

DOSSIER OF EVIDENCE

CAPITA: Translation and Interpreting

Formerly Applied Language Solutions

**Instances of failure to comply with MoJ
contract, breaches of the Framework
Agreement and unethical practices**

Prepared by



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Background

Evidence has been compiled from various sources including:

- Online at <http://rpsi.name/default>
- Online at <http://www.linguistlounge.org>
- Via Twitter.com
- The Professional Interpreters against MoJ outsourcing in GB [Facebook Group](#)
- Witnessed reports by public service interpreters present at court hearings
- Reports passed on by members of professional interpreters' representative bodies, including APCI, SPSI and PIA.

Each report contains the location of the court or police station concerned, date, case details (where available) and details of the incident.

Evidence describes a variation of ALS (now owned by Capita and called Capita Translation and Interpreting) failings including:

- Failing to supply an interpreter
- Supplying under-qualified interpreters
- Providing interpreters with no Legal or Criminal experience
- Providing interpreters without assessments
- Providing interpreters with inappropriate Tier allocations
- Providing interpreters without CRB checks
- Unethical ALS practices
- Breaches of the Ministry of Justice Framework Agreement (FWA)

Further Information

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March 2013

21/03/2013

Old Bailey

Details: At court I fall into conversation with a Capita interpreter. She is North African and does Arabic. Prepared to do French too but only in simple cases. She tells Capita this but still gets sent to do a job at Bailey. The judge was French speaker and, she said, corrected her translation several times. She was greatly embarrassed and told Capita they shouldn't have sent her. They told her that she should withdraw her name for French in that case. But they knew she wasn't qualified for French, yet sent her to the court that deals with the most serious criminal matters.

She says that the admin staff at Capita didn't have a clue what they were doing. She seemed very unhappy with her "employers".

21/03/2013

West Midlands

Details: I had a call from a solicitor's office offering me a job in a magistrates' court in West Midlands last week. Unaware that a court would resort to booking an interpreter through the appellant, I agreed to take up the job. On arrival at the court, I realised that I was going to interpret for an appeal and the appellant was asked to book the interpreter. The respondent, I was told, did not have any objections to this and the court did not give a damn about the all important principle of impartiality. The appellant told me: "You need to give me a hand when I am stuck" and I told him categorically that I have to be impartial although I have been booked by you.

When I dugged a little deeper, I found out that the Capita interpreter was late for the previous hearing turning up at 2.00pm for a 10.00am hearing. During my chat with one of the ushers, whom I knew through previous assignments, he told me that Capita was summoned to a Crown court in the region in relation to problems with interpreters and got away with it. I thought about refusing to interpret for the court but this was an important hearing for the appellant after years of waiting and he was funding his solicitors privately thousands of pounds.

On separate occasion, I was asked by another client I was interpreting for in Hertfordshire: "why don't you attend courts as I had to wait until 2.00pm for the interpreter to arrive for my hearing".

17/03/2013

Birmingham Crown Court

Details: Earlier this month I worked at one of my local police stations (they are not with Capita). The duty solicitor was appalled by the quality of Capita interpreters. He told me that apparently those who are Tier 3 cannot speak English, one Capita interpreter sent his brother-in-law to

Birmingham Crown Court for a trial, because he couldn't make it himself... I got the impression that the brother-in-law wasn't even an interpreter. Apparently the judge was furious, as you can imagine.

It seems it's old news, but it doesn't show any change either. The solicitor also confirmed that Tier 3 interpreters are still being sent to courts. He added how easy it was working with a professional interpreter. He covers West Midlands Police too. This is Capita territory and he said that the last Capita interpreter he came across there, just "didn't have a clue".

13/03/2013

Court TBC

Details: Waiting since yesterday morning for a Czech or Slovakian interpreter. Client remanded in custody last night when Capita promised to deliver. [update] By 16.00 there was still no interpreter & Capita could not say whether one might be here by tomorrow. Client already in custody for 2 days.

13/03/2013

North East

Details: Sat in court - first hearing can't go ahead as there is no interpreter - adjourned off and hearing with 3 advocates wasted [Reported by Chris Rose, Barrister at New Park Court Chambers]

13/03/2013

Hull Magistrates' Court

Details: On 13th March ALS Latvian interpreter attended Hull Magistrates Court. She sent me a text on the same day telling that the defendant had been kept in custody for 3 days due to interpreter's non attendance. When I asked her what did the solicitor say about it she said: nothing much. Unlawful detention due to interpreter's non attendance is a normal thing nowadays.

12/03/2013

Canterbury Crown Court

Details: No Czech interpreter for Canterbury Crown Court. To be fair they organised a Tamil interpreter... From Scotland!

12/03/2013

Derby Magistrates' Court

Details: At the end of last month I went to my local Derby Magistrates' Court to interpret for a CPS witness, the defendant had a Capita interpreter. The funny thing was she was open-mouthed listening to what I was interpreting to my witness and forgot to interpret for the

defendant. The legal adviser spotted it and asked her to interpret a summary of the case so from then on she did start interpreting for him.

When we had a break, she came up to me and said that this case was taking long (a trial), I told her that trials most of the time were long, then she said that normally it took 15 min, when you get driving offences. I just shook my shoulders and she asked me if I was new in courts. I told her that I used to be there all the time, but I've been boycotting Capita for a year now. She asked me if it was because of payment, I replied that it was partially about payment, but also because of unfair treatment of interpreters who spent money on getting qualifications, had to be vetted etc, but now no one cares and that in the first place no one wanted to speak with interpreters or interpreting bodies about the situation directly instead completely ignoring our opinion. She moaned back to me saying that she was in the same situation as she cannot register on the National Register as she only has partial DPSI and that Capita had more cuts in payment. At that point I had to move on and I wished her good luck.

11/03/2013

Reported by Martin Belica, Solicitor

Details: We had to suspend a police interview yesterday as my interpreter was worse than bad. Never had to do it before and felt bad about it but the detectives agreed and want a report from me with my comments in order to file it with capita...

08/03/2013

Maidstone Crown Court

Details: A man accused of committing a murder in the early hours of New Year's Day will stand trial later this year after denying the charge today. Jurijs Popovs is alleged to have killed 21-year-old Dmitrijs Titovs, who suffered stab wounds outside a block of flats in Henley Place, London Road, Teynham, near Sittingbourne. Popovs, of Henley Place, entered the plea despite the non-appearance of a Russian interpreter.

06/03/2013

Northampton Crown Court

Details: Judge Richard Bray branded Capita "hopelessly incompetent" after he was unable to sentence and expedite deportation proceedings against a Vietnamese drug king because no interpreter arrived at Northampton Crown Court.

02/03/2013

Kirklees Magistrates' Court

Details: Sofane Yakr appeared before Kirklees magistrates yesterday in custody. He faces four charges of stealing phones from women attending bars on King Street on November 10. Magistrates heard that he spoke no English and needed an Arabic interpreter. When magistrates discovered that he understood some French, *prosecutor* Julian Briggs helped progress the proceeding.

