

29th April 2025 Letter from the PI4J to the House of Lords

Professional Interpreters for Justice (PI4J) Response to the House of Lords Public Services Committee regarding the Report following the Inquiry in to Interpreting and Translation Services in the Courts

Subject: Lost in translation? Interpreting services in the courts - Professional Interpreter for Justice (PI4J) Response

Dear Baroness Morris of Yardley

On behalf of Professional Interpreters for Justice (PI4J), I am writing to express our appreciation for the Committee's recent report "*Lost in translation? Interpreting services in the courts.*" We welcome this comprehensive examination which substantiates many of the concerns PI4J organisations have consistently raised, regarding the court interpreting system in the United Kingdom.

The report's findings align closely with PI4J's ongoing mission to advocate for high professional standards and the proper recognition of qualified language professionals within our justice system. We are particularly encouraged by the Committee's acknowledgment of critical issues affecting court interpreting services, including qualification requirements, inadequate remuneration, challenging working conditions, and insufficient quality assurance mechanisms.

We strongly support the Committee's recommendations, especially those that directly address the professional concerns of court interpreters:

1. Improving data collection and reporting mechanisms to address concerns about lack of transparency, and encourage greater sharing of information
2. Establishing Level 6 qualification as the minimum standard for court interpreters, ensuring appropriate linguistic expertise in legal settings
3. Improving pay and working conditions to attract and retain qualified interpreters
4. Enhancing the professional status of interpreters within the justice system

We support the official recognition and continued use of the existing independent register – the National Register of Public Service Interpreters (NRPSI). This register has long served as the gold standard for quality assurance in the sector, offering a robust framework for verifying qualifications, upholding professional conduct, and ensuring interpreter accountability within the justice system. Importantly, we wish to highlight the regulatory function of the Professional Conduct Committee and the Disciplinary Committee for those registered with NRPSI, which provides an essential mechanism for maintaining trust and professionalism within legal interpreting services.

PI4J stands ready to offer our expertise to help implement these important recommendations.

Specifically, we would be pleased to:

1. Collaborate with the Ministry of Justice on developing robust qualification pathways for court interpreters
2. Support efforts to expand government funding for interpreter training, up to and including achieving the Diploma in Public Service Interpreting (DPSI), to enable additional interpreters to qualify to meet the needs of our courts
3. Continue to promote the professional development and codes of conduct for court interpreters

To ensure these vital recommendations are implemented effectively, PI4J will seek to reinstate regular meetings with the Ministry of Justice and other key stakeholders. We also look forward to greater transparency on rates which are being offered to interpreters, including the publication of the Big Word rate card which currently is not available for stakeholders and interpreters to see, share or discuss publicly.

This report represents a significant validation of PI4J's longstanding concerns and provides a valuable opportunity to influence positive change in court interpreting services. We thank and commend the Committee for its thorough inquiry and considered recommendations.

Yours sincerely,

Andy Murray

Chair of PI4J Steering Committee