



National Register of
Public Service Interpreters

Sarah Sackman KC MP
Minister for Courts and Legal Services
Ministry of Justice
102 Petty France
London SW1H 9AJ

Monday, 23rd June 2025

Dear Ms Sackman KC MP,

Re: Government Response to the Public Services Committee Report on Interpreting Services in the Courts (27 May 2025)

We welcome the Ministry of Justice's (MoJ) formal response to the Public Services Committee's report (MoJ ref: Sub 124328) and recognise the constructive steps being taken to improve the provision of language services within the courts.

We are encouraged by the Government's acceptance of the Ann Carlisle review recommendations and its movement towards the professional standards that have underpinned the National Register of Public Service Interpreters (NRPSI) since 1994 when NRPSI was launched following recommendations from the Lord Runciman Report. The implementation of the new Qualifications Framework and a strengthened Quality Assurance (QA) regime are positive developments. However, we must emphasise what the Public Services Committee rightly identified: the effectiveness of these quality improvements is inseparable from the issues of off-contract bookings, remuneration received by practitioners, and terms and conditions for engagements.

It is not possible to meaningfully improve QA or ensure consistent standards across court interpreting without addressing the root cause of off-contract reliance – namely, interpreters' widespread dissatisfaction with current rates of remuneration, terms and conditions (T&Cs).

As the MoJ itself will acknowledge, the demand for Level 6 qualified interpreters – such as those holding the DPSI or equivalent – will only increase under the new framework. Yet the continued failure to engage on T&Cs risks worsening the supply gap, as there are qualified interpreters who continue to reject MoJ contract work due to receiving unsatisfactory remuneration which is not commensurate with the skills and expertise of NRPSI Registrants.



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Working conditions need addressing, and improvements implemented, to ensure an effective supply of trained, qualified and experienced practitioners to deliver language services in the courts. Consistent feedback from NRPSI Registrants supports this: interpreters frequently decline work through MoJ's primary contractor, opting instead for off-contract arrangements that allow for more appropriate terms.

While the MoJ has taken incremental steps, such as introducing a two-hour minimum booking, the structural issues remain unresolved. Unless there is serious engagement on T&Cs, off-contract bookings will not only persist but will likely increase – undermining both QA efforts and the sustainability of any new contractual model.

This issue extends beyond pay. Interpreter welfare, how interpreters are treated, and the support provided to them are all reflections of the value the system places on their role. That value is most tangibly expressed in how they are remunerated and the terms under which they are expected to operate. Registered Public Service Interpreters (RPSIs) are skilled professionals who ensure fair access to justice and how they are treated must reflect this status. It is why NRPSI has consistently called for protection of title for Level 6 qualified and highly experienced PSIs as well as fair remuneration and working conditions.

It must also be acknowledged that the outsourcing of language services, introduced in 2012 with the aim of improving efficiency and cutting costs, has not delivered on its promises. Far from streamlining court operations, the system now relies heavily on off-contract bookings as a workaround to the deficiencies of the contracted model. The irony is clear: what was meant to eliminate the need for courts to book interpreters directly has led to a situation where that very practice remains commonplace, creating a more fragmented, less transparent system.

Far from replacing what was seen as a costly and time-consuming burden on court administrators, outsourcing has instead created a layered and fragmented system. What was once a one-tier structure – where courts sourced interpreters directly from the National Register – has evolved into a two-tier model (contractor and off-contract) and is now moving towards a three-tier system (primary contractor, secondary agency, and off-contract bookings). Each additional tier adds complexity and cost without resolving the core issue: interpreters' willingness to engage with the service under current conditions. An extra tier of agency-involvement will leave less funds available to recompense self-employed professional practitioners who are actually delivering language services for the courts and for the public.

With fewer than half of interpreters on the MoJ list holding a Level 6 vocational qualification, the gap between supply and demand will continue to widen unless action is taken. There is an imperative to ensure those on the current MoJ list who do not yet have a Level 6 qualifications are encouraged, and indeed supported, to achieve this level of professionalism. In contrast,



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NRPSI upholds, and has maintained since 1994, the independently managed and not-for-profit, register of currently nearly 1,700 Level 6 qualified interpreters with a minimum of 400 verified hours of professional experience; twice that demanded by the proposed new framework due to come in to operation in October 2026.

We are fully committed to supporting the implementation of the new qualifications framework and playing our part to ensure the justice system has access to high-quality interpreting services, as well as reserving the right to suggest and promote, for the public interest, further improvements in the proposed new framework.

This shared goal can be achieved sooner if the Ministry engages in open and constructive dialogue about remuneration, terms and conditions during future pipeline dialogue. Ultimately, without addressing the reasons interpreters continue to walk away from MoJ contract work, all other improvements, including the proposed new qualifications and experience requirements outlined in the new framework, risk being undermined.

We urge the Ministry to show leadership by explicitly initiating formal dialogue specifically on this issue with not only the regulator, NRPSI, but also the broad-based language institutes, associations and relevant membership organisations. This could be conducted within the on-going existing discussions regarding current and future pipeline of professional language service practitioners for the courts.

We welcome continued opportunities to meet and discuss moving forward in collaborative partnership, securing the future of public service interpreting and translation in our justice system, gaining protection of title for professional public service interpreters and translators, recognition of the value of independent regulation and registration for the profession, and improving remuneration, terms and conditions.

Yours sincerely,

Chief Executive and Registrar
National Register of Public Service Interpreters (NRPSI)