01/03/13

Police Station

Details: Yesterday I attended at police station to represent an Eastern European suspect for theft. The client had been in custody for 22 hours without interview, I had previously made representations with regards to delay. I was informed that the police had difficulties locating an interpreter to attend.

I was then informed that the interview and consultation will be conducted in the Doctors room as a telephone was required in order for a representative of language line to translate the consultation and subsequent interview! I made further representations about requiring private consultation but was assured that "this 'procedure' has been used a number of time in the past". The a/p statement had not even been obtained; the police had one independent witness statement after 22 hours! How can I possibly be sure that a police telephone line is private? I then advised a no comment interview and expressed my concerns at the start of the interview. Before the officer had even got to ask any questions, client began to cry and stated that she was very unwell..... By this point there was under an hour left on the clock.

The officer suspended the interview, left the room and spoke to CS. He then returned and confirmed interview was terminated.

February 2013

26/02/2013

Crown Court (tbc)

Details: Reported by Marina Zaretskaya. Another sign of "marked improvement". A solicitor has got in touch asking whether I've been booked by a crown court for his client next week (we'd done a prison visit together). When I explained the court has to use CapitaTI to book interpreters, he wrote back saying "It was adjourned last week as NO INTERPETER attended and has been rearranged to [date]". I wonder how much it's already cost MoJ in transport and security alone, taking him to and from prison, let alone all the other wasted costs of adjournment!

21/02/2013

Highbury Court

Details: Two Munich (football) fans accused of a racially aggravated offence remanded in custody as no German interpreter was available. Interpreter arrived at court next day (22nd) defendants plead guilty – fine deemed served due to excessive time served in custody and they were released!

21/02/2013

Anchorage House (tribunal)

Details: Report from a colleague: I went to Anchorage house today to look around tribunal the service. Spoke to a Somali interpreter who travelled 45 minutes by car. He paid £3.50 for parking and his case finished within 30 mins. He was so angry. He said the whole thing was s*** and that all the ALS were thieves and B***ards. He said he will receive £20 from ALS and his own calculation is that he will earn £12.00 today. When I reminded him that he needs to make an allowance for tax he said he will never come here again!

20/02/2013

FWA results in 11% increase in spending by WMP

Details: Recent figures show West Midlands police paid £202,879 to CapitaTI/ALS for the month of November 2012 – working out at around £7,000 every day or £2million every year. Compare this to 2011 when the force pledged to cut 40 per cent off the £1.8 million a year it spends paying interpreters. The force, which has to save £126 million over four years as part of Government budget cuts, said it can save at least £750,000 a year by changing the way it employs translators (<http://www.birminghampost.net/news/west-midlands-news/2011/09/08/west-midlands-police-to-cut-750k-from-budget-for-translators-65233-29383853/>) yet the above figures demonstrate that spending has in fact gone up by 11%.

16/02/2013 and 18/02/2013

South Tyneside Magistrates' Court

Details: A Vietnamese man accused of being behind the biggest cannabis farm found in South Tyneside has been remanded in custody after a translator was not supplied – twice - for the hearing. Nguyen, 19, was charged with producing a Class B drug and appeared at court on 16/02/13. But without an interpreter to translate to the non-English speaking Vietnamese, the case could not proceed. It was adjourned until Feb 18th, and Nguyen, of no fixed abode, was remanded in custody. He was back before magistrates on the 18th but for a second time, no interpreter was available.

16/02/2013

Uxbridge Court

Details: One client had an interpreter in interview but none arranged for court (reported by Sundeep Bhatia (solicitor) on Twitter

15/02/2013

Crown Court tbc

Details: Anybody speak mandarin? Interpreter for cc cancelled this morning alt was arranged for 2pm, now cancelled. How do I explain that to client... judge used slow loud voice and hand

gestures to say "no interpreter". I used pen and paper as he could read simple phrases.

15/02/2013

Court tbc

Details: No interpreter for two Romanian defendants. One of the barristers speaks Romanian so he's interpreting for them!

15/02/2013

Peterborough Crown Court

Details: Interpreter booked for 9.30am, so they fax the Court 11pm the night before to say won't be here until 2pm.

14/02/2013

Snaresbrook Crown Court

Details: I was called directly by Snaresbrook Crown Court yesterday morning to interpret for a trial which would last for 2 days. When I arrived, there was already an interpreter who was booked by Witness Care service. Apparently the defence counsel used her in the consultation with his client (not knowing that she was not booked by the court) and for this reason the court decided to use this interpreter for the trial, not the NRPSI interpreter they themselves booked directly.

I then spoke to the Listings Office, explaining the situation, they were aghast and said never before an interpreter for Witness Care service was used as the official interpreter in a crown court trial.

14/02/2013

Nottingham Magistrates' Court

Details: Yesterday/ 14th Feb, I was on a CPS assignment in Nottingham Magistrates. Interpreter for the defence never turned up and hence MoJ realized further savings by wasting Court's time, police's time and condemning the witnesses and defendants to further strain and misery.

13/02/2013

Nottingham Crown Court

Details: Crown Court today interpreters required 3 interpreters showing up 1 - Judge slams ALS

13/02/2013

Swindon Crown Court

Details: No charge was formally put to a 33-year-old accused of sexual assault and he did not enter a plea during a brief appearance at Swindon Crown Court as there was no Hindi

interpreter to translate proceedings for him. Conditional bail granted and hearing adjourned until April 19th.

13/02/2013

Court tbc

Details: Report from Twitter: Defence advocate says defendant should speak Russian or Lithuanian they r not sure which! Let's toss a coin should we? It gets better-not only does defence not know the language but the interpreter went AWOL after they helped probation with the report

11/02/2013

Crown Court (Yorkshire)

Details: A Crown Court trial in Yorkshire has just been postponed due to lack of rare language interpreter. The language was Polish.

11/02/2013

Willesden Magistrates' Court

Details: Reported on Twitter by Laura Hockers (Criminal Defence Solicitor) Waiting for a Latvian interpreter. The court has found one who is on her way. From Leamington Spa!!!

08/02/2013

Email exchange between ALS linguist and Capita TI

Details: Capita refuse to pay rates as agreed at the time of booking... see below exchange:

[From ALS Linguist]

I am writing to you in connection with the above assignment (ref). I have queried it via the linguist lounge portal but for some reason my payment changed status from 'queried' to 'new' without any reply from your payments department.

As per my query, it seems that you calculated the travel supplement using the new mileage rate. Please be advised that I had accepted this job before you changed your payment terms (and my understanding was, as per your message displayed each time I accepted a booking and entered into contract with you, that "By accepting the job, you accept the payment rates of the assignment as detailed in the 'Estimated Payments' section."). I would have cancelled this job had I known that you were going to pay me the new rate. Could you please amend the travel supplement amount?

[From Karen Hampshire]

Many thanks for your payment query. Any jobs that were offered and assigned to you before the 8th January would have still been under the "old rates" however as the job was completed and

accepted after the "new rates" this will automatically reduce to 20 per mile. If you would like to look discuss this matter further please contact legal@capita-ti.com.

