

# Media | Information



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Thank you for your interest in the **National Register of Public Service Interpreters (NRPSI)**. This document contains information for the media regarding NRPSI's role and responsibilities, its registration criteria, Code of Conduct, complaints process and Board/spokespeople. It also includes sections that outline the case for professional interpreting and state of the profession today. It concludes with some key NRPSI facts and figures.

Recent releases, statements and general news regarding NRPSI activities can be found in our online **News centre**, which is regularly updated with the latest information.

If you are looking for comment for an article, a thought piece on a particular issue, or further information on public service interpreting, please get in touch.

## Media contacts

For all media enquiries, please contact **Nina Croad**, Communications Consultant at NEO, in the first instance:

[nina@neoposition.com](mailto:nina@neoposition.com)  
**07889 491259**

## About NRPSI

### Our history

NRPSI was founded in 1994. The organisation was established following a serious miscarriage of justice resulting from an untrained 'interpreter' being engaged for a murder trial. The 'interpreter' did not even speak the same dialect as the accused.

This event led to the 1993 Runciman Royal Commission on Criminal Justice recommendation that a national register of qualified interpreters be established with the aim of "using only interpreters with proven competence and skills, who are governed by a nationally recognised code of conduct".

In 1994, after an initial project funded by the Home Office, the Nuffield Foundation invited tenders to run an interpreting register. The Institute of Linguists (now the Chartered Institute of Linguists or CIOL) was the successful bidder and the National Register was born. At the same time, the relevant graduate-level qualification, now called the Diploma in Public Service Interpreting (DPSI), was established. It continues to be offered by the Institute of Linguists Educational Trust today. Both the advent of the National Register of interpreters and the development of the DPSI were designed from the outset to address the interpreting needs of all parts of the public services.

In 1998, the Trials Issues Group recommended the exclusive use of the National Register when selecting interpreters for criminal investigations and court proceedings.

The need for a national register was confirmed by Lord Justice Auld's 2001 Review of the Criminal Courts of England and Wales.

The National Agreement on Arrangements for the Use of Interpreters, Translators and Language Service Professionals in Investigations and Proceedings within the Criminal Justice System (the 'National Agreement'), published in revised form in 2007 by the Office for Criminal Justice Reform, standardised the working relationships with interpreters and specified that spoken-language interpreters should be sourced from NRPSI. This quality standard was

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dispensed with by the Ministry of Justice when it outsourced interpreting services to the commercial company ALS (now Capita TI) in 2012. This led to many problems and criticism from the UK Parliament.

NRPSI became independent of CIOL in April 2011 and is now an independent not-for-profit organisation.

In 2019, NRPSI celebrates the twenty-fifth year since it was founded.

### Our role

NRPSI regulates the public service interpreting profession in the UK. We are a voluntary public interest body and our primary role is to protect the public. We do this by ensuring that interpreters working in a variety of public service environments meet the standards required of these exacting roles.

### Our responsibilities

#### Our core duties are:

1. Assessing and determining the standards required for registration
2. Ensuring that Registered Interpreters meet our standards for professional conduct and practice
3. Maintaining the National Register, providing a free online resource, accessible to all
4. Recognising the qualifications needed to become a professional interpreter
5. Investigating complaints about a Registered Interpreter's conduct or competence through a transparent process
6. Promoting the role of the regulator and the importance of registration to ensure that both the profession and society more widely understand their value.

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## About registration

In order to prove their fitness to practise and be registered with NRPSI, spoken-language interpreters must provide proof of their identity and entitlement to work in the UK, a valid security clearance, appropriate qualifications and relevant experience. They must also agree to abide by the NRPSI Code of Conduct.



Registration requires a specific interpreting qualification (most commonly the DPSI) in the relevant second language and English. For registration at Full status, interpreters must provide evidence of more than 400 hours' relevant experience. Given the very large number of languages in existence, there is a Rare Language status of entry to the National Register for those languages for which no interpreting qualification exists at the time they are registered. Rare Language candidates are required to provide documented proof of their English language skills and second language ability. They must also provide evidence of carrying out Continuing Professional Development (CPD) and that there continues to be no interpreting qualification in their language at the point of renewing their registration each year.

Registration must be renewed on an annual basis. At which time, evidence of at least 10 hours' relevant experience must be provided to show continuing practice in the language.

Registered Interpreters are able to use the letters RPSI after their name. They are also provided with the NRPSI Photo ID Card so that their registration can be checked at each assignment. A Registered Interpreter's identity can be checked via the NRPSI website.

