



PRESS RELEASE

£17 million lost in translation

16 December 2013

Figures for the thousands of court case delays caused by Capita failing to supply interpreters show that over £17 million pounds of tax payers' money has been lost since the contract began.

642 trials failed in 2012 as a result of the contract and complaints figures for 2013, published in October by the Ministry of Justice, reveal an increase in cases where interpreters are failing to appear when requested by courts. There have been 9,800 official complaints since the contract began on 30 January 2012, with higher numbers of complaints in the second part of 2013 compared to 2012.

Professional Interpreters for Justice, an umbrella group for professional interpreter organisations, estimates that court time costing £10.8 million was lost in 2012 and £6.7 million in 2013 up to November.

Geoffrey Buckingham, Chairman, Association of Police and Court Interpreters, says: "£17 million lost in court time is a shameful waste of tax payers' money and makes a mockery of the claims by Government that £15 million of savings were made in year one."

The group, which aims to work in partnership with the Ministry of Justice to safeguard quality in justice sector interpreting, has in addition collected its own examples of nearly 1,000 instances where interpreters were not available, or arrived late or caused other delays, amounting to 366 days of wasted court and tribunal time. These represent a snapshot of the overall picture.

Professional Interpreters for Justice attended a workshop with the Ministry of Justice where the group were invited to provide their input to the scope of the independent assessment of

quality in the language service contract. The Ministry of Justice has now issued an Invitation to Tender for the independent review.

Paul Wilson, Chief Executive, Institute of Translation and Interpreting, says: “The Ministry of Justice has finally begun its work on commissioning the independent review, which we hope will be independent, authoritative and substantive. We will then be looking to the new Justice Minister to act on the recommendations.”

In a new independent survey of over 1,000 interpreters commissioned by Professional Interpreters for Justice and carried out by consultants Involvis, only 26% said they are working for Capita TI and 77% of these said their experience of the private contractor is negative. A high proportion (68%) said they are not being treated fairly or respectfully and only 17% said they had been offered training.

Typical comments about Capita were “poor experience led me to avoid them at all cost” or “low rate, unprofessional staff and no understanding of the nature of interpreters’ work and role”, or “staff are rude, no structure at distributing jobs etc.”

Keith Moffitt, Chairman, Chartered Institute of Linguists, said: “The majority of professionally qualified and experienced justice sector interpreters will not work for Capita on principle and it appears that those that are working for them are feeling mistreated. Meanwhile the number of complaints is rising and our country’s reputation for delivering justice and the right to a fair trial is in jeopardy.”

1,172 interpreters took part in the online survey in October 2013. This was the fifth in a series of similar surveys commissioned by Professional Interpreters for Justice over the past two years.

Ends

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See www.linguistlounge.org for commentary and updates.

Follow @United4Justice on Twitter.

Ministry of Justice Framework Agreement and Capita TI contract

Estimates of wasted taxpayers' money

It costs approximately £10,000 per day for a Crown Court trial and approximately £1,600 per day for a magistrates' trial or tribunal.

To reach a sensible estimate of wasted taxpayers' money, a range of official published information on ineffective trials and numbers of recorded complaints has been considered.

There are also two substantial Dossiers of Evidence which have been collected and compiled on behalf of Professional Interpreters for Justice since the Framework Agreement came into effect on 30 January 2012.

Not included in these estimates are the custodial time for additional remands in prison and the additional transport costs for bringing defendants to court on repeated occasions.

- 1. 2012 official statistics reveal 608 trials in Magistrates Courts and 34 Crown Court trials were recorded as ineffective in 2012 as a result of interpreters not being available.** <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/court-statistics-quarterly-tables>

See tables 3.4 and 3.6

a. Costs of 608 Magistrates Court trials which failed @ £1,600 each	£972,800
b. Costs of 34 Crown Court trials which failed @£10,000 each	<u>£340,000</u>
Sub-total:	£1,312,800

- 2. The Ministry of Justice's Statistics Bulletin: Quarterly Update to June 2013**
9,800 published complaints to date. See Notes to Editors.

