



The Rt Hon. the Baroness Morris of Yardley  
Chair, Public Services Committee  
House of Lords  
London  
SW1A 0PW

**MoJ ref:** SUB131152

22 January 2026

Dear Lady Morris,

### **CONTRACT AWARD INTERPRETING SERVICES IN THE COURTS**

I am writing to provide you with an update following the conclusion of the procurement process for the new language services contracts, as communicated in our recent discussion on 21st January 2026. I am pleased to inform you that the process has now concluded, and the successful bidders have been formally announced.

This marks a significant milestone in our efforts to enhance the quality, accessibility and resilience of the interpreting service across the justice system. The new contracts, which will commence in October 2026, are designed to address the challenges raised within the Public Services Committee's report and incorporate key actions as described in our most recent update to you on 24 September 2025.

#### **Procurement Outcome**

Following a rigorous and legally compliant evaluation process, contracts have been awarded to the following suppliers:

- **Primary spoken services:** *thebigword* (incumbent)
- **Secondary spoken services:** *Translate UK* (new supplier)
- **Visual and tactile services:** *Clarion UK* (incumbent)
- **Quality and assurance services:** *The Language Shop* (incumbent)

Each of these suppliers demonstrated strong capabilities in service delivery, innovation, and commitment to continuous improvement. The contracts include enhanced provisions for performance monitoring. They also embed requirements for future supplier collaboration on the development of new technologies including Artificial Intelligence (AI) solutions, in line with the Ministry of Justice's strategic priorities as outlined within the AI Action Plan for Justice.

Implementation of the new contracts will resolve many of the key issues raised by the Committee, which I have summarised below:

**a) Implementing the new Qualifications Framework**

The recommendations from Ann Carlisle's independent review (related to interpreter qualifications and experience), which have been incorporated into the new contract specifications, will ensure that we are matching the competencies required for court work to the capabilities of our interpreters.

The new contracts will expand the Trainee Scheme managed by the quality and assurance provider. The purpose of the scheme is to increase the pipeline of interpreters with Level 6 Diploma in Public Service Interpreting (legal) qualifications in priority languages for the Ministry. More places will be made available and the cost to the individual interpreter will be reduced to 25%.

**b) Strengthening the Quality and Assurance (Q&A) process**

The new contracts will strengthen the existing Q&A process through the introduction of more risk-based sampling when assessing interpreters, ensuring even more robust confidence in the quality of assessment data. In addition, a formal Collaboration Agreement has been introduced setting out the obligations between all suppliers when working together to deliver the service, which includes implementing a provision for the Q&A provider to review and assure suppliers' complaints processes.

**c) Satisfying short notice bookings**

The new contracting model aims to satisfy short notice bookings and will introduce a primary and secondary supplier structure for spoken services which should reduce the need to use off contract suppliers where the primary contract cannot supply the required interpreter.

**d) Requiring our suppliers to provide new welfare support to interpreters**

The new contracts include better welfare provisions for interpreters. The suppliers will have processes in place to support and signpost interpreters when dealing with bookings with a sensitive subject matter. Interpreters will also have the option to "opt out" of bookings of a certain nature. Similarly, we will be strengthening safeguarding guidance for interpreters so that they can be confident in highlighting any safeguarding concerns they encounter while working with us.

**e) Improved remuneration measures for interpreters**

Improved remuneration measures have been introduced across several areas. These include securing annual Consumer Price Index (CPI) linked increases for interpreters, in line with the adjustments applied to the supplier, building on remuneration increases already delivered in June 2023 and through the increase to the two-hour minimum booking requirement from October 2024. The minimum paid duration of 2 hours will remain in place for HMCTS face-to-face assignments. Broader definitions of cancellation and curtailment will ensure more interpreters are eligible for payment in these situations.

We will monitor payments from MoJ through the suppliers - and ultimately to the interpreters - to ensure fairness and transparency in remuneration. This includes information about travel and subsistence rates (though we will not disclose this due to commercial confidentiality).

## Next Steps

We are now entering the implementation phase, during which we will work closely with the successful bidders to prepare for service commencement. This includes finalising operational plans, engaging with frontline staff and interpreters, and ensuring that the necessary infrastructure is in place to support remote interpreting and accessibility improvements.

We will continue to engage with stakeholders, including representatives from the judiciary, legal professionals, and interpreter organisations, to ensure that the transition is informed by user experience and feedback. Our commitment to transparency remains central, and we will provide further updates as we progress towards implementation.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank the Committee for its continued support and constructive engagement throughout this process. We remain dedicated to delivering a strengthened, high-quality interpreting service that meets the needs of all court users.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Sarah Sackman".

**SARAH SACKMAN KC MP**  
**Minister Of State**