[From ALS Linguist]

I have just checked my emails and I have found a confirmation email from 5th Dec 2012 (the day when I accepted this assignment). Does that mean that I should have been paid for travel under the "old rates"?

[From Karen Hampshire]

I am writing to confirm that the booking was accepted and assigned on the 5th December, however the job was closed on the 18th January (3 days after the booking). Hope this helps.

[From ALS Linguist]

Just to clarify, the job was closed on 18th January (3 days after the completion date) but I do not believe that this is relevant to my query. My understanding was that when I accepted this booking I entered into a binding contract between myself and Capita to provide you with my services and by accepting the job, I accepted the payment rates of the assignment (as detailed in the 'Estimated Payments' section at the time). In my opinion you cannot expect us to accept retroactive terms and conditions that change the (already entered by us) agreement.

As I have a couple of bookings (which I accepted before 8th January) let, I would be grateful if you could clearly present your position on payments for jobs accepted before the 8th January (but completed after that date).

[From Karen Hampshire]

Thank you for e-mail. Unfortunately I am unable to make any amendments regarding your query as we have to adhere to the rules regarding changes in the terms & condition. I apologise if this doesn't seem very helpful. What I can suggest is that all queries relating to the changes can be discussed with our Legal Department. "

07/02/2013

South Tyneside Magistrate's Court

Detail: A man accused of being behind a £100,000 South Tyneside drugs farm has appeared in court.

Hung Nguyen was arrested after police smashed a 100-plant farm in Mortimer Road on Thursday night.

The 23-year-old, of no fixed abode, is accused of growing the plants in the loft of the flat.

The Vietnamese man – who cannot speak English – was at South Tyneside Magistrates' Court yesterday facing a charge of producing the Class B drug.

However, there was no interpreter at the court and the case could not go ahead.

Hung was remanded in custody until Monday when an interpreter is expected at the court.

07/02/2013

Snaresbrook Crown Court

Details: Court 6, Snaresbrook Crown Court, before HH Judge J Korner CMG QC (Ref. T20127378). Based on a dispute over interpretation (Sylhetti language), judge Joana Koner abandoned the trial and gave direction to the CPS expressly "do not hire any interpreter who is not on the National register".

06/02/2013

Caernarfon Magistrates Court

Details: One case had to be adjourned four times because an interpreter failed to turn up. Solicitor Jim Connod said: "The case involved an eastern European defendant who could not speak English. After the fourth occasion the judge ordered the company to attend court to explain the delay."

On Monday a case was held up until an Italian speaking interpreter arrived from Manchester.

On another occasion a Lithuanian man had to spend an additional night in custody when no interpreter arrived.

Lawyers said there have been difficulties obtaining translators for Chinese and Vietnamese defendants and witnesses.

04/02/2013

Boston Court

Details: I was in Boston court today with CPS. The Latvian defendant was told to come back at 2 o'clock as the Russian interpreter could come only at 2.00. The Polish defendant was told that his case had to be adjourned until 22nd Feb as no interpreter was available.

The colleague had a quick chat with a Lithuanian Capita interpreter. She said that with their new system if two interpreters accept the same job, then the closest one gets the job, and the other one is left with nothing.

02/02/2013

Probation Hearing

Details: At my recent Probation booking a defendant asked a Probation officer to clarify his sentence because the interpreter he had in court told him that he had to do 15 (!) hours of unpaid work and sign in at a local police station on a weekly basis. The Probation officer checked his file and said that his sentence was 150 hours of unpaid work and 12 months of supervision!

January 2013

30/01/2013

Cambridge Magistrates' Court

Details: On Wednesday 30th January 2013, no interpreter turned up for a Mandarin speaking defendant for his sentence hearing at Cambridge Magistrates' Court, although a Mandarin interpreter had been requested by the court. The case had to be adjourned to the following day, Thursday, 31st January 2013, when TWO interpreters turned up and one had to be sent home.

This also had a domino effect on other services. The defendant's appointment with the child protection officer originally scheduled for Thursday 31st had to be cancelled. Maybe someone should total up the wasted taxpayers' money on these blunders: cost of adjournment on Wednesday, payments to 2 interpreters on Thursday and costs incurred by the local social services for the cancelled appointment and the cancellation fee to their interpreter.

29/01/2013

Capita offering jobs to non-LIT interpreters

Details: I was contacted by Capita yesterday to quote for a 30 minutes approval hearing in Kent. They found me on ProZ.com. I quoted £20/hour (minimum two hours), £10/hour travelling time (it would be about four hours from<>to where I live in London) plus travel expenses (using public transport - tube and train). That's what I charge when interpreting for solicitors. I only replied because I thought there was no chance they gonna pay it and to show them that nobody's really gonna work for what they pay.

To my surprise they agreed to my price! Of course I didn't accept the job. I told them that I had no experience working in courts. No questions about CRB (I have one but I don't mention it on my ProZ profile). I'm also wondering what tier would I fall under as Capita's non-registered interpreter? How and who decides how much they gonna pay interpreter? It's obviously not what they say - strictly no travel time, expenses etc."

28/01/2013

York Magistrate's Court

Details: Two interpreters fail to show up at court, resulting in remand time. Below conversation between the solicitor and a barrister on Twitter on Sat 26th Jan:

Kevin Blount @Kevin_Blount

1 interpreter at court. Still waiting for the other 2! Court over. V frustrating that 3 people are now in custody because of a lack of interpreters #NotJustice

- Nick Johnson @dreamglen
is that lawful?

Kevin Blount @Kevin_Blount

Pros apply to remand, I have no address and no way to take any instructions. It is very unfair and unjust but lawful

- Nick Johnson @dreamglen

I cannot see how it's lawful. Where is the natural justice?

Kevin Blount @Kevin_Blount

I agree. It is appalling and the interpreter system is failing. All of them I speak to are unhappy and threatening to quit

24/01/2013

Bedford Citizens Advice Bureau

Details: Polish client, does not speak english, no interpreters available, signposted to outreach tomorrow at Polish British centre.

23/01/2013

Court TBC

Details: Conor Gallagher @Courts_hack

Desperate confusion in this trial.It's only just now become apparent that the interpreter means beat when he says bite. going on since lunch"

23/01/2013

Bronzefield Prison

Detail: I was at Bronzefield prison today for a legal visit. Client asked the solicitor she would like me to be her interpreter in court next time because she couldn't understand the African lady she had had in previous court hearing. Solicitor was shocked and wanted to report this.

23/01/2013

Gloucester Crown Court

Details: A 33-year-old Cheltenham man and his Chinese wife are facing charges of managing brothels at five addresses in the town. Barry Champion and his wife Ailing Zhuang, 41, of Berkeley Street, were remanded in custody until February 14 and a jury trial was fixed to start on March 4. The five charges were due to be put to the pair at Gloucester Crown Court so they could make their pleas. However, a Mandarin interpreter failed to arrive at court to assist Zhuang and the case was adjourned for three weeks.

