



Central Interpreters Unit
Interpreter Operations Unit
UK Visas & Immigration
The Capital
New Hall Place
Liverpool
L3 9PP

By Email: CIU@homeoffice.gsi.gov.uk

21 December 2015

Dear Sir/Madam,

Re: Introduction of reduced rates of Home Office interpreters' pay from 1st January 2016

Professional Interpreters for Justice (PI4J) is an umbrella group representing over 2,240 interpreters from both the National Register of Public Service Interpreters (NRPSI) and the National Union of British Sign Language Interpreters (NUBSLI). Our aim is to work with government to ensure the quality of interpreting available to the Justice System and in the Public Sector.

Reliable communication provided by qualified professional interpreters and translators is an essential resource which ensures that justice and human rights are upheld for non-English speakers and deaf people. This is put at risk if standards are dropped and quality is sacrificed.

On 20th November 2015 interpreters received a notice regarding a reduction in rates to due to take place on all bookings undertaken on behalf of the Home Office (HO), including UK Visas & Immigration, Border Force, Immigration Enforcement and HM Passport Office and any other bookings made through Interpreter Operations Unit, from 1st January 2016 onwards.

PI4J is extremely concerned about this decision to slash interpreters' rates of pay, without any consultation with or input from interpreters and their representative bodies.

This decision will most certainly have serious implications for the supply of competent, qualified professional interpreters to the Home Office. These interpreters have provided ongoing linguistic support and expertise to the Home Office over the years, including in many rare and hard-to-find languages.

Interpreters have demonstrated in the last four years that they can and will refuse to work for low rates set by so-called 'market forces', thereby significantly reducing the pool of qualified interpreters and translators available to work in the public services.

This is evidenced by the detrimental decline within the Ministry of Justice's Court Interpreting Service since they outsourced to a private agency in 2012. We assume that you are aware of the extensive coverage in the media regarding the subsequent disruption and chaos visited upon the courts and the delays and collapse of court cases, resulting in an enormous waste of time and money and two Parliamentary hearings (see below links).

PI4J has been at the forefront of the professional interpreters' campaign against the unacceptable lowering of standards and quality in public service.

The standard of interpretation is fundamental to allow access to a fair hearing and justice for vulnerable minorities in the asylum and immigration system and to assist enforcement agencies in the prevention and detection of serious crime. They must be afforded equal access to the highest levels of linguistic support.

Standards must include minimum professional qualifications for Public Service Interpreters (PSI) and BSL/English Interpreters, Deaf interpreters and Sign Language translators, to include mandatory NRPSI/NRCPD/SASLI registration and independent regulation.

Without these safeguards, access to justice will be denied and human rights and race relations will be jeopardised.

In addition, we reiterate that in order to attract and retain qualified and experienced professional interpreters and language professionals, equitable and sustainable terms and conditions need to be put in place.

Professional interpreters invest substantial time, effort and money to gain and maintain their skills.

The proposed cut means that Home Office interpreting work will become part of the low-paying industries.

It is important to point out that there has not been an increase in the Home Office interpreting rates for many years now. They were further eroded by inflation and the growing cost of living in the UK, especially in areas such as London. In addition, failure to provide reimbursement for travel time under 3 hours each way and travel expenses up to 100 miles, particularly in view of the remote locations of many of the Home Office and detainee centres, make the rates even more unattractive.

Remuneration must reflect the fact that these are gross hourly rates for self-employed interpreters, liable to pay Income Tax and National Insurance, who have no pension, holiday or sick pay, and no job security.

The impact of the cuts places interpreters' livelihoods at risk and will mean that public service interpreting will no longer be a viable career. As skilled professionals they will seek to earn a better living in other sectors.

This in turn will result in reduced quality of language services and a back-log to a system which is already struggling.

Full support of professional interpreters and appropriate terms & conditions is the only way forward to ensure the quality and success of any future arrangements for the provision of language services in the public service sectors and to avoid a market exit.

In the interest of all involved and the system itself, we urge you to reconsider this troubling and counterproductive decision.

Yours faithfully,

Klasiena Slaney

For and on behalf of the Professional Interpreters for Justice

Professional Interpreters for Justice (PI4J) Member Organisations:

Association of Police and Court Interpreters (APCI) – chairman@apciinterpreters.org.uk

Cymdeithas Cyfieithwyr Cymru; (CCC) - geraint@cyfieithwycymru.org.uk

Institute of Translation and Interpreting (ITI) – chiefexec@iti.org.uk

National Register of Public Service Interpreters (NRPSI) – chairman@nrpsi.org.uk

National Union of Professional Interpreters and Translators, part of Unite the Union (NUPIT)

– nupit@uniteunion.org

National Union of British Sign Language Interpreters part of Unite the Union (NUBSLI)

– branchsecretary@nubsli.com

Society of Official Metropolitan Interpreters UK Ltd (SOMI) – board@somiukltd.com

The Chartered Institute of Linguists (CIOL) – keith.moffitt@ciol.org.uk

Links:

[Professional Interpreters for Justice \(PI4J\)](#), includes links to Parliamentary hearings and dossiers of failings

[RPSI Linguist Lounge](#) and [Professional Interpreters' Alliance](#), collected news reports about the outsourcing of public service interpreting in the UK

[National Register of Public Service Interpreters \(NRPSI\)](#)

[National Registers of Communication Professionals working with Deaf and Deafblind People \(NRCPD\)](#)

[Scottish body for training and qualifying British Sign Language interpreters \(SASLI\)](#)

[National Union of British Sign Language Interpreters \(NUBSLI\)](#)