



Dame Diana Johnson DBE MP
House of Commons
London
SW1A 0AA

MP ref: DJ47146
MoJ ref: MC86126

30 March 2021

Dear Dame Diana,

COURT INTERPRETERS

Thank you for your letter of 9 March addressed to the Rt Hon Robert Buckland QC MP as Lord Chancellor on behalf of your constituent, Ms Katherine Dagleish, about interpreters in courts. I am replying as Courts and Law Minister.

I realise Ms Dagleish is concerned about reports in the media concerning the qualifications of interpreters used in court proceedings. Language professionals provided by our contracted language service provider, thebigword, are sourced from the Ministry of Justice's register. Only language professionals who meet the MoJ's contractual requirements are included on the register, which is managed and audited by an independent language service provider.

The contract has a clearly defined list of qualifications, skills, experience and vetting requirements that language professionals must meet, which have been designed to meet the needs of the justice system. All language professionals are also required to complete a justice system specific training course before they are permitted to join the MoJ's interpreter register.

The contract sets out the minimum level of qualification and experience a language professional is required to have to work on each complexity level of booking. Details of these qualifications can be found at: www.contractsfinder.service.gov.uk/Notice/975cb99e-fec6-430f-8f31-fd532a907137.

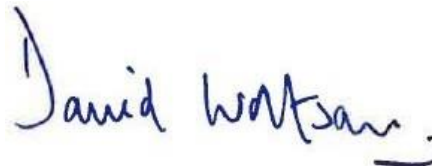
The MoJ's contracted service provider is required to hold evidence of these credentials, which are subject to an additional safeguard in the form of an annual audit conducted by the department's contracted provider of independent language service quality assurance, The Language Shop (part of the London Borough of Newham).

The Language Shop make regular and independent assessments of language professionals carrying out assignments via the MoJ's language services contracts. This includes a check of the qualifications held by the language professional to make sure they meet the requirements of the contract between the MoJ and the supplier. The language professional is required to provide photo ID on attendance at bookings to verify their identity.

Complaints about the quality of interpreting or professional conduct are referred to The Language Shop for independent assessment. Language professionals are suspended from the MoJ's register pending the outcome and are not reinstated unless The Language Shop confirms that the requisite standards have been met.

The rates offered to language professionals have been carefully considered by our suppliers. As well as a competitive 'base rate', a range of uplifts are paid to a language professional depending on the urgency, security requirement and complexity of the assignment. Language professionals engaged through this contract are self-employed professionals and are free to accept work for the MoJ or other organisations as they choose.

Kind regards,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "David Wolfson". The signature is written in a cursive style with a small horizontal line under the end of the name.

**LORD (DAVID) WOLFSON
OF TREDEGAR, QC**