

Message from The UK Court Interpreter Initiative

Dear Colleagues,

We invite you to join our 8th and 9th rounds of service withdrawal on:

12th and 13th June 2025, and 17th and 18th July 2025

The House of Lords Public Services Committee published its report on 24 March 2025, (<https://committees.parliament.uk/work/8493/interpreting-and-translation-services-in-the-courts/news/205980/lost-in-translation-significant-issues-must-be-addressed-for-effective-interpreting-services-in-courts/>) following an extensive inquiry.

The Committee concluded that the current state of interpreting services is unacceptable and presents a significant risk to the administration of justice, places undue demand on an already overburdened court system, and that there is a clear disconnect between what the 'government hopes is happening, what the companies contracted to deliver the services believe is happening, and what frontline staff report is happening'.

It is beyond belief how the MoJ still supports the ill practices undermining the principles of fairness to all service users in the justice system.

As we have seen from the inquiry and, in particular, from the submissions of the Bar Council and the Magistrates' Association, the current model not only fails to deliver justice but it also jeopardises it.

Please see below an article from Susan Grocott, KC, who gave very detailed evidence before the Committee:

<https://www.counselmagazine.co.uk/articles/disconnect-the-state-of-court-language-services>

So far, the court staff, barristers, solicitors and interpreters have stated that the system is not working. It is only the MoJ and its profit driven service provider who insist it is working properly.

What would it take for the actual service users to be heard? Will the two-thirds of public money keep being handed over to a profit-driven agency whilst hundreds of hearings do not go ahead, due to a lack of interpreters who cannot afford to work below what equates to the minimum wage?

Who can help redress the issue of profit made by the agency (closer to 75% as compared with the 25% paid to court interpreters) which would subsequently allow interpreters to be able to work and accept work well in advance rather than waiting for the "bookings auctioning", the day before the hearing? Why is public money paid to an agency that does little more than posting jobs on a faulty app? The agency does not pay for the interpreters' qualifications, vetting, experience, or business expenses. Why then, are they part of the chain in the first place?

At times when a lot of cuts have to be made, eliminating the agency and going back to the NRPSI or an agency that is prepared to make a lesser profit and rather rely on the volume of work, would release a great deal of taxpayers' money and stem the flow of highly qualified and experienced professionals seeking alternative careers.

As we know, in the middle of March, thebigword removed the additional payments for four languages:

- Urdu
- Farsi (Persian)
- Polish
- Russian

These interpreters are not only further away from being paid a £46/hour, as thebigword stated is the average they pay, in their evidence before the House of Lords. This is a figure no court interpreter is able to confirm, when in fact their fee falls well below the National Minimum Wage. These interpreters can only accept work within walking distance, and any required use of public/personal transport would mean they would actually be working at a loss should they decide to travel to a remote court.

As a direct consequence, an increasing number of interpreters report that they get told off by the Crown Court Judges for attending remotely. We understand that judges qualify this as "justice not being served".

The implementation of the new framework was postponed from October 2025 to October 2026, where the requirement for Level 6 interpreters will be reintroduced. This requirement was already set out as a recommendation by the Right Honourable Lord Justice Auld in his report dated 2001, which led to the NRPSI originally taking a leading role and becoming the acknowledged register of qualified, experienced and vetted interpreters. These requirements were abolished with the introduction of outsourcing, leading to the decline and destruction of our profession, and this is where we are today.

Despite the obvious flaws, the MoJ refuses to re-tailor the contract and gain value for taxpayers' money.

Many interpreters are still owed thousands by the current contractor and are in a position where they have to reach out to the MoJ seeking resolution for their claims. We urge interpreters who are owed money by the contractor to continue applying to Small Claims Courts as a straightforward and effective tool for recovering the missing payments. There is no lower limit of value for an SCC claim. You can make a claim for any amount less than £10,000.

<https://www.gov.uk/make-court-claim-for-money>

The demands we put to the MoJ are as follows:

- briefing the interpreter before the hearing on the previous and current stages and rulings on the case;
- making pauses between meaningful segments when speaking in court at all times when and if the interpreter is present in the dock; this applies to judges, barristers, and witnesses. The use of a microphone is mandatory;
- no "secret shoppers": The Language Shop representative must make their presence known to the interpreter by introducing themselves before the hearing. Assessors MUST have demonstrable proof of excellence at identical (equivalent) assessments. Assessors MUST have a qualification higher than the one of the interpreter under assessment, and have a minimum of 600 hours of experience interpreting in court;

- a three-hour minimum pay at the rate of £50 per hour; not 15-min increments: once an hour starts, an hour gets paid in full;
- a £150 cancellation fee if a booking is cancelled less than 24 hours before the start time; this applies to each consecutive day of the trial that has run short;
- travel time covering the full journey at £25/hour
- travel costs paid in full based on the TFL rates;
- mileage paid at £0.50 per mile;
- equal terms of pay for ALL languages
- a clear communication channel with the HMCTS, where interpreters can send their complaints.

We also urge you to join the Interpreters and Translators' branch of the GMB union so that interpreters can have a voice! It is by law that companies have to listen to union representatives in defining their remuneration and T&Cs policies. You can find the application form at:

https://www.gmb.org.uk/join-gmb?fbclid=IwY2xjawJcbaNleHRuA2FlbQlxMQABHZBYXUHtkGjXvIkceIQ2e0RN-2ZRypeeufqZndD5vuvrI6TkZ6oSAjuxxQ_aem_yc9Z86kf7mX6SH0jO2A7qw

Join us on 12th and 13th June 2025 and on 17th and 18th July 2025 before it is too late!

Kind regards

The UK Court Interpreter Initiative

ENDS

3rd June 2025