

# NRPSI-hosted Interpreter Organisations Summit

Meeting 11<sup>th</sup> June 2013 10.30-12.30

London Eye & Bishopsgate Rooms  
NRPSI Ltd, Longcroft House Business Centre,  
2/8 Victoria Avenue, London EC2M 4NS

## Summary

Present:

**NRPSI – National Register of Public Service Interpreters**

Ted Sangster (Chair)

Stephen Bishop  
Silvina Katz  
Ann Meador  
Lalia Pessoa-White  
Angela Ringguth  
Steven Thacker  
Bogna Wojnowska

**APCI – Association of Police and Court Interpreters**

Geoffrey Buckingham  
Mirela Watson

**CioL – Chartered Institute of Linguists**

Keith Moffitt  
Alan Peacock

**Involvis**

Penny Arbuthnot

**IoLET – Institute of Linguists Educational Trust**

Ann Carlisle

**ITI – Institute of Translation and Interpreting**

Ben Jones  
Caroline Travers

**NUPIT/Unite – National Union of Professional Interpreters and Translators**

Eileen Ford  
Amelia Naranjo-Romero

**PIA – Professional Interpreters' Alliance**

Madeleine Lee  
John Podvoiskis

**SOMI - Society of Official Metropolitan Interpreters UK Ltd**

Magdy Abbas

Maria Brown

**SPSI – Society of Public Service Interpreting**

Guillermo (Willie) A. Makin

**WITS - Wales Interpretation and Translation Service**

Zora Jackman

Tony Wilcox

Ted Sangster welcomed everyone to the second Summit Meeting of the Interpreter Organisations and thanked everyone for coming. He confirmed NRPSI's new location and said that the NRPSI Board and PI4J meetings would take place in separate boardrooms at Longcroft House that afternoon.

Ted Sangster introduced the meeting agenda and said that conclusions and action points would be noted.

Ted Sangster introduced the NRPSI board of lay and practitioner directors and asked everyone to introduce themselves at Keith Moffitt's suggestion.

**1 Apologies**

Apologies were received from Hassan Sobati, NRPSI and Klasiena Slaney SOMI.

**2 Summary of Meeting 12<sup>th</sup> March 2012 – Matters Arising not covered elsewhere**

Ted reminded the meeting of the reasons behind organising the last summit in March 2012, briefly outlined its main points and directed attendees to the minutes of the meeting. He explained that the previous meeting action points would be identified and discussed at the later stage of this meeting.

Ted asked whether there were matters arising not covered by this meeting agenda. Madeleine Lee raised concerns that there had been no progress on the Civil Service Job Evaluation and Grading Support (JEGS). Steve Thacker said it would cost £8-900 per day to use a consultant to carry this out for interpreting and would take 3 days. Paul Wilson had been tasked with this job in March 2012 but it had not been progressed – perhaps because of the difficulties that Steve had outlined.

Madeleine Lee confirmed that she thought it would be beneficial to have this carried out.

Ted confirmed that the issue would be considered by the board and communicated to all.

**3 Changes to security vetting requirements at NRPSI – latest update**

Ted Sangster briefed the attendees on the issue of security clearance in particular CRB disclosures and DBS certificates. He outlined the clear statement of what NRPSI, as a regulator, not employing interpreters, was allowed to do as laid down by the Disclosure and Barring Service in their letter published on NRPSI website.

Ted mentioned that other organisations and individuals had contacted DBS and received identical responses. He informed the meeting that based on these recommendations the board of directors at its last meeting on 18 April 2013 decided to withdraw the requirement to provide and hold a valid security clearance in order to register with NRPSI and remain on the Register. The board had decided that NRPSI would continue to record acceptable security clearances on registrants' records, but given the DBS's direction could not insist that this was a prerequisite for any application for registration.

Ted emphasised that he and Stephen Bishop had been trying to arrange a meeting with DBS with some difficulty as DBS has not agreed to any of the proposed dates. DBS suggested a telephone conference (date to be confirmed) which NRPSI had accepted to speed up the process. Ted confirmed that reintroduction of a compulsory security clearance as part of the registration criteria would be discussed as a priority.

The proposal from WITS which would potentially resolve the problem of DBS provision for some NRPSI registrants will also be discussed at the meeting with DBS.

