

NRPSI Activities

Introduction

The efforts of NRPSI in lobbying and advocating protection of, and development of, standards in public service interpreting has led to major changes in the ecosystem already but there is still very much more to do. It is not possible to list everything which has been carried out by NRPSI. I am however delighted to draw out some of the more significant aspects of NRPSI's recent work.

The activities listed below have had an impact and led to some definite improvements in the public sector interpreting ecosystem but there is still much to do. The more those who are professional public service interpreters who have the qualifications and experience join NRPSI as Registrants, then the louder NRPSI's voice can be; see

http://www.nrpsi.org.uk/downloads/Qualifications_and_Experience_Criteria_for_Entry.pdf

NRPSI is not only committed to giving voice to the voiceless - those who cannot speak English and need an interpreter in complex situations where the consequences can lead to hard liabilities - but is also committed to giving professional public service interpreters a louder voice with the state, government, public sector organisations and all those who can ensure a fairer ecosystem.

Examples of how NRPSI's activity is being noticed include:

NRPSI LinkedIn site

Followers have increased by over 70% over the last two years due to the volume of news focused on professional public service interpreting; see <https://www.linkedin.com/company/2134408/admin/>

Mike Orlov's LinkedIn site

Hitting over 18,400 followers, this LinkedIn channel is a superb vehicle for getting messages out about the need for statutory recognition of regulated and Registered Public Service Interpreters (RPSIs); see <https://www.linkedin.com/in/orlovmike/>

NRPSI website; see <https://www.nrpsi.org.uk/>

- Registered website users stand at 17,875 in January 2022, compared to 17,562 in December 2021; an increase of 313 or 2% month on month.

- In January 2021 there were 16,015 registered website users; a year-on-year increase of 1,860 or a 12% lift.
- In January 2022, 5,142 language searches were recorded; an increase of 1,496 against January 2021's 3,646 language searches; a 41% lift.
- All this indicates much greater focus on the work NRPSI is conducting on behalf of those who are professional practitioners, complying with the Code of Professional Conduct; follow this link - (http://www.nrpsi.org.uk/downloads/NRPSI_Code_of_Professional_Conduct_22.01.16.pdf)

Examples of how NRPSI's activity is leading to change include:

Ministry of Justice

The Ministry of Justice's recent agreement to launch an independent review of language services delivery as reported by many media channels including the digital platform 'Slator' are a clear signal that change and transformation is on the agenda for public service interpreting within HMCTS; see <https://slator.com/uk-conduct-review-of-minimum-qualifications-for-interpreters/>

This followed the call by Baroness Coussins in her recent speech in the House of Lords supporting the need for regulation and registration of public service interpreters and the need to ensure recognition and protection of title for those who meet the standards needed to be a professional practitioner; see <https://hansard.parliament.uk/Lords/2021-11-22/debates/E73503CA-6A96-4A1E-82D9-156E084FFA71/PoliceCrimeSentencingAndCourtsBill#contribution-DEBBFD05-93BF-497E-B588-627E6BC84C41>

NRPSI welcomed this support from Baroness Coussins and the All Parliamentary Party Group on Modern Languages; see <https://www.nrpsi.org.uk/news-posts/Read-NRPSI-reaction-to-Baroness-Coussins-intervention-in-the-debate-at-the-Police-Crime-Sentencing-and-Courts-Bill-on-Monday-22-November-2021-click-here.html>

What is really positive is the way in which many NRPSI Registrants joined in lobbying last year by writing to their MPs and getting letters back from them following the pressure they placed on the MoJ; see this link for just one of the many letters written by NRPSI for Registrants to send to their MPs; <https://www.nrpsi.org.uk/news-posts/Write-to-your-MP-to-find-out-more-about-how-the-Ministry-of-Justice-defines-assignments-Click-here-for-the-pro-forma-letter-you-can-send-to-your-MP.html>

NRPSI also ran a sustained public campaign based on images which pinpointed the issues in the MoJ's language service delivery. Many NRPSI Registrants joined in this work by 'Liking' and 'Sharing' the social media posts through 2021; see <https://www.nrpsi.org.uk/news-posts/Click-here-to-see-a-summary-of-the-issues-NRPSI-has-been-addressing-with-the-MoJ-s-language-services-delivery.html>

This campaign ran for many months, and linked with the MPs question campaign, has undoubtedly had an effect. It is the first time since 2012 that the MoJ is commissioning an independent review; the next year is a vital time when all professional practitioners need to rally to ensuring their voice is heard.

Police

There are some police forces which have used the ESPO Framework to engage with public service interpreters; this allows them to work with bilingual native speakers who have enrolled on a Level 1 vocation public services interpreting course.