There is no published breakdown for which trials these relate to so we have made a conservative estimate of £1,600 in wasted court time for each one i.e. the equivalent of 1 day in a Magistrates' court.

a. 9,800 complaints from 30 January 2012 to 30 June 2013	
i. 5,697 of these relate to 2012 @ £1,600	£9,115,200
ii. 4,107 in first two quarters of 2013 @ £1,600	<u>£6,571,200</u>
Sub-total:	£15,686,400

- 3. Dossiers of evidence published by Professional Interpreters for Justice**

We have to date calculated 366.5 days of wasted court time since the FWA began (241.5 days in 2012 and 125 days to date in 2013)

- a. 30 January 2012 – 29 January 2013
 - i. Approx. 720 logged incidences amounting to 241.5 days of wasted court time @ £1,600 **£386,400**
 - b. 30 January 2013 – mid November 2013
 - i. Approx. 270 logged incidences amounting to 125 days of wasted court time @ £1,600 **£200,000**
- £586,400**

TOTAL ESTIMATES OF WASTED COURT TIME AND COSTS

2012

Ineffective trials	£1,312,800
5,697 complaints	£9,115,200
Dossier evidence	£386,400
2012 total:	£10,814,400

2013

Ineffective trials	not yet published
4,107 complaints	£6,571,200 (January to June 2013 i.e. first two quarters)
Dossier evidence	£200,000
2013 total to date:	£6,771,200 (as at mid-November)

OVERALL TOTAL: £17,585,600 (as at mid-November)

Alternative more conservative estimation: if the Dossier evidence calculations are removed (as they may be construed as overlapping with the official complaints) then the estimates are as follows:

2012	£10.4 million
2013	£6.5 million
Total to date	£16.9 million conservative estimate

NOTES TO EDITORS

Caseload statistics for criminal, civil and family courts and tribunals can be accessed in the **Court Statistics Quarterly** and **Quarterly Statistics bulletins**, both published on the Ministry of Justice Website.

2012 official statistics reveal 608 trials in Magistrates Courts and 34 Crown Court trials were recorded as ineffective in 2012 as a result of interpreters not being available. <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/court-statistics-quarterly-tables>

See tables 3.4 and 3.6

MoJ Language Contract Statistics Bulletin

Here is the link to the Ministry of Justice Statistics bulletin on the use of language services in courts and tribunals: Quarterly Update to June 2013.

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

A Ministry of Justice report has published details of 9,800 complaints about its court interpreting contract, with the report revealing that the numbers and frequency of complaints have increased this year. Capita has delivered the service since 30 January 2012 and the Statistics Bulletin reveals that 3,786 (39%) of the complaints relate to interpreters not being available for courts or tribunal cases.

The service is essential for those whose first language isn't English and who need help in understanding and communicating accurately in court cases and tribunals.

Professional Interpreters for Justice, the umbrella group representing interpreter organisations, says the Statistics Bulletin's stated figure of an 87% "success rate" of completed requests hides the true picture of the thousands of court and tribunal cases where Capita's failure to supply an interpreter, or when an interpreter is late or of poor quality, is disrupting the delivery of justice and wasting tax payer's money.

In the second quarter of 2013 there were 1,957 complaints, 23% more than in the same period of 2012. The majority of these (64%) were about interpreters not being available. When compared with the same period of 2012, figures showed there was a four-fold increase this year in interpreters not being available, rising from 218 cases (April-June 2012) to 1,254 between April-June 2013.

Professional Interpreters for Justice (PI4J) is an umbrella group representing over 2,200 NRPSI registered and qualified interpreters in 135 languages. Our aim is to work in partnership with the Ministry of Justice to safeguard the quality of interpreting services for the Criminal Justice System.

Quality Review: representatives of Professional Interpreters for Justice were invited to a Ministry of Justice workshop in September 2013 to give their ideas for an independent quality review which was recommended by the National Audit Office last year.

National Register of Public Service Interpreters (NRPSI)

Until 30 January 2012 qualified interpreters were sourced using the National Register of Public Services Interpreters (NRPSI) which provides and maintains the voluntary register for the interpreting profession. NRPSI ensures required qualification standards are met; the quality of interpreting is defined and maintained through a Code of Conduct; and that access to a database of professional interpreters is freely available for all.

The value of the National Register was endorsed by the JSC report in its conclusions and recommendations (no.4) saying “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.”