

NRPSI MEETING WITH INTERPRETER ORGANISATIONS

Monday 12th March 2012

From 1200- 1500

At Room 2, London Councils' Office

59 ½ Southwark St, SE1 0AL

Those attending:

NRPSI – National Register of Public Service Interpreters

Ted Sangster
Sian Pritchard
Steve Thacker
Lalia Pessoa-White

APCI – Association of Police and Court Interpreters

Geoffrey Buckingham (Chairman)
Alan Thompson (Secretary)

CloL – Chartered Institute of Linguistics

Keith Moffitt
Hilary Maxwell-Hyslop

ITI - Institute of Translation & Interpreting

Paul Wilson

NUPIT/Unite – National Union of Professional Interpreters and Translators

Amelia Naranjo-Romero
Eileen Ford

PIA - Professional Interpreters' Alliance

Madeleine Lee

SOMI - Society of Official Metropolitan Interpreters UK Ltd

Magdy Abbas
Yvonne Malni
Ranjeeta Johnson

SPSI – Society for Public Service Interpreting

Willie Makin
MansoorDhifallah

Introductions

Ted Sangster welcomed everyone to the meeting and thanked them for coming. He asked everyone to introduce themselves.

Purpose and outcomes of the meeting

Ted acknowledged that many of those attending had been asking to meet NRPSI for some time. This meeting therefore was both an opportunity for NRPSI to outline what we have been doing, explain why and also to answer any questions.

In addition he hoped that there would be a useful exchange views and if possible an identification of common ground on the issue of the MoJ changes and that as a result this meeting would lead to a greater understanding between NRPSI and the various interpreter groups.

NRPSI progress since April 2011

Ted outlined a number of aspects of progress which description was interleaved with a number of comments and questions.

He summarised the progress as :

We started 1st April 2011 as a company limited by guarantee with a completely new board, appointed independently on merit.

As a board decisions are taken by consensus (occasionally by majority decision) with collective responsibility thereafter

Some staff transferred, some left. Sian has merged her staff into one, much more flexible team

The board decided early on to maintain a freely accessible database, and also to give registrants the opportunity to display what information they wished including contact details.

We responded to the MoJ consultation, shared that response with our registrants and placed it on our website.

There have been significant revisions to the Code of Conduct and Disciplinary procedures, we have caught up the on the backlog of cases and given the highest priority to maintaining this underpinning of the quality of the register

The website has been improved and there is more to come

The number of registrants has increased

There has been improved communications with our registrants including posting minutes of our board meetings on our website – and again with more to come

Whilst maintaining an appropriate distance given the role of an independent regulator we had maintained a watching brief in many fora especially on MoJ issues

Sian has embarked on a significant programme of engaging with new and potential new interpreters in giving presentations across the UK.

There has been some limited but focused advertising e.g. to solicitors.

The board has embarked on a detailed strategic review which is in the process of being finalised

We are looking to engage the services of a PR agency and also significantly improve our website and presentation

A number of comments and questions were made during and after this outline of progress including :

Whether NRPSI is really independent of the CioL given that they remain located in Saxon House.

Ted responded that he could absolutely confirm that NRPSI is independent of the CioL.

As a board we run our own affairs, determine our own policies, have our own resources and stand or fall by our own decisions and actions.

Therefore other than historical the only continuing relationship we have with the Institute is that we are co-located and that they are our landlords and as part of this provide some common services such as IT, reception, cleaning etc. We have already moved some common services away from them into separate third party arrangements and are looking to what else is appropriate.

We are very much aware of the perception of us being in the same building and Sian has actively researched alternatives for us. The cost of moving however and the increased rent that would be payable (the rent for our office in Saxon House is very competitive in the market) have been considered by the board as too much to be justified, certainly at the present time when our resources are better applied to other priorities.

In the meantime we have changed our registered address at Companies House to that of our accountants as a small indication of the reality of our separateness, and it remains our medium term intent to move office when circumstances allow.

Questions were raised as to who attended the meeting with ALS and why the meeting took place.

Ted stated that the meeting with ALS was a fact finding meeting only, attended by himself and Siân Pritchard who then reported back to the board.

It was mentioned that there were rumours that the New NRPSI had inherited over 200 disciplinary cases from the old NRPSI which were not dealt with.

Siân corrected this by saying it was only 8 cases that preceded the 1st April 2011 that had not been run through to completion. She also confirmed that all cases since then (the date of the establishment of the current NRPSI) have been dealt with within the revised and tighter timescales determined and monitored by the board.

Dr Makin raised the issue that he felt it was not appropriate for a regulator to carry contact details and that this was a role for the Membership organisation.

Ted pointed to the board decision that had been taken on this, and Steve Thacker pointed out that only 600 registrants on NRPSI were also members of a Membership organisation so to remove the contact details from the register would mean that the interpreters who were not members of membership organisations could not be contacted.

Others also supported this view and agreed that carrying contact details of registrants (should they wish) was in the best interests of registrants.

Madeleine Lee raised concerns about the letter sent by NRPSI to the MoJ on 27 February 2012. She was concerned that the letter seemed to indicate that NRPSI would consider reducing the entry requirements and accept lower qualifications.

Ted confirmed that this was not going to happen and offered to write again to the MoJ to clarify this point. It was also stated and agreed by all that there would be no reduction in qualifications to join the register

It was suggested that NRPSI could undertake a survey of registrants to gather a range of views as to the required role of the regulator and also factual information to guide NRPSI and other stakeholder bodies in determining their developing strategies. This was coupled with a discussion led by Amelia and Eileen as to accurate data on interpreters' earnings to assist in responding to some of the perceptions bandied about in the debate on the MoJ changes.

Summary

All agreed that the prime purpose of the NRPSI was to retain the quality of public service interpreting and that the board of NRPSI should ensure that there was no watering down of qualifications or registration criteria

Agreed further actions

The NRPSI would look at ways of improving the means and effectiveness of communication with its registrants and establishing a means of consultation with them and that this would be discussed at the next board meeting.

The board of NRPSI would consider the value and means of undertaking a survey of registrants to assist in determining the appropriate future strategy and more immediate engagement in the MoJ changes debate.

It was agreed that the various membership organisations would provide a brief outline of their role and services (and contact details) for this to be placed on the NRPSI web site with links.

Membership organisations would encourage continued support for and registration with NRPSI.

It was agreed that the meeting had been useful and that further meetings would take place, probably every 4 months.