22/01/2013

Westminster Magistrates' Court

Details: (Reported by @Case4theCrown via Twitter) As usual no interpreter at court even though the police booked one yesterday. Crapita strikes again

22/01/2013

Cheltenham Magistrates' Court

Details: Two Russians in custody. Nearest interpreter 150 miles away. Advocates advised to 'speak slow and loud.' Helpful. #farce (reported by Criminal Defence Solicitor, Frazer Stuart via Twitter @FrazerS)

22/01/2013

Hull Magistrates' Court

There was no Polish interpreter available for a 5 handed case in custody on 22nd January 2013 at Hull Magistrates' Court. The client was remanded in custody overnight but still no interpreter arrived. After waiting until 2pm I was told to come back tomorrow, however, there was still no interpreter in the morning. I was again told to come back at 2pm. When the interpreter turned up, she said she had been rung at 11.50 today and had not been contacted yesterday.

It is disgraceful that 5 people were kept in custody without being told why, court staff were waiting. As lawyers we don't get paid for these hearings and when they are adjourned to next day, the same happens.

21/01/2013

Hammersmith Magistrates' Court

Details: Today I attended a London Magistrates' Court for CPS, Capita interpreter did not turn up, the defence barrister requested that I assist her to consult with her client (Polish), I refused politely, case adjourned.

21/01/2013

Cambridge County Court

Details: Cambridge County Court needed a Bulgarian interpreter today, ALS has failed twice, direct calls to NRPSIs today. The professional witness (social worker) promised to complain and ask for her wasted costs/expenses. The case adjourned until Thursday.

21/01/2013

Stoke on Trent Crown Court

Details: Teenager Jan Holub has had his case adjourned as an interpreter did not attend court. The 19-year-old, of Leek Road, Shelton, who is charged with burgling a house in Boughey Street, Shelton, was due to enter his plea at Stoke-on-Trent Crown Court. But the Slovakian interpreter did not attend and no progress could be made in the case. Judge Paul Glenn adjourned the case until Friday and Holub was granted bail.

19/01/2013

Police Station

Details: I had an encouraging chat with a solicitor at a police station on Saturday; she was bemoaning the shocking service provided by Capita. She said the London courts are generally okay, but outside of the capital it's very hit-and-miss. She said she's contacted them on occasion to chase up interpreter bookings for court, and she said they just feed her barefaced lies!! When I left the station, they held the prisoners to produce them at court today. I had a call from the desk sergeant later in the day asking if I could attend court. I explained briefly why I would not work at court. I was a little anxious at refusing the job because work has been dead for the last 6 weeks, however, I worked out that under the new (reinstated old) travel rates, after deductions for tax, fuel and parking, and taking into account travel time of 2 hours, I would be paid a grand total of £3.40/hour - after doing the sums I didn't feel so glum about turning down the work... I say 'work', I mean 'slave labour'!!

Date tbc

Peterborough Crown Court

Details: The Latvian and Lithuanian defendants in Peterborough Crown Court were given Russian translators today. Russian ALSers are saving the contract and oils the system as Capita definitely has a shortage of Latvian interpreters since they cut their payment this year.

17/01/2013

Reading Magistrates Court

Details: No interpreter available for 3 days in a row, starting with 15th January 2013. For Romanian defendant (Ciurcanu)

17/01/2013

Court TBC

Details: I received a call from xxx Interpreting [another agency] for a court booking for 17th of January. They promised me the same rates as for direct booking from the court. I wonder why they are calling when I have no contract with them.

17/01/2013

Police Officers struggling to source interpreters

Details: I spoke to a Detective Constable in Capita territory recently. He said that officers who need interpreters are really frustrated as Capita can't supply or make them wait for hours before sending one out for just a couple of hours, which is not enough time to do statements, interview under caution and have a consultation. He said that management don't really care about quality as long as someone turns up and they can tick a box. Capita linguists take multiple bookings in

a day making it impossible for them to focus and complete the first one. They are always in a rush to move to the next job. On occasions they can't get linguists for a week. For some languages like mine (Nepalese) they can't get any at all so they resort to requesting HINDI linguists and have problems with language fluency.

17/01/2013

Crown Court (TBC)

Details: A couple of days ago I received another call (at around 13.20pm)... this time from Crown Court. The conversation with the listings officer (L.O) went like this:

L.O: Hello Katrina, Me: "Oh Hello, long time no speak"

L.O: "I know, it has been a while, [with slightly embarrassed voice] are you working or are you prepared to work for courts as we have a trial starting today - that is in 40 min - and I was wondering whether you could..."

Me: "Well... I am and I would love to but are you not supposed to use ALS?"...

L.O: "Well yes but we cannot/couldn't get anyone so I thought I'd phone you".

Me: "Well... [name of L.O] you know I always assisted you and stepped in when you needed someone urgently, but I am afraid I will not be able to do this as long as ALS contract remains in place as I feel this is beyond me... as MoJ signed the contract of interpreters' provision after being previously warned. I hope it will be soon revoked"

L.O: [saying in a manner pretending that did not want me to hear it, but did it purposely so it sounded like it slipped out of his mouth] "Ohhh, well we all hope it will be revoked for everyone's sake!, Oopps, it's okay then, I understand"

06/01/2013

Royal Courts of Justice

Details: Court of Appeal (extradition case) in Polish – no interpreter turned up so hearing went ahead without one.

15/01/2013

Over 50 cases with no interpreter assignment

Details: A Capita interpreter logged on to the portal to show me the jobs which had not been assigned an interpreter –for today alone, there were over 50 cases which had NO interpreter assigned. For tomorrow (16/01/2013) there were over 90 cases within a 20 mile radius of London for which an interpreter has not been assigned.

15/01/2013

Taylor House (Immigration)

Details: 17 interpreters present today – all booked directly rather than through Capita

12/01/2013

Court in Essex (tbc)

Details: [Reported by Paul Vickers (@OnCallPaul), Criminal Solicitor via Twitter] I'm at court. CPS and papers are here. Client in cells downstairs. Fly in the ointment? I don't speak Czech and no interpreter is here :(

11/01/2013

Hull Magistrates' Court

Details: On Friday I received a phone call from Hull Magistrates from a lady called Lesley. We have always had a good relationship. She phoned me for the second time since ALS took over. This time she did not ask me for a particular booking but just asked if I am willing to work for courts at all. I told her the following: Lesley, you know that I have always had a good relationship with you and the rest of the court staff and I would love to assist you and work for you even in short notice BUT only if the ALS contract is revoked. I was always prepared to step in in emergency situations but this time although, I would love to, I believe it is beyond my capacity as a professional interpreter." She said she fully understands but regrets that I cannot help her.

11/01/2013

Cardiff Crown Court

Details: Just had a phone call from Cardiff Crown Court for 2 days trial, starting on Monday. The lady was not impressed when I turned it down...