What is positive is the development of the Dynamic Purchasing System by the police and the launch of the PAIT scheme; see <https://www.nrpsi.org.uk/news-posts/Click-here-for-the-latest-from-the-police-regarding-developments-with-the-PAIT-scheme-and-contracts-on-the-DPS.html>

Thanks to the approach by the police language service management team, and the lobbying and advocacy from NRPSI over many years, with partner organisations in the grouping called 'Professional Interpreters 4 Justice', the police are now focused on engaging with professional interpreters who have level 6 qualifications and 400 hours experience.

This is beginning to replicate the exemplar in our ecosystem, the London Metropolitan Police Service, which only engages with regulated and Registered Public Service Interpreters who adhere to the NRPSI Code of Professional Conduct.

There is still much to do with regard to remuneration, terms and conditions for police engagements, but major positive steps have been taken and NRPSI is continuing to lobby for the best possible platform to protect the public and ensure best possible environment for those who are professional practitioners.

Crown Commercial Service

The latest iteration of the CCS framework has been much improved and it is anchored with NRPSI's code of Professional Conduct for the first time. NRPSI will continue to have constructive dialogue with the management team at CCS and we are all hoping for further improvements which will mean better

protection for the public and a fairer ecosystem for professional practitioners. Such improvements take time but without the dialogue, these improvements would not happen.

Examples of how NRPSI's publicity activity include:

Legacy media supporting regulated and Registered Public Service Interpreters

Many articles and features have been published in magazines such as the Law Society Gazette, ITI Bulletin Magazine, CioL's Linguist magazine, the Financial Times and of course the well-received BBC Radio 4 programme entitled 'Giving Voice to the Voiceless'.

This is a phrase often used by NRPSI when advocating statutory recognition for regulated and Registered Public Service Interpreters, first coined by a Registrant.

See this link for one example of legacy media coverage: <https://www.nrpsi.org.uk/news-posts/Financial-Times-article-from-5th-November-as-a-pdf.html>

Also see:

<https://www.nrpsi.org.uk/news-posts/You-will-find-the-latest-NRPSI-article-appearing-in-the-most-recent-edition-of-The-Bulletin-ITI-s-journal-here-click-for-a-short-but-informative-read.html>

...and this link for another example: <https://thelinguist.uberflip.com/the-linguist-archive/the-linguist-59-4-aug-sept-2020>

...as well as <https://www.lawgazette.co.uk/news/cps-to-write-to-defence-teams-linked-to-unqualified-court-interpreter/5107515.article>

Articles written by NRPSI supporting regulated and Registered Public Service Interpreters

Listed below are just some of the articles written by NRPSI, with links to each of the pieces and a quote taken from each feature. Many of these have been picked up by both legacy and digital media, such as 'Government Business Magazine' and 'Health Business Magazine'.

11th November 2019, supporting Registrants operating in Health settings:

<https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/public-service-interpreting-nhs-uk-mike-orlov/>

Quote from the article:

Well- trained, qualified and experienced public service interpreters contribute to the safeguarding of human rights. Registrants who voluntarily accept and adhere to the NRPSI Code

of Professional Conduct are inspirational beacons to professionalism in language service provision.'

18th June 2020, making the case for regulation and registration in public service interpreting:

<https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/case-registration-regulation-public-service-language-provision-orlov/>

Quote from the article:

'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.'

25th June 2020, advocating access to public services for all, including those who do not speak English:

<https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/lack-english-language-skills-should-mark-someone-out-second-orlov/>

Quote from the article:

'While state resources are clearly not limitless, it is nevertheless critical to set public sector funding priorities on the basis of commitments to quality-principles, not just supply and cost considerations; especially when lives are at stake. The pressure to save money or recoup costs should not be allowed to insidiously undermine the principle of non-discriminatory access to public services and should certainly not hinder access to justice for all and free and clear access to medical services.'

2nd June 2020, a call for statutory recognition of Registered Public Service Interpreters

<https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/clarion-call-statutory-recognition-registered-public-service-orlov/>

Quote from the article:

'For NRPSI, 'quality' is one of the defining characteristics of the public service interpreting profession. It is the quality of the qualifications and experience of Registrants and the interpreting services they deliver which sets them apart; they represent the pinnacle of the profession. And, of course, the NRPSI Code of Professional Conduct underpinning their professional practice is based on quality and standards.'

