



The Rt Hon Sir Gerald Kaufman MP  
House of Commons  
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12 December 2012

### LANGUAGE SERVICES IN THE JUSTICE SECTOR

Thank you for your letter of 5 November on behalf of your constituent, [redacted], about the Ministry of Justice's (MoJ) contract with Applied Language Solutions (ALS).

The MoJ entered into a Framework Agreement with ALS (now owned by Capita), for the provision of language services to the justice sector in order to place the provision of interpreting services on a more modern, sustainable and affordable footing. It had strong reasons to change the old interpreter booking system, which was inadequate in several respects, and this has been acknowledged by the National Audit Office. The old arrangements were wasteful, time consuming for staff, and did not represent value for money for the public.

The new framework is intended to remedy these problems by providing better value for money, while maintaining quality standards and reducing the administrative burdens on justice agencies. We estimate savings of £15 million in the first year on the cost of interpretation and translation. I am aware that interpreters have expressed concerns with the new approach to language services in the justice sector, and indeed they continue to do so. We accept that there were problems at the start of the new contract in January but we have now seen a very significant improvement in performance and are confident that this trend is continuing.

As a result of difficulties within the first two months of the contract, some short notice bookings were temporarily removed from the Framework Agreement. The cost of interpretation and translation outside the ALS contract between February and September is approximately £1,550,000. However, the monthly spend has reduced from over £500k in February 2012 to just over £70k in September 2012. A total for October 2012 is not yet available.

The above figure is the total of the spend outside the contract, not the difference between the old arrangements and those under the framework. While this will have some effect on the savings made this financial year, we remain confident the contract will make the expected saving of £15m a year for the MoJ.

Figures in the recent MoJ statistical publication show a success rate of 95% of bookings by the end of August, while complaints have fallen dramatically. However, we are continuing to push the contractor for further improvement. I remain confident that the Framework Agreement can deliver the savings forecast.

I hope my reply is helpful. I enclose a copy for you to send to Ms Hetherington should you wish to do so.

Will be with



**CHRIS GRAYLING**