



Jess Phillips MP
House of Commons
London
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MP ref: ZA29348
MoJ ref: MC87025

4 May 2021

Dear Jess,

COURT INTERPRETERS

Thank you for your email of 14 April addressed to the Rt Hon Robert Buckland QC MP as Lord Chancellor on behalf of your constituent, Mr Omar Lamarti, regarding interpreters in courts. I am replying as the Courts and Law Minister.

I understand the concerns Mr Lamarti has regarding the qualifications of interpreters used in court proceedings. The Ministry of Justice (MoJ) is committed to ensuring the justice system is supported by a suite of high-quality language service contracts that meet the needs of all those that require them.

The Ministry does not directly employ interpreters, as it commissions the services of suitably qualified interpreters through its contracted service providers, thebigword and Clarion Interpreting. The MoJ accepts individuals onto the MoJ Register with the qualifications listed in your letter. They would however only be engaged in work for the MoJ if other requirements are also met. These requirements include the number of hours of experience they have; the complexity of the booking itself; and whether the language in question is considered as rare or otherwise.

The evidence of public service interpreting experience required by those on the MoJ list is vetted and accredited through references obtained by thebigword. They contact each of the referees given by the interpreter to validate the information that has been provided. Full details of the standards required for our language professionals can be found at www.contractsfinder.service.gov.uk/Notice/975cb99e-fec6-430f-8f31-fd532a907137.

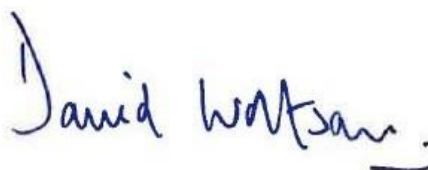
All interpreters are also required to complete a justice system-specific training course before they are permitted to join the Ministry's interpreter register. This course was co-created by the MoJ and the International school of Linguists (ISL). The course is an induction programme and is delivered as an online package which is not an accredited piece of learning. It takes approximately four hours to complete. As the course is not accredited, it cannot be compared to any other qualifications. There is no examination, but at the end of the programme, interpreters are required to complete a knowledge test which requires a 70% pass mark. Those who pass the course are provided with a certificate which is self-generated through the ISL portal. The MoJ does not hold information on the number of individuals who sat the course or who did not pass but can confirm that there were 504 individuals who passed the ISL Justice Sector module in 2019 and 2020.

As of March 2021, there are 1073 interpreters across the MoJ register who hold a Diploma in Public Service Interpreting (DPSI) or Diploma in Police Interpreting (DPI). The number of interpreters listed on the MoJ register fluctuates regularly. Each interpreter has only been counted once irrespective of whether they hold multiple DPSIs or DPI in different languages.

The MoJ does not hold information about interpreters with a level 6 public service qualification and the number of hours of experience they possess, or the percentage on the MoJ's list in 2019 and 2020. This is because there is no requirement to do so within the contract. This is also the case for the number of interpreters who comply with or abide by the National Register of Public Service Interpreter's Code of Professional Conduct.

The MoJ's contracted service provider is required to hold evidence of these credentials, which are subject to an additional safeguard in the form of an annual audit conducted by the department's contracted provider of independent language service quality assurance, The Language Shop (part of the London Borough of Newham). The Language Shop make regular and independent assessments of language professionals carrying out assignments via the Ministry's language services contracts. This includes a check of the qualifications held by the language professional to make sure they meet the requirements of the contract between the Ministry and the supplier. The language professional is required to provide photo ID on attendance at bookings to verify their identity.

Kind regards,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "David Wolfson". The signature is written in a cursive style with a horizontal line at the end.

**LORD (DAVID) WOLFSON
OF TREDEGAR, QC**