Tony Wilcox, at Ted Sangster's request, explained the mechanism of the WITS proposal. In cases when registrants have no employer available to apply for DBS certificate for them, WITS offered to be put down as the employer on the application forms as they see themselves as the potential employer of any self-employed PS interpreter. Applications will be put forward via an umbrella body as per DBS procedures. Tony indicated that minimum level of the clearance should be Enhanced DBS certificate as it is closer to police clearance – NPPV. He confirmed that NPPV is of a higher standard than Enhanced DBS.

A number of comments were made in support of reintroduction of compulsory security clearance as part of registration:

Tony Wilcox emphasised that due to the language barrier the interpreter is the only person who is fully aware of what is being said in an interpreting situation, therefore they should be vetted. He explained that there were still two independent police forces that sourced interpreters from the Register. If registrants were not security cleared they would stop using the Register.

Lalia Pessoa-White mentioned that interpreters were being cleared by the police forces they work for. Also this requirement was supported by the National Agreement.

Amelia Naranjo-Romero emphasised that interpreters work with children and vulnerable adults, therefore they needed to be vetted.

Guillermo (Willie) A. Makin stated that SPSI would stop supporting NRPSI if compulsory security clearances were not to be reintroduced. He also said that five police forces from the South West were considering outsourcing their interpreting services but had not done it yet. If NRPSI continued with its current policy, it might trigger the outsourcing.

John Podvoiskis described another way of overcoming the technical difficulties in applying for DBS certificate. He said that as an employee of his own company he had applied for the DBS certificate, stating his own company as the employer.

It was pointed out that Capita TI were able to carry out security checks on the interpreters they use.

There were several comments and observations made about NRPSI:

Madeleine Lee noted that the registrants' perception was there was no communication prior to the announcement of the decision regarding security clearances. The decision seemed to be taken lightly by the board of directors who did not endeavour to investigate other options.

Madeleine Lee raised the issue of accuracy of the searches on the on-line register with regard to security clearances. She pointed out that as Enhanced CRB or DBS checks include Standard checks, everyone listed with Enhanced certificates should also appear on the searches made for Standard certificates.

Geoffrey Buckingham stated that NRPSI as a non-statutory regulator can apply any requirements and criteria to the recruitment process.

Madeleine Lee and John Podvoiskis made a plea to NRPSI for immediate reintroduction of compulsory security clearance as part of the registration process. The minimum level of acceptable security clearance should be Enhanced CRB or DBS. It was pointed out that instant action was required as the number of registrants with no security clearance were rising.

NRPSI responses to the above comments and observations:

Stephen Bishop agreed that the listing of security clearances on the on-line register should and would be improved. With the introduction of the new name of DBS on certificates, changes to the presentation of the data on the search results page were required. He said that he wanted to obtain clear guidance from the DBS so that the security vetting issue could be resolved once and for all.

Silvina Katz drew attention to the general trend of the DBS to reduce the number of professions for which disclosures are required.

Ted Sangster emphasised that the decision to change the procedures on security clearances was not taken lightly and followed on from the clear direction received from DBS. He confirmed that security clearances were still being recorded.

Ted thanked all those who had contributed, summarised the comments made and confirmed that a follow-up discussion would take place at the NRPSI board meeting that afternoon. He also emphasised that the proposal from WITS would be discussed at the proposed meeting with DBS. The outcome of the NRPSI board of directors meeting will be communicated to the attendees of the Summit Meeting within a week.

#### **4 NRPSI strategic plans**

Ted Sangster summarised the outcome of the last meeting in respect of NRPSI strategic plan. He said that the strategy had been communicated to all registrants by email and made available on the NRPSI website since May 2012.

A two page document stating the strategic aims and strategic objectives was tabled at the meeting. He outlined NRPSI goals drawn from the strategic plan:

- Promotion of NRPSI to users
- Improved service to registrants

- Wider scope of registrants, beyond public service interpreting
- Increase the number of registrants

In light of this a change to the organisation's name had been proposed:

NRPSI – National Register of Professional Service Interpreters

A number of comments were made on the proposed changes:

Madeleine Lee and John Podvoiskis strongly opposed the change to widen the appeal of the register outside the public sector. They recommended focusing on promoting the Register to public service organisations only. John Podvoiskis suggested strengthening the existing organisation and keeping it intact. He proposed setting up a separate company to regulate other forms of interpreting would be a better way to achieve this.

