

Letter for MPs regarding HMCTS Language Services

Template letter to send to your MP

You can **download and use the template letter/email on the next page** to ask your MP to raise further questions in the House of Commons about the courts' use of unregistered interpreters.

In order to edit the document once you have downloaded it, simply select all the text by holding down the "Ctrl" key and pressing the letter "A" on your keyboard ("Cmd" + "A" on a Mac). You can then cut and paste the text into a Word or .txt document, or directly into the body of your email. It should be possible for you to do this using the free-to-download standard version of the Adobe Acrobat Reader software most commonly used to view PDFs.

To find the contact details of your MP, visit: <https://members.parliament.uk/members/Commons> .

We would be interested to know which MPs are contacted for future reference as part of our ongoing lobbying activities. So please do let us know if you make use of the letter and the name of your MP by emailing mike@nrpsi.org.uk .

We would also be delighted to hear about any response you receive to your letter. If you are happy to share this, please email a copy to mike@nrpsi.org.uk .

From:
To:
Chris Philp,
The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Home Department

Thank you for your answer on 25th February 2021 to questions asked by Alex Cunningham, Shadow Minister (Justice), regarding language service delivery at the Ministry of Justice (MoJ):
<https://www.theyworkforyou.com/wrans/?id=2021-02-22.156382.h>.

I note your comment: 'The MoJ is committed to ensuring the justice system is supported by a suite of high-quality language service contracts, that meet the needs of all those that require them'.

Given the MoJ contract has a clearly defined list of qualifications, skills, experience and vetting requirements that suitably qualified interpreters must meet, and that these qualifications, skills, experience and vetting requirements have been designed to meet the needs of the justice system, it will be illuminating to explore these in more detail in the public interest.

Notwithstanding any claims of commercial sensitivity, as the interests of contracted agencies should not outweigh the public interest, could the MoJ expand on its 'contractual requirements', which are administered by contractors and managed and audited by an independent language service provider?

Having read pages 90 to 98 of the 'Agreement relating to the Provision of Language Services – Spoken Languages (Lot 1 Redacted 2011116 V2)', which can be found online (<https://www.contractsfinder.service.gov.uk/Notice/975cb99e-fec6-430f-8f31-fd532a907137>), I have further questions concerning the interpreting qualifications that seem to be acceptable to Her Majesty's Courts and Tribunals Service (HMCTS) that I would like answered in the interests of transparency.

Specifically, does HMCTS accept individuals onto the MoJ list of interpreters, to be engaged in MoJ settings, with the following levels of qualification:

- Level 1 Foundation in Public Service Interpreting; a 2-to-4-week course
- Level 2 Public Service Interpreting Qualifications
- Level 3 and Level 4 Community Service Interpreting Qualifications; 'A' level standard
- Those with a Bachelor's degree in Philology but not holding any Public Service Interpreting qualifications
- Those with a Bachelor's degree in Linguistics but not holding any Public Service Interpreting qualifications?

How many interpreters on the MoJ list of interpreters engaged by HMCTS have a Level 6 (Bachelor's degree level) Diploma in Public Service Interpreting (DPSI) or Diploma in Police Interpreting (DPI)?

What evidence of public service interpreting experience do those on the MoJ list at the above levels need to provide, if any?

How is this evidence of public service interpreting experience vetted and accredited?

Of those with a Level 6 public service interpreting qualification, how many possess 400 hours or more of public service interpreting experience?

What percentage of the overall MoJ list did those interpreters with Level 6 public service interpreting qualifications and 400+ hours of public service interpreting experience make up, on average, in 2019?

Of those interpreters with a Level 6 public service qualification and 400+ hours' public service interpreting experience, how many comply with and abide by the National Register of Public Service Interpreter's (NRPSI) Code of Professional Conduct (the only code of conduct written specifically for public service interpreters and regulated by NRPSI, the independent not-for-profit national regulator of spoken word public service interpreting)?

I am also interested in understanding more about the 'justice system specific training course' you mention, which all interpreters are required to complete before joining the MoJ list of interpreters.

- Which academic/standards/training organisation or accrediting body oversees the course?
- Which organisation authored/wrote the course?
- Who conducts the training?
- How long is the course – i.e. what number of days are needed to complete the course?
- Is this course taught at Level 1, 2, 3, 4, 5 or 6 (from GCSE to degree level)?
- How are those taking the course examined – e.g. is there an examination at the end of the course?
- If so, how many failed in 2019?
- Are certificates issued?
- How many individuals sat the course in 2019 and in 2020?

Could you also outline the detail of the additional safeguard you mention: the annual audit conducted by the department's contracted provider of independent language service quality assurance. Specifically, what are the protocols and procedures administered by The Language Shop on an annual basis?

Given the MoJ's contracted language service providers and language service quality assurance provider are required to hold evidence of the qualifications and experience credentials of those on the MoJ list of interpreters, I have no doubt this information is readily available.

I look forward to exploring in greater detail the levels of qualification and experience that an individual must have in order to join the MoJ list of interpreters and operate in the criminal justice system, and how these are checked.

Thank you for your cooperation.