## About the NRPSI Code of Conduct

NRPSI maintains the Code of Conduct that all Registered Interpreters are required to sign and follow. Key components of the Code of Conduct include maintaining confidentiality about any information heard during the interpreted interview, remaining impartial (public service interpreters do not act for either party but enable communication between them) and interpreting faithfully what is said in both languages.

## About our professional complaints process

NRPSI provides a free professional complaints process for anyone who feels that a Registrant has not followed the Code of Conduct. NRPSI follows a defined procedure for all complaints, which are heard by panels comprising a majority of Lay Members to represent the interests of the public. If a complaint against an interpreter is upheld, they can face a range of sanctions. These include suspension and expulsion from the Register. NRPSI publishes data on complaints heard and the outcome of all complaints.

## About the NRPSI Board

NRPSI is owned and managed by NRPSI Ltd, a not-for-profit organisation. It is governed by a Board consisting of seven Non-Executive Directors: four Lay Members, including the Chair, and three Registered Interpreters. The Directors, who were selected through a competitive process following open calls for applications, set policy and have responsibility for the NRPSI's strategic direction and financial priorities.

NRPSI's Executive Director is an advisor to the NRPSI Board on matters of policy, strategy and financial priorities, with responsibility for the day-to-day operations of the organisation.

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## About our spokespeople

### NRPSI Chair

**Ted Sangster's** career has spanned both public and private sectors, large and small companies, as well as commercial and not-for-profit organisations. He spent 20 years with Sealink and its privatised successors (Sea Containers then Stena), becoming Operations Director in Scotland for ferry operator Caledonian MacBrayne and Director General in London for BIFA – the trade association and professional institute for the UK's freight forwarding industry. Ted returned to Wales in 1998 as Chief Executive of Milford Haven Port Authority, where he remained until retiring in April 2010. He has been a chair and non-executive director of a number of organisations. Current positions held include Chair of the enterprise company PBI, the science and education charity the Darwin Centre, the Pembrokeshire Haven Business Group, as well as the National Register of Public Service Interpreters (NRPSI). He is a Chartered Director and a FCILT and FCMI.



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### NRPSI Executive Director

**Mike Orlov** joined NRPSI in May 2019 as Executive Director and Registrar. With a background in media and publishing, he has extensive experience of working at board-level and a proven track record of delivering complex change programmes to improve organisational performance. Prior to joining NRPSI, Mike was a Partner at SteppingStone Global, a management consultancy based in Bahrain and the UK. Before this, he spent most of his 30+ year career working in publishing for leading companies, both here in the UK and in the six Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries. He held senior positions at News Group International, Northern & Shell, the London Evening Standard, The Mail on Sunday, and Reed, Turret and Haymarket. Throughout his career, Mike has provided management consultancy, coaching, mentoring and training to associate professionals. He is a Fellow of the Institute of Leadership and Management (FInstLM) and committed to continuing professional development. A recognised subject matter expert on leadership competencies, Mike is an experienced communicator, speaker and frequently published business writer in the business press and on LinkedIn: [www.linkedin.com/in/orlovmike/](http://www.linkedin.com/in/orlovmike/)



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## Practitioner Board Members

**Silvina Katz** has more than 30 years' experience working as an interpreter and translator for a range of organisations and sectors including the Police, Courts, Prison Service and Health. Silvina has worked as a language tutor for many years and as an associate university lecturer on the Diploma in Public Service Interpreting (DPSI) courses specialising in Law and Health. During a career spanning more than 25 years in local government, she was responsible for Corporate Policy, Consultation and Governance for a large district council.



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**M<sup>a</sup> Eulália Pessoa-White** (also known as **Lalia White**) has been a Director of the National Register of Public Service Interpreters (NRPSI) since April 2011 and is a member of its Professional Conduct Committee. An experienced freelance interpreter with more than 25 years' experience, she has worked for a variety of public services including The Metropolitan Police Service, UK Police Forces, Her Majesty's Court and Tribunal Services, HMRC, Immigration Services, and the Department for Work and Pensions. She has undertaken extensive voluntary work to help raise the profile of public service interpreters and improve their working conditions. She was instrumental in setting up the Society of Metropolitan Interpreters (SOMI), served on the Association of Police and Court Interpreters (APCI) committee, and was Chair of the National Union of Professional Interpreters and Translators (NUPIT). Before working in the Criminal Justice sector, M<sup>a</sup> Eulália worked as secretary, translator and interpreter for industries ranging from engineering to commodities.



