

## Chartered Institute of Linguists

Transparency matters; public service interpreting needs more collaboration and investment to attract, retain and make sure we recognise and use the skills of high quality UK based interpreters. Latest Independent Chief Inspector's report on language services in the asylum process shows why.

### **CIOL response to the Independent Chief Inspector of Borders and Immigration's report "Inspection of the Home Office's use of language services in the asylum process May – November 2019"**

We welcome the review by the Independent Chief Inspector of Borders and Immigration Home Office's use of language services in the asylum process, which has raised a number of concerns and issues.

#### Key issues

The Chartered Institute of Linguists notes include:

#### **The services of Interpreters need to be properly understood and valued**

Interpreters provide a vital and valuable service and are essential to securing fair outcomes. The report notes that there may be gaps in provision and that the Home Office's efforts to recruit interpreters need overhauling. The report also notes that higher rates of cancellation by in-demand interpreters require a much more critical look at the competitiveness of its 'package' and that this should be coupled with a programme to raise the standards of interpreter competence and conduct, from the initial testing (with help from professional bodies) of interpreters' qualifications (including their fluency in English) and suitability to be listed, through the regular monitoring of their performance, to a rigorous process for delisting those who are not up to standard.

#### **Lack of transparency**

The report highlights a lack of data and information and problems with transparency regarding the qualifications of Interpreters and Translators who are completing assignments. Although "commercial sensitivity" was repeatedly stated as a reason it was not possible to share data with Inspectors, this leaves a vacuum of information which inevitably raises questions and potential concerns. We call on Language Service Providers (LSPs) to transparently share data on Interpreters completing assignments to enable all the stakeholders to properly understand the issues facing UK Public Sector Interpreting and how they can contribute to improvement.

#### **Offshoring of Remote Public Service Interpreting**

CIOL has been concerned for some time about the lack of oversight regarding the 'off-shoring' of Interpreting services, especially to the country where an applicant may have come from. There are clear concerns which may negatively impact asylum seekers trying to enter the UK to escape persecution, but also there may also be

practical problems around offshore interpreters understanding the UK legal system, especially processes and terminology. There now needs to be a review and understanding of services that are handled outside of the UK, with a default requirement for all assignments which have a high impact on a person's life to be handled by qualified UK interpreters.

#### **Quality Assurance**

There are a number of examples within the report where Interpreters have not acted in either a professional manner or questions have been raised about the quality of the services provided. CIOL agrees with the need for the implementation of independent monitoring of the services provided and transparent reporting of this process. This should be carried out by organisations not currently delivering or associated with the services delivered to the Home Office.

The Chartered Institute of Linguists welcomes the report and recommendations and is willing to work with and support the Home Office, LSPs and other stakeholders to respond to this important call to action. There will need to be significant culture shifts within the interpreting 'Industry' as a whole, especially around transparency and willingness to work together to solve issues in public service interpreting; if this is not forthcoming we believe there is a material risk of a crisis in public confidence in the fairness of outcomes which depend on high quality interpreting.

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