11th December 2020, addressing those who engage with public service interpreters

<https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/do-you-work-public-sector-serving-need-make-use-spoken-mike-orlov/>

Quote from the article:

'If the interpreting function fails, we lay ourselves open to miscarriages of justice; misdiagnoses leading to all sorts of problems for patients, medical professionals and the NHS; and desperate situations for those who need help from our social services. To protect the public, to defend the

reputation of the public services and to ensure professionalism in public sector interpreting, always ensure you insist on an independently accredited interpreter who has had their qualifications checked, experience validated and their security clearances reviewed; check the annually updated ID card which is only issued each year after a strenuous renewal process for each Registrant.'

13th January 2021, supporting professional public service interpreters:

<https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/nrpsi-independent-register-regulator-professional-public-mike-orlov/>

Quote from the article:

'Add your voice to those calling for recognition of qualified and experienced public service interpreters. Make your support for statutory recognition known to those in government. Embrace those who have the appropriate qualifications, have gained experience and are prepared to put themselves on the line, adhering to NRPSI's Code of Professional Conduct. Regulated and Registered Public Service Interpreters are there for those who need it most - those who cannot speak English but need to interface with the UK's public services.'

27th April 2021, the future for public service interpreting

<https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/future-independent-registration-regulation-public-services-mike-orlov/>

Quote from the article:

'Would you accept an unregistered and unregulated doctor diagnosing your ailments? Of course not. Would you accept a barrister acting on your behalf in a trial or bail hearing who has only been approved by a commercial organisation whose primary concern is maximising profits? I very much doubt it. So why accept the services of an interpreter without the appropriate Diploma in Public Service Interpreting (DPSI) in Health or Law who is not independently registered and regulated? There is no reason why anyone should tolerate this when it is possible to work with a professional and qualified public service interpreter who has at least 400 hours of experience, checked and accredited by the independent, not-for-profit Regulator of spoken word public service interpreting.'

19th May 2021, asking is it futile to demand statutory recognition for professional public service interpreters?

<https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/blowing-wind-mike-orlov/>

Quote from the article:

'If a public sector organisation calls someone a 'Language Professional' when they are patently untrained, under-qualified or inexperienced, why should we trust that particular public sector organisation? Why would you trust any commercial organisation accepting contractual requirements that drives them to recruit bilingual speakers for government engagements? Are

they surrendering standards, ethics and public safety in pursuit of company profits, dividends for owners and shareholder value? Are they encouraging less than acceptable requests from questionably managed public sector organisations which put cost and supply before ensuring spoken word public service interpreters are fit to act on behalf of someone who does not speak English? Sadly, such things are already happening.

Consequently, it is not pointless to pursue statutory recognition for professional public service interpreters; it is not 'blowing in the wind'. Not when public trust lies in independent regulation, in the assurance that professionals are being regulated by the independent body, where there is no interest in maximising revenue from government contracts or reducing costs by paying interpreters lower engagement fees.'

25th May 2021, asking is it futile to demand statutory recognition for professional public service interpreters?

<https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/blowing-wind-mike-orlov/>

Quote from the article:

'Clearly, NRPSI still faces very real challenges in its pursuit of statutory recognition for public service interpreting, its protection of the title of Registered Public Service Interpreter (RPSI) and for the independent registration and regulation of RPSIs to become mandatory. However, we are a long way from 'tilting at windmills', and we remain committed to championing and protecting safeguarding-standards for the public. And we are committed to holding to account those who would change or dismantle these standards to suit expediency, profit or ease supply issues by eroding serious and vital matters of principle.'

14th June 2021, lobbying the UK Government for it to be mandatory for public sector organisations to only engage with independently registered and regulated public service interpreting professionals

<https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/taking-account-accountability-mike-orlov/>

Quote from the article:

'As long as public sector organisations continue to operate without NRPSI's involvement in protecting, maintaining and developing standards, NRPSI will continue to attempt reflective and constructive dialogue with those in authority with the aim of achieving best possible practice in spoken word public service interpreting for one reason only: to protect the public, giving voice to the voiceless, no matter what their mother tongue.

All practitioners and managers in public service organisations should demand that the spoken word interpreters engaged by them are registered with, and regulated by, NRPSI – the independent Regulator for spoken word public service interpreting in the UK. Where would you put your trust: in a commercially-driven agency that recruits, supplies and disciplines those on their lists as per their commercial contracts with public sector organisations? Or an independent, not-for-profit regulator concerned with protecting the public?'

27th July 2021, speaking up for standards in public service interpreting

<https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/speaking-up-spoken-word-interpreting-standards-mike-orlov/>

Quote from the article:

'Faced with decision-making by public sector organisations which puts the public at risk, we desperately need a UK-wide system of professional registration and regulation for spoken word public service interpreting that is both independent and transparent to ensure the public is protected.

