

## **The Case for Registration and Regulation**

This article is all about all about why high-standards are important, ensuring members of the public are protected and calling on all to cleave to best-practice. If none of these issues are important to you, then stop reading now. But if you are keen to serve the public to the best of your ability and are looking for guidance on how to achieve this, then read on.

Independent, neutral and respected registration and regulation in any arena motivates and incentivises government, the public sector and those private companies which have been attracted to the ecosystem, in whatever area, to behave in an ethically-bound and socially responsible manner.

The National Register of Public Service Interpreters (NRPSI) has been delivering registration and regulation of professional public service interpreters for over 25 years as well as encouraging self-regulation of interpreters through promotion of the Code of Conduct. For the first time this year, the public service translators register is being launched.

NRPSI's continued maintenance and development of professionalism supports ethics and encourages highest industry standards, notwithstanding what many believe to have been negative commercial pressures since austerity was imposed in the UK in 2012.

Only by commitment to independent registration and regulation can stakeholders be assured that their interests in preserving delivery, and protection of reputation, continue to be founded on long term sustainability; rather than achieving immediate government targets or annual short-term profit-taking by commercial organisations in the eco-system.

Independent registration and regulation are valuable controls against 'bad-actors'; exposing their poor delivery when compared to those whose goals are anchored in professional delivery in public-sector language-services. Part of NRPSI's mandate when it comes to upholding standards is to flex every muscle to expose and tackle inequities and inequalities which hamper sustained high-quality delivery for the public.

The reasons for NRPSI's birth are as relevant today as they were in the early 1990s when the project was set up, triggered by the unfortunate Begum case, with the support of the (then) Institute of Linguists (IoL) and initially funded by the Nuffield Foundation, to develop a model for the provision of public services across language and culture. Almost 26 years later NRPSI still fulfils its role.

For instance, when looking at the skill of interpreting, it requires the ability to convey the meaning between two languages, instantly and accurately, taking into account cultural and linguistic differences. In addition, interpreting for public service bodies requires specialised knowledge and familiarity with courts, police procedures and protocols as well as NHS and other public sector organisations; this is not a job for an untrained bilingual nor is it a role for language academics who have had no interpreting training and do not have interpreting qualifications.

The National Register of Public Service Translators (NRPST) was born naturally, out of necessity and ever-growing number of calls for regulation of translators, who have had their professional bodies, institutes and associations but never a register and regulator. It made sense for NRPSI to branch out and create NRPST.

NRPSI's and NRPST's registration and regulation have several elements which are vital and relevant for government, the public sector, privately owned language services companies, professional interpreters (and translators given the launch of NRPST; [www.nrpst.org.uk](http://www.nrpst.org.uk)) and language services' membership-organisations, institutes and associations, defining:

- Publicly standards and statements of expectations; the Code of Conduct
- Levels of qualification to become a registered and regulated professional
- Valid levels of experience to become a registered and regulated professional
- Validated ID and entitlement to work in the UK for the public sector as a self-employed professional
- A recognised and ratified registration process approving, and permitting the operation of, a service offered by a qualified and experienced Registrant, through a validation process naming the individual professional
- How to manage the public register of those who have been validated and named; open-source so anybody can review at any time given it is a national asset
- Promotion of best-practice and highlights those who deliver best-practice
- Protection for Registrants through the ethically-bound Code of Conduct
- A professional standards process ensuring compliance, including reporting and management of non-compliance with these standards
- Where there is an alleged breach of the Code of Conduct, there is an independent complaints process, not influenced by commercial necessity or political gain
- A de-licensing process through which a Registrant, if judged to be operating unsafely, is ordered to stop or suffer a penalty
- Minimising of asymmetry by lobbying on behalf of Registrants with government, the public-sector and those privately owned organisations in the ecosystem
- Advocating the benefits of independent registration and regulation of highly professional operators

- Protecting registration and regulation, denying ‘Regulator-Capture’ where either government, the public sector or other organisations gain control of the registration and regulation processes, for the potential benefit of ‘bad-actors’ to the detriment of all other stakeholders

NRPSI Registrants must meet the entry requirements by providing evidence of passing one of the recognised public service interpreting qualifications that meet National Occupational Standards (at QCF Level 6 or higher), along with public service interpreting experience.

These are the criteria for the Full status registration.

This top status (Full) registration can be achieved through the following routes:

- By providing the relevant qualifications and 400hrs of experience at the point of registration
- By providing the relevant qualifications at the point of registration and 400hrs of experience within five years
- By providing 400hrs of experience and partial qualifications at the point of registration with the view to completing it within three years

NRPSI also recognises the less common languages classed as ‘Rare’ where no qualifications are available at present. Those languages can be registered by providing at least 100hrs of experience and evidence of passing English level qualification. Rare language registration is being assessed on its merits every year.

All of the registered interpreters (regardless of their status) must renew their registration every year by demonstrating that they still practice interpreting and are up to date with language development.

For detailed criteria for entry on to NRPSI please visit the website:

[http://www.nrpsi.org.uk/downloads/Qualifications\\_and\\_Experience\\_Criteria\\_for\\_Entry.pdf](http://www.nrpsi.org.uk/downloads/Qualifications_and_Experience_Criteria_for_Entry.pdf)

In comparison with interpreting, translation can be done in the comfort of a translator’s home and with the aid of dictionaries and modern technology. That does not mean however that anyone can do it. The bad example of literal translation can be seen in the infamous Google translate, where language ambiguities, double meanings or idiomatic expressions are not considered. This is why public service translators should also be qualified, registered and regulated. Regulation of translators has no precedent in the UK therefore criteria for entry, although thoughtfully designed, is very much work in progress and would have to withstand the test of time to be fully developed.

NRPST translators must meet entry requirements by providing evidence of passing the recognised translation qualifications that meet the National Occupational Standards (at QCF Level 6 or higher), along with translation experience. All registered translators must ultimately achieve the Full status registration through similar routes to those for NRPSI. The experience is being measured in units (a 'unit' being either 1000 words, 1 day of translation work or 1 translation engagement). For a Full status the translators must provide 100 units, which could be percentage of one or all three types of units. Translators on NRPST would also need to renew every year by demonstrating that they are still practising translation.

For detailed criteria for entry on to the NRPST please visit the website:

<https://www.nrpst.org.uk/about-us/qualification.html>

As the independent and voluntary not-for-profit operation delivering registration and regulation in public sector language provision, we advocate *any* language professional engaged by public services should have been validated by the National Register.

This validation ensures all key elements of qualification, experience and clearances are taken in to account as well as checking the identity of each and every Registrant.

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