



PRESS RELEASE

COURT INTERPRETING ‘DISGRACE’ AS SWEETENERS REJECTED

11 May 2013

Interpreter organisations, which have united as Professional Interpreters for Justice, have rejected the amended terms introduced by Capita from 1st May in a bid to attract more of their members to work in courts and tribunals. The Justice Minister, they say, is hiding behind this ‘new deal’ in a bid to distract attention from continuing poor performance and is not being honest regarding Government statistics which do not tell the whole story.

Incidences of interpreter ‘no shows’ and poor quality interpreting at courts and police stations across the UK continue to flood in on a daily basis. They include the postponement of a hearing in a quadruple murder case at Nottingham Crown Court (10 May) when a Mandarin interpreter booked for defendant Anxiang Du didn’t arrive, prompting High Court Judge Justice Julian Flaux to label the outsourcing company ‘an absolute disgrace’ and Northampton North MP Michael Ellis to say it showed the service was ‘out of control’.

The Ministry of Justice’s own statistical report about the contract, says Professional Interpreters for Justice, does not give the whole picture as it does not report on the large number of interpreting assignments being arranged directly by court clerks who are bypassing Capita because they are frustrated with the system.

Professional Interpreters for Justice also claim that the Minister is wrong in stating that the recently announced changes to payments are “what interpreters want” in her report (25 April) to MPs, as interpreters have repeatedly stated the opposite in meetings held with the Ministry in recent weeks.

Interpreters were invited to meetings where proposals for pay adjustments were presented. They stated they were not interested in incentives but instead wanted the Capita contract dropped as it disregards the importance of having professionally qualified interpreters to ensure a fair trial where defendants and witnesses do not speak English.

Keith Moffitt, Chairman, Chartered Institute of Linguists, on behalf of Professional Interpreters for Justice, says: “Interpreters do not want to be persuaded to work under the Capita contract and those invited to the meetings told the Ministry of Justice exactly that. Unfortunately, these weak proposals will do nothing to improve the poor performance which is clear will continue under the contract with Capita.”

Professional Interpreters for Justice, which represents ten groups, are angry that the Minister of Justice, Helen Grant MP, has brushed off the highly critical Justice Select Committee report (published 6 February) without putting in place measures needed to address the failings, which have been described as ‘nothing short of shambolic’.

Paul Wilson, Chief Executive, Institute of Translation and Interpreting (ITI), says: “We are ready to work on meaningful reforms once the Ministry of Justice cancels the contract with Capita. The adjustments in pay and other measures suggested by the Minister in her report are an attempt to deny the failure of the Framework Agreement and do not address many of the key recommendations set out by the Justice Select Committee.”

The Ministry of Justice has been repeatedly criticised, most recently by the Justice Select Committee, for signing a four year Framework Agreement for language services with Applied Language Solutions (ALS) which was acquired by Capita in December 2011 and now operates as Capita Translation and Interpreting.

Professional Interpreters for Justice will be writing to the Justice Select Committee and the Public Accounts Committee to set out their concerns regarding the Minister’s apparent disregard for its recommendations and are calling for a parliamentary debate in relation to the Capita / MoJ Framework Agreement.

Ends

For further press information please contact:

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Notes to Editors

The Minister published her response to the Justice Select Committee Report on 25th April: see her statement here:

<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201213/cmhansrd/cm130425/wmstext/130425m0001.htm#13042544000026>

The full report in response to JSC is here:

https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/192487/jsc-report-interpreting.pdf

Reports of Capita failures are coming in on a daily basis, see below for a snapshot of the last seven days:

Nottingham Crown Court, 10 May, quadruple murder trial collapses due to no show of Mandarin interpreter, as reported by Ian Gallagher of Northampton Chronicle:

<http://www.northamptonchron.co.uk/news/crime/du-interpreter-row-system-out-of-control-says-mp-ellis-1-5082858>

**A week in the life of Capita Translation & Interpreting...
Capita failures reported between 1-7 May 2013:**

Woolwich Crown Court (01/05/2013)

Details: After asking the Capita interpreter if he was qualified (to which he simply replied "I am from Capita"), the Judge released him and did not use him. The defendant himself said (from the dock) "I can speak better English than this interpreter".