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**Dr Hassan Sobati** is a scientist by way of his formal education, a barrister by way of his most recent academic work and a linguist by way of his main profession. He achieved his scientific education in the UK (MSc in Biotechnology, Imperial College London; PhD in Molecular Biology, King's College London, 2001). He then went on to study law part-time in London (Postgraduate Diploma in Law, Westminster University; Bar Vocational Course, BPP, 2006). He was called to the General Council of the Bar by the Honourable Society of the Middle Temple in 2006. He is a linguist who speaks six languages at various levels of fluency. He achieved his lingual skills and qualifications from 1983 to 2004. Dr Sobati is a fully qualified, full-time interpreter and translator. He has been working full-time as an interpreter in the field of law using his two native languages of Dari and Farsi, specialising in crime, immigration and family law since 2000. He is also affiliated with NRPSI, CIOL, the Metropolitan Police Service, CPS, AIT, Crown, Magistrates' and County Courts, Home Office, and other professional bodies and organisations. He is an examiner and tutor for degree level lingual exams and also an author of lingual expert reports for the Crown Courts and Tribunals. Dr Sobati was elected to the position of Board Member of NRPSI in March 2011 and is dedicated to the principles of regulation through fair play and maintaining high standards. This is to say that there should be no monopoly of contracts in the public sector or compromise on qualifications, experience and the interest of justice for financial reasons. No disregard for quality and professionalism should be tolerated at any cost.



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### Lay Board Members

**Ann Mealor** is Chief Executive of WilliamJack, an independent public relations consultancy, and Associate Lecturer at the London College of Communication, University of the Arts. She is also Head of Communications and Business Development for the International Travel Writers Alliance, the world's largest association of professional travel journalists, and Managing Editor of Always Traveller. Ann began her career in local government PR, advancing to Head of Communications at the London Borough of Tower Hamlets. In 1997, she joined the then Institute of Public Relations (IPR). As Head of PR, Deputy Director General and, finally, Interim Chief Executive, she supported the development of the Institute through to it achieving Chartered status, and played a key role in helping the CIPR to more than double its membership to over 9,500 and quadruple its turnover to over £4m. An experienced and effective communicator with senior management and board level experience, she is committed to best practice and encouraging it in others. Ann is a CIPR Fellow and Accredited Practitioner.



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**Steven Thacker** is Managing Director of Sigma Consulting (UK) Ltd. He is also on the Board of four organisations, which includes being Vice Chair of the National Register of Public Service Interpreters (NRPSI). Formerly a police Chief Superintendent, Stephen has held senior strategic positions as Divisional Commander, Deputy Director of HR and Head of Executive Support, as well as posts that include Head of Training and Career Development. He has chaired discipline proceedings for the Secretary of State for Health, Health Care Commission and Institute for Learning as well as NRPSI, and is a member of the discipline committees for the Chartered Institute of Public Relations and Chartered Institute of Management Accountants. Stephen has extensive HR and talent management experience, and holds an MA in Educational Research and Evaluation (M. Ed.). He conducted four years post graduate PhD research at the University of East Anglia Centre for Applied Research in Education, and is a Fellow of the Institute for Learning and Institute of Leadership and Management.



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**Nick Whitaker** was formerly a Partner at BDO LLP, one of the UK's leading accountancy and business advisory firms. A Fellow of the Institute of Chartered Accountants in England and Wales (ICAEW), he has a background in corporate finance. During the course of his career he has provided expert counsel on corporate governance and finance to organisations in a wide range of sectors, both in the UK and internationally. Nick has been an advisor to various government departments including the Department of Industry, Department for Transport, Cabinet Office, National Audit Office (NAO) and HM Treasury. His experience of working with central government is extensive and includes working on privatisations as well as being engaged by the NAO to evaluate the financial cost of government using consultants. Nick has also been an expert witness in a variety of commercial disputes and professional negligence cases, and has High Court experience. He is a qualified mediator, working primarily on behalf of ICAEW, and has been Treasurer of a number of not-for-profits including the charity Peaceworkers UK, now part of the larger agency International Alert.



## Protection of the public: The case for professional interpreting

A number of tragic cases have resulted in government reports indicating the importance of professional interpreting.