Geoffrey Buckingham pointed out that NRPSI had been set up to register public service interpreters. If its fundamental role changed he thought it would cease to exist. He said that NRPSI was recognised all round the world. The unique position of NRPSI had been recognised by EULITA. If the principles of NRPSI changed, that recognition would come to an end. He commented that strategic plans should be informed by surveys and suggestions from the stakeholders.

Guillermo (Willie) A. Makin commented that any expansion was premature and would result in a decrease in the number of registrants. He said that NRPSI had a long way to go to be an effective regulator, but there was a lot to be said for the strategy.

Penny Arbuthnot reminded the meeting that as part of the PI4J campaign the role of the NRPSI had been promoted for the last 18 months. She warned that it was not the right time to change the name. NRPSI should focus on consolidating the existing name. She insisted that NRPSI should concentrate on promoting its uniqueness as a regulator: preserving the quality and standards and protecting the public.

Ted Sangster asked if there were specific objections to the NRPSI strategic objectives apart from that stated in E.1.

Penny Arbuthnot proposed the following amendments to wording of NRPSI strategic plan:

Inserting 'Public Service Interpreters'

Keith Moffitt commented that if NRPSI expanded its scope it would be taking over the role of a membership organisation and becoming a competitor to other membership organisations.

Madeleine Lee requested that research and consultations are carried out when setting the strategic plan.

Amelia Naranjo-Romero and Eileen Ford asked what would be the qualifications requirements resulting from implementing the strategic plan.

Ann Carlisle confirmed that the DPSI offered by IoLET was fundamentally a public service interpreting assessment; therefore she envisaged that other examinations would be necessary to establish the range of acceptable qualifications for other forms of interpreting.

Alan Peacock emphasised that the NRPSI as a regulator should protect the public in the first place and widening the Register would jeopardise this. He also pointed out that there were plans to widen the Register in the past but never beyond public service translators.

Guillermo (Willie) A. Makin suggested that the strategic plan should not be abandoned but reassessed and amended where appropriate.

Tony Wilcox suggested that feedback from user groups should be taken into consideration while updating the NRPSI strategic plan.

As an aside to the points under discussion Amelia Naranjo-Romero reminded everyone of the long standing boycott of the Framework Agreement. Madeleine Lee and Guillermo (Willie) A. Makin gave background information regarding the boycott.

Madeleine Lee requested that in the strategic plan 'interpretation' be amended to 'interpreting'.

NRPSI responses to the above comments and observations:

Angela Ringguth commented that expanding the Register beyond public service interpreting would ensure that NRPSI catered for a wider range of clients and therefore guarantee better access to qualified interpreters.

Ted asked again if there were specific objections to the NRPSI strategic objectives apart from widening the Register. There were none.

Ted then reminded the meeting that NRPSI as an independent organisation had to remain financially viable. He confirmed that there would be no watering down of qualifications. Registrants would need to have adequate qualifications regardless of the sector they worked in.

Ted once again thanked all those who had made contributions to this important issue, welcomed the support expressed for the overall thrust and direction of the strategy and confirmed that the comments regarding changing the name and expanding the Register had certainly been taken on board and would be discussed at the board meeting. He appreciated a strong opposition against the change from 'public' to 'professional' but at the same time pointed out that the term 'professional' not 'public' was used in the name of the PI4J group.

He acknowledged that the strategic plan needed to be refreshed and updated but he understood that in principle there were no calls to abolish it.

## **5 Improving communication and cooperation between the associations - discussion**

Ted Sangster requested suggestions from the attendees.

Ann Mealor confirmed that NRPSI was striving to improve communication with interpreter organisations and would be delighted to publish press releases received from membership organisations. She requested to receive the press release on the 500 days of boycott.

Steven Thacker acknowledged that user groups could be helpful in collecting feedback to be taken into account by the NRPSI board.

John Podvoiskis praised NRPSI for improving communication with its registrants.

## **6 Future meetings**

Attendees agreed that the meeting was very useful and suggested the next meeting should take place in about 6 month's time.

## **7 AOB**

Amelia Naranjo-Romero, Madeleine Lee, Guillermo (Willie) A. Makin and Geoffrey Buckingham raised concerns with regard to the quality of service and turnover of the NRPSI staff. Ted Sangster and Stephen Bishop outlined the current office situation.

Ted Sangster thanked everyone for attendance and confirmed that the PI4J members should stay in the room for their meeting and NRPSI board members would move to a separate boardroom after lunch.

Meeting finished at 12.30