

Warning of 'catastrophic skills gap' in public service interpreting

The executive director of the National Register of Public Service Interpreters (NRPSI) has warned of a looming 'catastrophic skills gap' caused by Brexit, after the organisation's fourth annual review revealed that a third of UK public service interpreters are non-UK EU nationals.

The NRPSI published its annual review this summer. The report shows that the number of registered public service interpreters has remained stable over the last three years (2014-2016). It also indicates that the average number of years that interpreters stay on the register has increased steadily, and is now nearing ten.

Of the 1,889 qualified interpreters on the register, almost a third (31 per cent) are non-UK EU nationals. Stephen Bishop, executive director of the NRPSI, said: 'It would be a



Stephen Bishop

travesty for the UK interpreting profession and public if we were to lose so many of our skilled interpreters because of the UK's withdrawal from the EU, and so we remain committed to lobbying the UK government to ensure this catastrophic skills gap doesn't occur.'

The NRPSI is an independent voluntary regulator. This year's



Ted Sangster

annual review revealed that 104 different languages are registered, with 15 per cent of registrants offering more than one language. The annual review also includes details of complaints received by the organisation: over the past three years, a total of 87 complaints have been received about registered interpreters. Almost a

third of these (29 per cent) came from the police. The majority of the complaints did not relate to linguistic skills but to breaches of other sections of NRPSI's Code of Professional Conduct.

Ted Sangster, chairman of the NRPSI, said: 'We are fortunate that so many interpreters remain committed to the profession and serving our public services. These are uncertain times for many people, but the need for skilled public service language professionals who are prepared to be accountable remains constant. And so too does NRPSI's resolve to ensure that public service interpreting standards are upheld to protect the profession, those working within it and the public.'

To view/download a copy of the NRPSI's Annual Review 2016, visit: <http://www.nrpsi.org.uk/AnnualReview2016>.