Bristol Crown Court (02/05/2013)

Details: Three Polish defendants, Rafal Nowak, Anna Lagwinowicz and Tadevsz Dmytryszyn, accused of murdering Catherine Wells-Burr were in the dock today. At 11.16, Andrew Langdon (defending Anna Lagwinowicz) said that the witness, Peter Kolack had not had the benefit of an interpreter when the police took a statement from him on September 12, which he said was an important consideration because Mr Kolack's English is limited.

Shrewsbury Crown Court (02/05/2013)

Details: A three-day-trial due to be held at the Crown Court had to be adjourned for the second time in a week because the interpreter who had been booked for the defendant was not available. Judge Peter Barrie apologised to the defendant and witnesses and said that because of centralisation of services, the courts were no longer able to approach translators directly. Barristers Mr Ian Ball and Mr David Munro, said the difficulties were indicative of the government's shake-up of the criminal justice system.

Sheffield Magistrates' Court (03/05/2013)

Details: At Sheffield Magistrates' Court today – my client came ready for trial at 2pm, but Capita rang the court to say the Pashtun interpreter wouldn't be there till 3.30. All casual, like this is totally acceptable and normal. Newsflash.... it isn't (Reported by Barrister)

Canterbury Crown Court (03/05/2013)

Details: Yet another delay at Canterbury Crown Court due to a Swahili interpreter not attending. So far 20 minutes of court time & adjourned.

Hendon Magistrates' Court (03/05/2013)

Details: No interpreter for morning hearing, none available until afternoon; Sentence adjourned as CPS have no details re compensation.

St Albans Crown Court (07/05/2013)

Details: Capita fail to provide Cantonese interpreter at St Albans today. Hearing aborted (T20130220YEE Chee L41E12046513). Court only informed at 9:15 this morning of non-availability for 10:15 hearing. Hearing fixed three weeks ago.

For a copy of the dossier of evidence (Vol 2), detailing failures reported since the start of year two of the Capita contract, please contact us using the details above.

Professional Interpreters for Justice

PI4J is an umbrella group representing over 2,200 NRPSI registered and qualified interpreters in 135 languages. Our aim is to work in partnership with the Ministry of Justice to safeguard the quality of interpreting services for the Criminal Justice System.

Members of Professional Interpreters for Justice

1. **Association of Police and Court Interpreters (APCI)**
chairman@apciinterpreters.org.uk
2. **Chartered Institute of Linguists (CIOL)**
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3. **Institute of Translation and Interpreting (ITI)**
chiefexec@iti.org.uk
4. **National Register of Public Service Interpreters Ltd (NRPSI)**
chairman@nrpsi.co.uk
5. **National Union of Professional Interpreters and Translators, part of Unite the Union (NUPIT) - nupit@unitetheunion.org**
6. **Professional Interpreters Alliance (PIA)**
info@profintal.org.uk
7. **Scottish Interpreters and Translators Association (SITA)**
messageSITA@gmail.com
8. **Society of Official Metropolitan Interpreters UK Ltd (SOMI)**
board@somiukltd.com
9. **Society for Public Service Interpreting (SPSI)**
chairman@spsi.org.uk
10. **Wales Interpreter and Translation Service (WITS)**
wits@gwent.pnn.police.uk

National Register of Public Service Interpreters (NRPSI)

PI4J is calling for the Minister to revert to the previous National Agreement arrangement whilst proper consultation takes place on a viable new delivery model which delivers value for money and upholds justice.

Under the National Agreement (until 30 January 2011) qualified interpreters were sourced using the National Register of Public Services Interpreters (NRPSI) which provides and maintains the voluntary register for the interpreting profession. NRPSI ensures required qualification standards are met; the quality of interpreting is defined and maintained through

a Code of Conduct; and that access to a database of professional interpreters is freely available for all.

The value of the National Register was endorsed by the JSC report in its conclusions and recommendations (no.4) saying “there do not appear to have been any fundamental problems with the quality of services, where they were properly sourced i.e. through arrangements that were underpinned by the National Register of Public Service Interpreters.”

See www.linguistlounge.org for commentary and updates.

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