



Chair of NRPSI Observations

As I approach the time when I will be handing over the chairmanship of NRPSI it's an opportunity (maybe self-indulgent I accept) to reflect on the last 11 years since I was appointed in April 2011 to help NRPSI separate from the CIOL and become a completely independent company limited by guarantee (no shares or shareholders so all that we earn is ploughed back in).

NRPSI may have been independent since 2011 but of course has existed since 1994 following the recognition of the need to underpin quality standards and public safety by creating a voluntary regulator for which the CIOL took up the challenge until its well-considered and brave decision to allow NRPSI to become completely independent.

Those early days of independence were certainly exciting as we tackled the demands of the transfer of staff and of the Register; forging relationships; identifying the strategic direction; reviewing the Code of Professional Conduct; and all running alongside the themes of explanation, promotion and engagement. We may not always have got it right but we certainly learned by experience.

An early challenge and an early decision we did get right was to move the Register from subscription to open access. We also ensured that Registrants' information on the freely accessible database carried their contact details if they wished.

And then of course was the MoJ consultation on a new Framework. The outcomes and consequences of that are still with us and have been and remain a major focus of our activity.

MoJ issues remain important of course and a major challenge but they are not all consuming. As a register we need to look wider to health, local government, other users engaged in the public sector such as solicitors, insurance companies, charities etc. We also need to continually justify and build our position as the UK's voluntary regulator to the interpreting communities across all UK's nations and regions.

Other highlights come to mind such as our Annual Review (the next one is this year after a COVID interruption), revising and updating our Code of Professional Conduct, reviewing and updating NRPSI strategy with the current three-year plan due to be updated this year which will be a priority for my successor.

Our main challenges remain – maintaining the value and relevance of the Register to interpreters and those who employ them. We had around 2,000 registrants in 2011 and are now at fewer than 1,700. Given that Registrant fees are our only source of income part of our strategy is to start a sister register for translators, NRPST, which after a long gestation will launch this spring.

We all recognise that quality standards are at the heart of what NRPSI does (and NRPST will do) and that at times they are under threat and are often given lip service only rather than also being at the heart of government and its agencies. Quality of course comes at a price and therefore lip service is

not enough. Interpreters have to be remunerated at a level that enables those who can demonstrably deliver to the highest standards (as our Registrants do) to continue working as PSIs. Public interest and safety demand that.

NRPSI is a regulator not a membership body so whilst engaging with government and the public sector on the need for quality standards to be maintained is increasingly what we do, it is made even more effective through our alliance with membership organisations and other partners, especially with the PI4J.

I will leave with a few reflections, all about people.

The first is of you, our Registrants. The professionalism, commitment to standards and strongly held opinions based on what is fair and right is our driving force and determines what we do and how we do it.

Secondly the equal level of professionalism, hard work and dedication of the NRPSI team led by Mike. As a small example the flexibility they showed in responding to the pandemic restrictions and developing a new way of working almost overnight was impressive and humbling. My thanks to them all.

Then of course there are my colleagues on the board some of whom I have worked with since 2011 and others who have joined along the way. All have shared the commitment to maintain the quality standards that underpin NRPSI's core, and I am confident that this will continue with the changes that will take place over the next couple of years as the board renews its membership.

So, looking back it's been a great experience and wonderful to be involved in such an important regulator. As a lay chair I came new to the interpreting world but have learned a lot about it and been thoroughly inculcated with the need for efficient, professional and properly recognised interpreting provision in the public sector.

I will look on from now with better informed view and continue to track progress of the National Register – especially towards the long-term strategic goal of statutory regulation and protection of title!

So, in case this is the last time I communicate with you, good luck, and my thanks and best wishes to you all.

Ted Sangster
Chair
NRPSI

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