11/01/2013

Great Manchester Police

Details: A Manchester based colleague of mine texted me this morning that the Great Manchester Police rang her for her services as a Chinese (mandarin / Cantonese) interpreter, as The Agency wasn't able to provide one. It was the first direct call from this police force since 2010! One can easily deduce ALS is really struggling big time if they can't even provide an interpreter for the Chinese language.

11/01/2013

Bristol Crown Court

Details: Bristol CC just rang me due to 'today's problem in court'. The lady from the listing office used to contact me first as I am 'local' in the south west) but hasn't rung me since ALS rolled out the contract. I was sitting in a local police station 10 minutes away from court waiting for a job to start there and declined, so she said she will ring around! However, 45 minutes later, another lady from the listing office rang me. We chatted briefly and I asked her about ALS delivery. With

a 'sigh' she reluctantly described it as 'manic'. She then asked if I could help them with a case today as she knew I was in Bristol and the case had been postponed until this afternoon. She said they had lots of problems there and did I know what time I would be finished at the police station – she even offered for the court to contact the police to ask if they would release me for some time in order to help them out. I declined again as I am happy to do the police job but have no idea of the estimated time it would take.

Another 45 mins later (I was still waiting for my police job to start) I was passed a message stating that the court had telephoned the station asking me to call them back r.e. needing my emergency services. The court had explained about their problems and asked the police how long I would be there. I eventually finished my job at 2.30 and noticed more missed calls from the Court – I rang back out of courtesy and she begged me to help the court asap as they had so many problems. I decided to go along – having to apologise for turning up in casual clothes and was met by the solicitors who explained that this case is a bit of a saga, with several adjournments due to difficulties of having interpreters. Today no court interpreter was present as the interpreter who was pre-booked rang to cancel yesterday. The judge was very appreciative of my attendance. The clerk commented that 'we have to book interpreters via "whatever it is called" (she could not get the name right), it's "crap", we can't rely on it...'

10/01/2013

Northampton Crown Court

Details: Committal for Sentence - S20120367 VAN HA Thanh [34OS0140912 RIC]. ALS still trying to source Interpreter.

04/01/2013

Cambridge Crown Court

Details: A Lithuanian charged with murdering one man and stabbing another in Peterborough has appeared in court. Andrejus Ruljevas, (21), of no fixed abode, appeared at Cambridge Crown Court today (Friday) charged with murdering Saulius Grigoravicius, (20), on October 17 last year at an address in Gilpin Street, Peterborough. He is also charged with the attempted murder of Vladislavas Kuznecovas. Mr Grigoravicius was stabbed in the heart and Mr Kuznecovas, who is in his 20s, was left seriously injured with a stab wound. No pleas were entered at today's hearing at the Crown Court as an interpreter was not available. Judge Anthony Bate adjourned the case until February 18 and also set a provisional trial date of April 22. Ruljevas was remanded in custody.

03/01/2013

London (Crown Court)

Details: A Crown Court in London has just called me. That specific Court for the first time in over a year. They were desperately looking for an interpreter for a trial for today and tomorrow. Why can't they make up their minds and decide, do they need Capita OR us?

02/01/2013

Ipswich (Opinion of local solicitor)

Details: Neil Saunders, of Saunders, Goodin and Riddleston in Queen Street, Ipswich, said: "The service has been a bit patchy, to say the least; unreliable and on occasion one has wondered about the standard of the interpreters and the consequent cost to the judicial system and the public purse of having sub-standard interpreters in court by way of either lengthening the court process or, indeed, in the worst-case scenario of there being a miscarriage of justice."

02/01/2013

Ipswich (Opinion of local solicitor)

Details: Dino Barricella, of Barricella, Hughes and Marchant in the Buttermarket, Ipswich, has put up with the non-appearance of interpreters and has even had to resort to Google translate in order to communicate with clients in court.

Mr Barricella said: "It has got better, but it is the quality of people you get that concerns me. I think we were spoilt before the new system and didn't really appreciate what a good service we had. While interpreters are turning up now, they clearly don't know much about the court procedure."

December 2012

20/12/2012

South Wales (Solicitor)

Details: A rather unhappy solicitor from South Wales told me yesterday, it took 5 appearances for a Greek defendant to have an interpreter! The court was told Capita only has 1 Greek interpreter who was busy in London. The court had to make its own arrangements eventually. If that wasn't enough a couple of months back he had three defendants that required, an Albanian, a Vietnamese and a Lithuanian interpreter. At no point they had all three interpreters in court, after endless attempts!

18/12/2012

Milton Keynes Magistrates' Court

Details: Henrietta Offae, 41, and 55-year-old Titlayo Ajalahave who were charged with 19 counts of wilfully neglecting a person without capacity when they worked at Westlands Residential Home in Olney. Offae has also been charged with possessing a false passport, which has been surrendered to Thames Valley Police.

The case was adjourned until January 11 so that an interpreter could be found for Ms Ajala.

17/12/2012

South Tyneside Magistrate's Court

Details: Pham Chou, a 51-year-old Vietnamese, was charged with producing a Class B drug, and brought before South Tyneside magistrates' court. There was no interpreter available for Chou, who does not speak any English, and the case could not go ahead. Chou, of no fixed abode, was remanded in custody. She was due to appear in court again today with an interpreter.

14/12/2012

Oxford Crown Court

Details: A DRINK-DRIVER went the wrong way on a motorway slip road after fleeing the scene of a pub brawl. Niedzwiedz, a cleaner who has lived in the UK for seven years, admitted the charges of dangerous driving, drink-driving and driving without third party insurance. She was given a six-month prison sentence suspended for a year and banned from driving for a year.

The judge also passed a wasted costs order against court contractor Applied Language Solutions after the firm failed to send translators to two earlier court hearings. The company was ordered to pay £500 towards prosecution costs, £160.75 to the defence, and £16.50 for Niedzwiedz's bus fare.

17/12/2012

Snaresbrook Crown Court

Details: I received today a call from Snaresbrook Crown Court desperate for a Spanish interpreter. The caller said ALS could not get hold of anybody.

15/12/2012

West Yorkshire Police

Details: I just had a call from a PC from West Yorkshire. He said he got my number from a colleague and was hoping that I worked for ALS and can help them tonight. He was very disappointed when I refused, he said he would have to call ALS now and ask them to find someone. I thought the whole point of using an agency was that officers don't have to ring around trying to book an interpreter, the agency does that for them? However I also know from another PC from WYP that when they ring ALS and ask for an interpreter to interview someone, ALS's first question is what time the suspect was arrested - then they work out if its an "urgent" request or if it can wait a few more (6-12) hours. So its not the police but ALS who decides when (if?) suspects get interviewed

14/12/2012

(London Court)

Details: Tifina Zlatanova, Inner London Room: 6 at 11:15" adjourned because there's no interpreter.

14/12/2012

London Crown Court

Details: Just been told by the OIC, a case in a London Crown Court has just been adjourned because there was no Bulgarian interpreter. As far as I'm aware the Court didn't even try to book one directly. Can't be bothered.