One such case was the death of seven-year-old Victoria Climbié in February 2000. This resulted from failures in child protection and led to the public inquiry by Lord Laming. Lord Laming's report highlighted failures on the part of various public services, including health services, social services and the police. Victoria's first language was not English and at no time was she interviewed alone with the aid of an interpreter. Instead, language mediation between Victoria and the English-speaking public services was provided by a member of her family who was ultimately found to be jointly responsible for her death.

The lack of "suitable interpreters" is also highlighted as an issue in a major maternal deaths study (now called 'Confidential Enquiry into Maternal Deaths in the UK'): "A lack of availability of suitable interpreters is one of the key findings running throughout this Report. The use of family members... or members of their own, usually tight-knit, community as translators causes concern."

Reinforcing the dangers of using a family member to interpret when they could be the perpetrator of abuse against the party they are interpreting for, the study reports a victim as saying: "Even if the perpetrator isn't with you, he sends one of his family members with you. And in the name of honour you can't ever talk about it. Especially if they say 'I'm going to interpret because she can't speak English.'"

The absence of professional language services occurred in the events leading to the death of five-year-old Daniel Pelka in March 2012. Family members and perpetrators of the crime were the ones used to interpret between the victim and the public services. Reporting in the Serious Case Review for the Coventry Safeguarding Children Board in September 2013, Dr Neil Fraser said about Daniel Pelka: "Without proactive or

consistent action by any professional to engage with him via an interpreter, then his lack of language and low confidence would likely have made it almost impossible for him to reveal the abuse he was suffering at home."

Cost-cutting measures by the government and public services, as well as their procurement practices, have also put the public at greater risk from poor interpreting.

There has been the case of the Ministry of Justice's (MoJ) language services being outsourced to successive language agencies who are not required under the terms of the MoJ contract to use Registered Interpreters. This is in spite of the aforementioned instances of what can happen when registered professionals aren't used.

There has also been the recent case highlighted by the **BBC One programme 'Inside Out North East and Cumbria'** of unqualified police interpreters being used unwittingly by several police forces in the region following outsourcing to a local agency. According to the BBC account, this has cost the public thousands of pounds, delayed court proceedings and even resulted in the collapse of a court case.

Unfortunately, these are not isolated instances. They are but a few examples of the use of unregistered interpreters, which puts public protection at risk.

It is why NRPSI remains committed to working with the public services to assist them with their language services requirements and procurement processes. It is also why NRPSI is pursuing statutory regulation of the public service interpreting profession and protection of the title of public service interpreter. For it is only by ensuring that all individuals working as and calling themselves public service interpreters are appropriately qualified and registered that the quality of the language services provided to the public services can, without exception, be assured.

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## The interpreting profession today

Most interpreters are self-employed and hired on a job-by-job basis, not knowing when or where their next assignment may take them.

The availability of Registered Interpreters varies across the UK. There is a range of ways an interpreter may be engaged by public service users: by direct contact using the National Register, via the interpreter's own website and interpreting agencies, or as part of a government framework covering departmental or regional requirements.

There is a strong drive for recognition of interpreting as a profession. Increased immigration as a result of EU policies has led to greater recognition of the need for governments to facilitate communication between different language speakers and provide entitlement to interpreting and translation services. Even in the light of the UK voting to leave the EU, the need to facilitate communication in this way is unlikely to recede.

Due to the voluntary nature of regulation by the National Register, many interpreters work in the UK without registration and appropriate qualifications. It is therefore not known how many interpreters are working regularly, or how many assignments they are completing.

While NRPSI regulates those interpreters who display the professional self-regard to be on the National Register, it is powerless to deal with complaints against unregistered interpreters. The NRPSI Board has therefore determined that its long-term strategy should be the statutory regulation of the public service interpreting profession. Widespread recognition of the vital role that professional interpreters play in facilitating the smooth-running of the UK's public services, and the threat posed by unregulated professionals, needs to be backed up by legislation.

Statutory regulation of the public service interpreting profession is just one of the **ten strategic aims** that NRPSI has elected to focus on over the next three years. These aims are based on the key challenges facing the public service interpreting profession as well as the language needs of the public services.

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### Our ten strategic aims for 2019–2021

- Assist Registrants to maintain and improve their professional skills through the promotion of CPD
- Influence the government regarding the sourcing of language services and in particular persuade the MoJ to insist on the use of Registered Interpreters for the next wave of contracts
- Establish the means to achieve our objectives of statutory regulation and protection of title
- To be recognised by all as the arbiter of quality in interpreting
- Launch a register for translators – the National Register of Public Service Translators (NRPST)
- Review the potential impact of new technology, assessing the needs for changes to training and skills of Registrants
- Encourage use of the National Register by users in the private and voluntary sectors
- Increase the number of new entrants to the profession and onto the National Register
- Manage profession's post-Brexit future and maintain and develop relationships with other registers in linked areas in the UK and Europe
- Seek to be recognised as the government's arbiter of quality definition and maintenance across all levels of linguistic practitioners.