The processes of registration, regulation and accrediting fitness to practice must not be hidden behind closed doors, where public sector organisations and private companies actively block them from public review.'

Working with other bodies

'Professional Interpreters 4 Justice' is a highly effective lobbying body representing the institutes, associations, unions and regulator concerned with improving the situation for professional public service interpreters who are registered, regulated and adhere to the Code of Professional Conduct.

The National Register supports the activity of these partners as much as it can. NRPSI promotes the CPD opportunities which are developed for professional practitioners by institutes, associations and training organisations; see <https://www.nrpsi.org.uk/news-and-links/CPD-Events.html> as well as taking part in conferences and meetings. The next conference NRPSI will attend is the CloL conference to ensure public service interpreters have a voice at this important gathering.

Interpreting Academy

NRPSI has been delighted to be involved with Ricky Mateus in the establishment of what is undoubtedly going to be a major force in advocating higher standards and recognition of professionals across the UK; see <https://www.nrpsi.org.uk/news-posts/Click-here-to-read-the-latest-newsletter-from-the-Interpreting-Academy.html>

Town Hall Meetings

NRPSI has been running a series of Town Hall meetings where Registrants can share their issues and be assured of follow up by the NRPSI secretariat. Areas of concern expressed in these meetings have been passed back to the relevant authorities, as NRPSI ensures Registrants' voices are amplified and heard. Perhaps one of the key short-term areas to be addressed has been late payments by the MoJ to Registrants who have carried out off-contract work but have faced delays in getting paid. NRPSI is lobbying for a consistent approach from the MoJ and a commitment to make timely payments; watch for the next Registrants' newsletter for updates.

Webinars

Follow this link (<https://we.tl/t-5nid0NMbam>) for an example of the many webinars delivered by NRPSI encouraging professionalism in public service interpreting, targeting those who are interpreters, those who work in public service settings and those who are in positions of authority to instigate changes.

Also see the webinar slides which have been presented a number of times for Registrants who want to improve how they run their own business; <https://www.nrpsi.org.uk/news-posts/Managing-Your-Own-Business-webinar-slides-click-here.html>

Perhaps one of the key issues being addressed regularly by NRPSI is the need to review outsourcing as the basis for much public sector interpreting engagement. NRPSI has never stepped away from this issue, as witnessed by the many articles listed above. In June 2022, NRPSI will be addressing outsourcing again at a webinar organised by the AIT; see <https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/outsourcing-reviewing-history-and-planning-for-the-future-tickets-272070800087?aff=ebdsoporgprofile>

University Presentations

NRPSI has presented over 40 times to university modern language departments in the last 3 years, visiting universities in person prior to the pandemic but continuing the work remotely since the first lock down. These efforts are ensuring a stream of highly educated future public service interpreters are taking level 6 vocational qualifications and are beginning their careers as regulated Registered Public Service Interpreters.

It is also useful to listen to the concerns of undergraduates, postgraduates, early career researchers and faculty. Given this closeness to universities, NRPSI is working with the 'University Council of Modern Languages' (UCML) to lobby the public sector about ensuring fair remuneration, terms and conditions to ensure a future pipeline of professional practitioners.

Annual Review

The last review was published at the end of 2019, and it is a useful aid in understanding the work of the National Register.

See http://www.nrpsi.org.uk/downloads/1240_NRPSI_Annual_Review_6th_Edition.pdf

NRPSI has not published an annual review over the last two years given the pandemic but is planning on releasing data covering this period later this year.

However, the words of NRPSI Chair, Ted Sangster, from the last Annual Review sum up the need for NRPSI's on-going efforts to protect the public and to lobby for statutory recognition of Registered Public Service Interpreters, gaining protection of title for regulated professional practitioners:

'When an interpreter is working in a public service setting, usually in a potentially life-changing or life-threatening interview situation, they are the only person who understands what both of the other parties are saying. If the professional ability and integrity of the interpreter cannot be relied upon, the potential for abuse of the public's trust is clear. NRPSI was set up with help from the Home Office and the Nuffield Foundation¹ to ensure those used as interpreters in the public sector are appropriately qualified, have the right levels of experience, and are ready to carry out interpreting assignments. NRPSI's core function is to protect the public and the public purse from poor practice in interpreting. The risk and ramifications of not using highly qualified and experienced public service interpreters in the courts, in police interview rooms and in doctors' consulting rooms, to name but a few of the scenarios in which they should be used, is incalculable.'

The above is just some of the recent work carried out by NRPSI.

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