14/12/2012

Taunton Crown Court

Details: Interpreter cancelled last night at 21.50 for Crown Court sentence today. ALS MD to appear next time unless interpreter turns up. Shambles. Next hearing due, Friday 21st December.

13/12/2012

Wythenshawe Police Station

Details: A police constable called me on 30th October to book my interpreting services for an incident of domestic violence. When I attended on the agreed date on 01.11.12, I asked about the reasons for not using Capita. The police constable stated that they called Capita on 28th October to book an interpreter for Tuesday 30th October, however, the following day they received a message from Capita saying that a Farsi interpreter was not available on the agreed date. The police had the alleged perpetrator in custody. He did not need an interpreter; however, they needed an interpreter to take a statement from the injured party. The police therefore, called a Farsi interpreter to travel all the way from London to take the statement on 30th October. Despite the cancellation, a Capita interpreter also arrived few hours later than originally booked. Since the London interpreter was already there taking the statement, the agency's interpreter was released.

Following this statement, the suspect was interviewed, however, there were a few points that needed to be clarified with the injured party, therefore, they called me. The police decided to video interview the injured party. During a short break, the police constable told me that she and her colleagues do not have any positive experience with Capita and they are of the view that the interpreters provided by Capita do not appear to have a similar level of professionalism. She further added that on two previous occasions she had specifically asked for a female interpreter; however, a male interpreter turned up. According to the officer, the interpreters on both occasions kept a prolonged conversation with the injured party to the extent that she had to intervene and ask for the conversation to be interpreted. The interpreter said: "it's nothing, she is just upset".

According to the police constable, her colleagues have had similar dissatisfaction with the quality of the interpreting service provided by Capita.

I would like to point out that Farsi is not a rare language and there are many qualified interpreters in my language, nonetheless Capita is still struggling to provide an interpreter. In this case 3 interpreters was used for a statement.

13/12/2012

Court in Chelmsford (TBC)

Details: None of the three interpreters booked by the Court a week ago have attended yet for the 3 cases.

07/12/2012

Bodmin Magistrates Court

Details: A case involving a Lithuanian national had to be adjourned by magistrates last week because an interpreter was not available to attend the proceedings.

Evaldas Visockis, aged 24 and of Tower Road, Newquay, appeared before Bodmin magistrates in custody on November 28 charged with using a VW Transporter without insurance and with wilfully obstructing a police officer.

He was released on bail with a condition that he must reside at Tower Road. The case is due back before the court this time with an interpreter present, on December 11.

07/12/2012

Ipswich Crown Court

Details: Ipswich Crown Court judge David Goodin said he was “astounded” at the non-attendance of a Bengali interpreter who had been booked by the court to act as translator for a 27-year-old man accused of attempting to rape a woman in an alleyway in Newmarket in August.

“Astonishingly and disgracefully for justice, no interpreter has appeared and in these circumstances we can’t make any progress with the case today,” said the judge. “This is yet another example of interpreters failing to appear.”

Judge Goodin was forced to adjourn the plea and direction hearing until today after court staff were unable to ascertain the whereabouts of the translator.

November 2012

30/11/2012

Ipswich Crown Court

Details: I attended at Ipswich CC today to see one of the ALS/Capita interpreters in action. Nadia Tabler arrived on time and patiently waited until the case was called. As I predicted the defendant who needed an interpreter was a Russian speaker so, Nadia interpreted into Russian. I sat as close to the dock as possible however, it was virtually impossible to hear her whispering.

When the judge read out the charges, all three defendants pleaded not guilty. I did not hear her interpreting a charge for a Russian defendant. I think he might have understood it. Prosecutor's speech was not interpreted at all. Occasionally I heard some whisper from the dock but I would say only about 15% of the hearing was actually interpreted. When barristers put forward their reasons for granting them bail, I swear I did not hear her say anything. Then there was a lengthy story of their criminal record, many dates were mentioned for future hearings and again no interpreting took place. Finally, the judge refused bail and explained his reasons for it and I don't think any of it was interpreted unless she whispered so quietly that even I could not hear her.

At the end the usher thanked Nadia for her time and she seemed to be very pleased. As there were seven or eight other cases this morning prior to Nadia's case and the court was extremely busy I don't think anyone minded about the quality of interpreting. As long as there is an interpreter present it's just fine. This is very sad.

29/11/2012

Slough Magistrates Court

Details: Today at 14:00 Slough MC rang looking for a Romanian Interpreter. I declined and asked where was the ALS/Capita interpreter. The lady only said: "it is nightmare, sorry we are rushing to find somebody".

29/11/2012

Basildon Crown Court

Details: I just had a friendly chat with a Lithuanian Interpreter working with two Lithuanian defendants. She represents ITL (Interpreting Translation Line – ALS/Capita failed to supply), came from London, works for this agency for a year, has no appropriate qualifications, studied interpreting/translation in Lithuania only, dressed in shocking red trousers and orange skiing jumper.

What just happened in the court room is even more interesting! She represented herself as Giedre Jakstaite, not L. Duksalaite as appears on the list. She wasn't interpreting at all! When the Judge made his speech he made breaks and was patiently waiting for her to interpret. So, eventually she did... consecutively. No simultaneous interpreting at all! By the way, when she took her coat off, I could see her pink underwear and I am sure the Judge could as well.

28/11/2012

Westminster Magistrates' Court

Details: On 1st November Capita TI failed to provide an interpreter for a first appearance. There is a note on the solicitors' file: "No interpreter available until 5th Nov." It was impossible for the solicitor to take instructions and the case was re-listed for the 5th. On that occasion an interpreter was present and a Not Guilty plea was entered. The solicitor wanted to proceed with a bail application and on the instructions of their client contacted a family member via the interpreter. The solicitor told the family member to attend Westminster MC within the next hour and a half, to bring all the relevant paperwork and security money or the defendant would be remanded in prison. The interpreter spoke to the family of the defendant, the court waited for a couple of hours, nobody turned up and the defendant was remanded again. *He is still in prison, awaiting trial.*

Two days ago I was asked by the solicitor to contact the family of the defendant once again to explain to them about the next bail application and to ask them why they never turned up at court. What I heard was quite astonishing: according to the family member, the court interpreter had told them that if they failed to turn up at court within the hour they would be arrested and sent to prison. The defendant's family member said he had no idea why he would be arrested, that's what the interpreter had told him.

28/11/2012

West Yorkshire Police

Details: West Yorkshire police yesterday had to look for a Russian court interpreter direct as Capita couldn't supply for the following day.

28/11/2012

West Yorkshire Police

Details: Today out of the blue got a call from West Yorkshire Police asking me to go to court tomorrow. A female officer told me "they (ALS/Capita) let us down badly". She said they (the rank and file coppers) are very unhappy with the situation with interpreters.

P.S. I don't know where they got my details from because I've not been on the NRPSI register for a good 6 months now.

