

# 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:

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## 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.

### 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

### Executive Director and Registrar

#### Mike Orlov

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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### Lay Members

#### Nick Whitaker, Interim Chair

Nick Whitaker was, until retirement, 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, he has a background in corporate finance, audit, forensic services and practice management. 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. 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 costs of government. Nick has been an expert witness in a variety of commercial disputes and professional negligence cases in the High Court. He is a qualified mediator, working primarily on behalf of the ICAEW. Since retiring from full time work, Nick has held a number of not-for-profit and regulatory non-executive positions and trusteeships – including in higher education, housing associations, legal statutory regulators, environmental and peace organisations.



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### Rob Ellingham

Rob Ellingham was, until his retirement in December 2022, one of the pre-eminent experts on interpreting and translation working within the UK police service. During his 36-year career with the Metropolitan Police, he advised both senior police officers and the National Police Chief Council lead for languages on policy decisions and best practice. He worked closely with the Contract Manager at Leicestershire Police to ensure the professionalism of interpreters and translators working with the police. And he worked alongside other government agencies as well as central government departments to extol the benefits of employing professional interpreters and translators. For the last nine years of his career with the Met, Rob worked as a senior leader managing self-employed interpreters and translators alongside global travel services. More recently, Rob has been actively involved in supporting Baroness Coussins and others in the House of Lords in their aim to professionalise public sector language services to better protect those at greatest risk in society from poor interpreting practice.



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### Helen Watts

Helen Watts is a freelance researcher with more than 20 years' experience of working alongside Public Service Interpreters. Her most recent research project in the field of public service interpreting (PSI) includes training for professionals working with interpreters; an analysis of interpreters' views and experiences of the interpreter's declaration/introduction and the impact of culture and context on interpreters' practice. While working at Praxis Community Projects, Helen developed and co-ordinated a university accredited undergraduate training programme in PSI and its subsequent continuing professional development modules in collaboration with City University. From 2006 to 2009, she established and managed an interpreter service for GP practices and social services in East London for Praxis. She also co-designed, implemented and piloted a selection and assessment process for this service. Helen co-wrote a journal article with Jane Straker in the Critical Link series on training interpreters and is a founder member of the Consortium for Public Service Interpreting (CfPSI, 2010 to 2020), which promotes both spoken and signed language interpreters. With a particular interest in languages of the wider world, quality assurance mechanisms and the training of the users of interpreters, Helen gained a PhD in linguistics from the University of the West of England in the UK in 2020.



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## Practitioner Members

### Banu Gokberk

Banu Gokberk is a Turkish and English interpreter. An experienced and highly skilled language professional, she has worked as a public service interpreter since 2007. Passionate about professional standards, Banu believes that public service interpreters and translators must undergo training to obtain the skills required for their specialised role. For Banu, interpreting is not about knowing two or more languages, but understanding two or more languages – and that understanding comes through training, qualifications and experience. Banu possesses a Level 6 Diploma in Public Service Interpreting (DPSI) in English Law as well as a Level 3 Community Interpreting qualification. She is proud to be registered with the National Register of Public Service Interpreters (NRPSI) and to appear on the online National Register. Throughout her career, she has advocated protection of title and believes that professional registration is key to this. A supporter of NRPSI's commitment to maintaining and promoting public service interpreting professional standards, Banu felt it was a natural step for her to serve on the NRPSI board, which she joined in 2023.



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### Madeleine Lee

Madeleine Lee is a Dutch interpreter. She had a bilingual upbringing in the Netherlands before taking French and Dutch Studies at Hull University and then studying for a Master's Degree in Modern European Cultures and Societies. Madeleine then went on to obtain the Diploma in Public Service Interpreting (DPSI) in Dutch/English Law. Through the years, Madeleine has supported NRPSI's mission in different ways: she served two terms as an elected member of the Council of the Chartered Institute of Linguists (CIOL), was a contributor to the Professional Interpreters for Justice (PI4J) campaign, a member of NRPSI's Disciplinary Committee panel for eight years and is now one of NRPSI's non-executive directors. Madeleine is a Fellow of the CIOL, a Member of the Association of Police and Court Interpreters (APCI) and an Honorary Member of the International Association of Professional Translators and Interpreters (IAPTI). She has also been a NRPSI Registered Public Service Interpreter since 2005.



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### Phil Muriel

Phil Muriel was appointed to the NRPSI Board as a non-executive director in 2022 and has served on the NRPSI Admissions Committee since 2021. Phil is an experienced and highly qualified medical and legal interpreter and translator, holds the Diploma in Translation (Law/Business), the Diploma in Public Service Interpreting (DPSI) in Law and the DPSI in Health. He has also achieved the status of Chartered Linguist. Phil is also an experienced lecturer and qualified tutor. With over 20 years' experience as an interpreter, Phil has trained more than 700 candidates to qualify as Community or DPSI interpreters and was awarded the Nuffield Trophy for the best DPSI class result in the UK in 2011. Phil has also successfully mentored students preparing for the Dip Trans exam as well as MA in Translation students at Durham University, sharing with them his 13 years' experience as a legal translator. Phil is also a singer songwriter and freelance musician.



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## 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 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 and successive humanitarian crises in different regions 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. Despite the UK's withdrawal from 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 recognition of the public service interpreting profession forms part of NRPSI's vision:

**To secure** recognition for the organisation as the definitive independent strategic resource for government, the public sector and linked private sector in setting standards for language services delivery

**To achieve** a position where public sector organisations are mandated to engage only with registered, regulated language service professionals

**To secure** for registered, regulated public service language professionals:

- Protection of title
- Statutory recognition
- Professional status, ensuring this is valued by government and public sector organisations as well as related private entities
- Terms, conditions and remuneration commensurate with the qualifications and experience of registered, regulated practitioners.

By securing these we will fulfil our remit to uphold standards in language services delivery, protecting those who need it most and giving a voice to the voiceless.

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## In delivering this vision, our key areas of focus over the next three years will be:

- Maintaining sustainability of the organisation through volatile times
- Reviewing and developing the Code of Professional Conduct and complaints procedures
- Establishing the National Register of Public Service Translators (NRPST) and growing NRPSI
- Embedding the organisation's delivery across the UK
- Building on our conversations with Registrants and extending our services where viable
- Becoming active across all areas of public service interpreting and translating, matching levels of attainment to the complexity of work
- Continuing and developing effective dialogue with key stakeholders
- Promoting the work of the organisation and Registrants
- Securing protection of title for public service language professionals
- Lobbying for statutory regulation for public service language professionals
- Lobbying to obtain appropriate remuneration, terms and conditions, commensurate with the qualifications and experience of registered, regulated practitioners.

Source: NRPSI, Our Strategy for 2023-2025

# NRPSI

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## Key facts and figures

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

- A. There are more than 1,700 interpreters on the National Register spread across the UK, offering around 110 different languages.

### 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 £242.00, 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 £81 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 £242.00. All fees quoted include VAT (correct at September 2022). 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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**Q. How many complaints are brought each year?**

- A. We typically receive 15-25 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.

**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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