Source: NRPSI, Our Strategy for 2019-2021

**NRPSI**

## Key facts and figures (FAQ)

### Q: How many interpreters are currently on the National Register?

A: There are more than 1,800 interpreters on the National Register spread across the UK, offering around 100 different languages. Further analysis of the National Register is published in the [NRPSI Annual Review](#).

### Q. What are the most popular languages?

A: The most common languages offered by Registrants are Polish, Urdu, Russian, Spanish, Arabic, Romanian, French, Farsi, Mandarin and Portuguese.

### Q. What is a public service interpreter? What's the difference between a public service interpreter and an interpreter who works for private sector businesses?

A: Public service interpreters work with a full range of public service organisations spanning Health, Police, Government and Legal sectors and adhere to the impartial model of interpreting. Each of these sectors requires specialist knowledge and has its own terminology. Interpreters working within them face challenging situations that demand training, experience and professional competence.

### Q: Why should people use the National Register?

A: Using the National Register provides access to interpreters who:

1. Are qualified, accredited and security vetted
2. Have agreed to abide by a Code of Professional Conduct
3. Can be held accountable if they break that code

People can use the National Register to check if an interpreter is registered. All Registered Interpreters are also required to carry and present on request their NRPSI Photo ID card.

### Q: How much does it cost to use?

A: It doesn't cost anything to use the National Register to source a qualified, Registered Interpreter.

### Q: How is the National Register funded?

A: It is entirely funded by the registration fees that interpreters pay to register and to remain on the National Register.

### Q: How much does registration cost?

A: The initial new application fee for one language is £227.50, which includes the first year's registration fee if successful. Interpreters who are already registered in one language can pay a one-off additional fee of £79 to register for each additional language (subject to meeting the registration requirements for each language). All interpreters are required to renew their listing on an annual basis. The renewal fee (regardless of the number of languages registered) is £227.50. All fees quoted include VAT (correct at January 2019). Visit the [NRPSI website](#) for a full list of up-to-date fees.

### Q: How can people access the National Register?

A: By visiting the NRPSI website and using the search engine on the right-hand side of the screen. You search by selecting the language you require and the postcode where the interpreter is required to carry out the job. You will be asked to register as a user of the National Register before running a search for the first time. Registration is simple, free and a one-off process.

### Q: Can anyone be listed on the National Register?

A: Interpreters need to successfully meet all of NRPSI's entry criteria, including those relating to qualifications and experience, in order to become a Registrant and be listed on the National Register. An interpreter with a language for which there is no recognised qualification may be eligible to join under the Rare Language category.

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## Related reports/ documents:

[NRPSI Annual Review of Public Service Interpreting in the UK 2017](#), published in July 2018

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**Q. How many complaints are brought each year?**

A: We typically receive 20-30 complaints per year. Of these around 80% are referred to our Professional Conduct Committee, and 30% of these go on to be heard by the Disciplinary Committee.

**Q. How should a complaint be made?**

A: A complaint must be made in writing to the National Register Professional Standards Department. Refer to the 'Complaints about interpreters' section under 'Clients of Interpreters' on the NRPSI website for further information.

**Q. What happens if a complaint is upheld?**

A: Depending on the nature of the complaint, a Registrant can face a range of sanctions (see **Indicative Sanctions Guidance**) if found in breach of the NRPSI Code of Conduct. The most severe sanctions entail Registrants being suspended from registration for a period determined by the Disciplinary Committee; or excluded from registration with the possibility of application for reinstatement after a period and subject to conditions determined by the Disciplinary Committee. The minimum period of exclusion is normally two years. The outcomes of complaints are published on the NRPSI website and a statistical analysis of the complaints is published in the **NRPSI Annual Review**.

**Q. Can NRPSI investigate complaints about interpreters who are not registered?**

A: No, NRPSI cannot review complaints about an interpreter who is not registered. Only interpreters on the National Register have demonstrated their commitment to best practice by signing the NRPSI Code of Conduct and can be held accountable.

For further information, please visit the NRPSI website [www.nrpsi.org.uk](http://www.nrpsi.org.uk) or get in touch.

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