28/11/2012

Blackfriars Crown Court

Details: Romanian defendant: This is the message I received from a barrister just now: 'Sadly, the interpreter did not turn up. List office had it booked yesterday. ALS rang up in the morning to say no one was coming - List Office tried freelancers but none available to come. Adjourned till [date] most frustrating and extremely unprofessional as everyone ready to proceed today!' End of story!

28/11/2012

London Crown Court

Details: London Crown Court looking desperately for a Romanian interpreter for TWO cases.

27/11/2012

Maidstone Crown Court

Details: Judge Michael Carroll sitting in Maidstone, said the behaviour of Applied Language Solutions, appointed by former Justice Secretary Kenneth Clarke in January to provide translators to courts across England, was "so close to contempt of court". A Slovak interpreter had been booked as far back as August to help defendant Lubomir Chorvat during his trial on a charge of wounding with intent. However, the case failed to start when it was discovered a Slovak interpreter was not available for the defence team.

Arrangements were hastily made for a Czech translator to assist after the lunch adjournment. But when the court reassembled, Judge Carroll (pictured above) was told their services had also been cancelled.

Addressing the court, the judge did little to hide his anger.

"We now have a nightmare situation where someone awaiting trial on an extremely serious matter is not able to be told what is happening in his case. He has not seen his barrister this morning because of no interpreter and he is being kept in the dark by the inability or unwillingness of a company which is contracted to supply an interpreter and their failure to do so without any kind of explanation to the court. This is so close to contempt of court that I feel I should take the matter further."

A trial is declared "ineffective" if, like Chorvat's, it has to be abandoned on day one. The cost of yesterday's delay was estimated to have cost the taxpayer £8,000. When the possibility of calling upon the services of an independent interpreter was broached, Judge Carroll remarked: "I am not sure the court has the power to appoint an outside interpreter when a huge amount has already been paid to an agency who refuses to honour their contract." Despite being assured that a Slovak translator would be available, the judge added he was prepared to report the matter to the Lord Chief Justice. "Something has to be done," continued Judge Carroll. "Not just something has to be seen to be done, but something has to be done."

26/11/2012

Grimsby Magistrates

Details: No Latvian interpreter for Grimsby Magistrates today.

26/11/2012

Northampton Crown Court

Details: Capita failed to provide a Polish interpreter

26/11/2012

Manchester Crown Court

Details: The case of Jan Chodorovsky - no interpreter however the trial started without them.

26/11/2012

Basildon Crown Court

Details: I just came back from Basildon CC. I was there at 9.50am. At 10.00am both barristers of two Lithuanian defendants happily greeted me: 'Are you Lithuanian Interpreter?' We introduced each other and I admitted that today I was going to be an observer and not their interpreter. They definitely were expecting for Interpreter to arrive. At 10.05am His Honour Hudge Lodge asked if defendants had an interpreter. One the barristers explained kindly: 'No, Your Honour, but, if we speak slowly, they understand.' The Judge said: 'So, we'll speak slowly'. They proceeded. The defendants were released on bail because the custody time has expired. How they understood bail conditions, I have no clue...

26/11/2012

Tweet by CourtReporter (@RobMiddleton23) 'Third case adjourned. Rafal Chudzinski, 34, accused of cannabis production, has no interpreter and his solicitors are not here either.'

22/12/2012

South Somerset and Mendip Magistrates

Details: An Italian man facing an allegation of indecent exposure said to have been committed at Yeovil has had the case adjourned for an interpreter to be present.

Antony Ferrara, aged 44, of Higher Kingston, Yeovil, appeared before South Somerset and Mendip Magistrates charged with intentionally exposing his genitals intending that someone would see them and be caused alarm or distress during an incident on September 14.

No plea was entered and the case was adjourned at the request of the defence because the defendant did not speak any English. Until then his unconditional bail was extended.

20/11/2012

Unqualified interpreters working for police and courts

Details:

Earlier today I received a phone call from a person I did a community interpreting course with (some 5 years ago). That person did not, in fact, finish the course, she decided to drop out. Later and on various occasions I met her at one of my local police stations (she was working for the police as a Lithuanian/Russian interpreter). Today she phoned to enquire how to finish her community interpreting accreditation. It seems that ALS has been pressuring her to get some

qualifications. Having said that, she has been working for them for some time and so far no one was bothered by the fact she did not have any relevant qualifications at all.

I also know of another (this time Polish) interpreter who hasn't got any qualifications (in fact, she has failed her Met Test, yet still she has been allocated to Tier 2 and has been working as a court interpreter for ALS).

20/11/2012

Southwark Crown Court

Details: Freelance interpreter receives panic call from Southward – ALS cannot provide Arabic interpreter for this morning

20/11/2012

HMP Wormwood Scrubs

Details: I attended HMP Wormwood Scrubs as an interpreter for a legal visit. There is a notice on a wall there stating that "all interpreters must produce their NRPSI cards." So if you are not registered on the NRPSI, you will be refused entry.

It's hilarious, considering that most ALS/Capita interpreters would not be allowed to work in this prison, even though booked by a solicitor, not the prison directly. The National Audit Office pointed out that in May only 305 NRPSI interpreters out of 2,200 were registered with Capita. What is no good for a prison is welcomed by the court service, even when that someone turns up late. Another blatant proof of slipping standards for court interpreters.

19/11/2012

Immigration Tribunal Nottingham

Details: Immigration Tribunal Nottingham needed my presence yesterday to cover up the failures of ALS/CAPITA'S inadequacies on ASAP basis... the lady on the other end was very understanding. She said the agency failed to provide the interpreter....."Why do not you simply abandon this agency to make things easy? It is upsetting, insulting, degrading, humiliating" Yes we do understand.....you can write a book about them. She was not in a panic as they used to be. She was laughing throughout and she was sympathetic to our cause.

16/11/2012

Crown Court in the North West

Details: No Hungarian interpreter for Crown Court hearing so case adjourned till Monday and suspect had to be remanded in custody.

16/11/2012

Police Station in Manchester

Details: No interpreter at a police station in ALS territory to interview rape victim and suspect.

10/11/2012

Huddersfield Police Station

Details: Huddersfield police resort to contacting a freelance interpreter, Nadia, directly, as they are unable to contact the ALS booking team.

October 2012

30/10/2012

North Staffordshire Magistrates'

Details: North Staffordshire magistrates adjourned the cases of Slovakian Robert Laca because he does not understand English and an interpreter was not available. The 38-year-old, of Leek Road, Stoke, is accused of failing to provide a specimen of breath for analysis, failing to cooperate with a preliminary test, possession of cannabis and driving otherwise in accordance with a licence at Shelton on October 14.

He will now appear in court on November 2.

27/10/2012

Old Bailey

Details: A few of weeks ago I was interpreting for CPS at the Old Bailey. It was a trial with a foreign defendant and professional witnesses of various nationalities. There was an interpreter for the defendant sitting with him in the dock. I observed her for as long as I myself was in the courtroom. She was not wearing any badge and because at that point the CPS interpreter was working in the same language, there was no need for her to interpret. Towards the end of the day there was a discussion of that lady's availability for the rest of the trial. She could only do one more day. The Judge addressed one of the prosecutors and said to him: "It is your responsibility to find a proper replacement interpreter. Make sure the interpreter is booked directly, professional and not from THAT AGENCY!"

