the same level of satisfaction with the services of non-registered interpreters)*.

Despite such high satisfaction levels, things do occasionally go wrong. Recent analysis of NRPSI complaints data shows that most disputes arise from poor communication between the interpreter and the client. To get the best from an interpreter, always ensure that they are fully briefed. When time allows, agree dates, times, fees, and the extent and nature of the assignment in

writing in advance. Most importantly, arrange for them to arrive in time to review any last details and ensure you are both clear on your roles, responsibilities and what you are there to achieve.

Regrettably, there also still remains a persistent use of non-registered interpreters – who are unqualified, inexperienced and aren't bound by professional standards – in some quarters including the UK courts. While cost-saving is often the argument levelled for engaging them, this doesn't stand up given the amount of time and money reportedly lost which can result. Worse still, there have been instances of miscarriages of justice involving the use of non-registered interpreters. It was just such a case that led to the establishment of NRPSI in 1994 – some 25 years ago this year.

That is why NRPSI is focused on achieving statutory regulation of the PSI profession and mandatory registration of all PSI professionals. We feel passionate about ensuring that the public services have the professional interpreters they need to support them in their work, and believe statutory regulation is the best way to achieve this going forward. In the meantime, though, please help us to help you by ensuring that every interpreter you work with is NRPSI registered.

By Ted Sangster
CHAIRMAN, NRPSI