19/10/2012

Staines Magistrate's Court

Details: Three Romanian clients remand in custody on Friday at Staines Mags Court, due to no ALS interpreter.

19/10/2012

Grimsby Magistrates' Court

Details: I have received a text message from a colleague today saying that there was no Latvian interpreter at Grimsby Magistrates today. The defendant was remanded. The police (!) then tried to book an interpreter for tomorrow, calling RPSIs direct, explaining that an interpreter is required but would be paid by the court. In a conversation with the listings office at the court it

transpired that the court wasn't prepared to pay for the interpreter as the booking would originate from the police.

19/10/2012

Students failed DPSI exam yet still work for Capita

Details: I passed the DPSI English law exam this year with great results. My student colleagues who work for ALS/Capita didn't pass and have to re-sit one or more units. One of them (Turkish) has failed all units but one. But they still work for ALS and work in courts. So it's that question again - What sort of interpretation quality do these people provide? They are unqualified, of course they'll be happy with low payment. The funny bit is that when I asked them why they are doing this when their place is not in court, they always answered that they are using it to practise! Well, didn't really help for the exam, did it?

This is simply absurd.

16/10/2012

Agency etiquette / work offer with no assessment

I registered on the ALS portal to work as a court interpreter. The whole process was very easy. The only thing I had to do was to give them a name they could put in their template emails and a telephone number they could call me at. Experience? Qualifications? I kept changing them every two days, from nothing at all to 9,000,000 hours of interpreting experience. Still Tier 1. Without any assessment. I got my first call the very next morning. A rather stressed gentleman tried to convince me to go to a court miles and miles away from me. Miles. It was around 8 in the morning and I had no chance to be there on time. I made the gentleman aware that it would take me around 3 hours to get there, if I am lucky with the trains. Interpreter arriving at 11 a.m.? Not a problem! I asked what the case was about, but they had no idea. Very well then, I will go.

Of course, I was not lucky with the trains at all! The agency would have to pay for my ticket (long distance between two major cities) and my travel time. I arrived a few minutes after 12 only to learn that they adjourned the case in the morning because they couldn't wait for an interpreter and they called the agency. Shame that the agency didn't call me. The court staff – quite rightly so – refused to sign my timesheet. After all, they did notify their supplier that they no longer needed me. Well, nothing to worry about. As long as the job is in the system. But the day is not wasted. I just got a call to go to another court, 55 miles away. And guess what? I got £10 pounds extra for accepting an urgent assignment! I'm on my way!

08/10/2012

ALS withholding payments

Details: I have met an Arabic interpreter this morning at a solicitor's office. He told that he's been chasing up payments from ALS for the last six months but can't stop working for them fearing that they might ignore his requests and end up not being paid. (reported by Anouar Nsiri)

08/10/2012

Boston Magistrates' Court

Details: A colleague has just texted to say that there are no Polish or Lithuanian interpreters in Boston Magistrates' Court this morning. The clerk and solicitors are furious. Magistrates' courts in Lincolnshire don't call RPSIs direct.

08/10/2012

ALS withholding payments

Details: I just met a Farsi speaker colleague who recently joined ALS. He had his first job in county court. When I asked how the assessment was, he told me he did not have one - contrary to their claims they are offering jobs to the interpreters without an assessment (reported by Reza Ghandchilar)

06/10/2012

Norfolk (Police Investigation Centre)

Details: I attended one of Norfolk PICs, where a Latvian gentleman was detained. It appeared that a week ago he attended Colchester Magistrates court for a drink driving offence. There was no Latvian interpreter present so the case was adjourned until this week. There was a bail condition attached that he must not drive any transport vehicle in any public place or road in UK. However the gentleman did not understand this, as there had been no interpreter present, so yesterday he was stopped by Norfolk police and remanded in custody until Monday for breaching the court order. His solicitor at the police station was furious and said that in her experience the interpreting service is rapidly declining.

04/10/2012

Leeds

Details: Just found out that the Hungarian interpreter who got dismissed by a judge in May in Leeds Crown Court for being totally incompetent (she could hardly read out the oath) is still actively working. (Reported by Eszter Fejes)

04/10/2012

Snaresbrook Crown Court

Details: A Bulgarian ALS interpreter has walked out on the last day of the trial, the judge is threatening to dismiss the case if interpreter problems are not resolved by tomorrow (there must have been some before today). I know all this from the OIC who called me desperately begging me to go tomorrow - he doesn't want to lose his case, obviously.

03/10/2012

Bristol Crown Court

Details: No show by any Turkish interpreter today for a plea and case management hearing at Bristol Crown Court. The case was a serious one, causing grievous bodily harm with intent. The court continued without one as the defence did not want any delay, but it is very sad that even in a case carrying a maximum sentence of life imprisonment a defendant in need of an interpreter should not have one.

03/10/2012

Peterborough Magistrates' Court

Details: Trial involving a Latvian defendant and the Peterborough MP who the defendant is accused of assaulting. Court was informed that the interpreter had cancelled the night before and they were forced to wait for another one from 70 miles away.

September 2012

29/09/2012

Beverly Magistrates' Court

Details: A desperate phone call from Beverly Magistrate's Court on Saturday morning at 10.30. The defendant's solicitor rang and asked if I was willing to attend and translate as ALS did not provide their 'linguist'. Needless to say I was not jumping and rushing like in "the old good times". I went to my yoga class instead. Later on the solicitor told me that he had to use his iPhone to Google translations but the reception was not good so, using his own words, "it was a nightmare". The defendant was kept in custody.

27/09/2012

Croydon Crown Court

Details: I arrived at Croydon CC this morning at about 11:00. The jury for this trial was selected yesterday. In the court room the Lithuanian interpreter was saying to the judge that she is not available for some day or days next week. You can imagine the face of that poor judge. Although she kept her cool and noted that the interpreter has to make herself available for the whole duration of the trial and that she hopes there are many other Lithuanian Interpreters in the country. A few minutes later the judge discharged the jury saying that there were some changes in availability of the representatives due to the late start of the trial. She adjourned the case until 23.10.12. The court staff told me that because the interpreters were not supplied at due date the court schedule was messed up. While the judge was explaining to the jury the reasons of the adjournment both interpreters were sitting quiet. The Slovak interpreter said that she just qualified 2 months ago.

26/09/2012

Bristol Magistrates' Court

Details: Czech ALS interpreter arrives 4 hours late

26/09/2012

Hull Crown Court

Details: A killer who stabbed and strangled a man before burying his head in remote woodland has been cleared of murder but convicted of manslaughter. The trial was originally listed for up to three weeks but, after a series of problems over Lithuanian interpreters, it lasted for three-and-a-half weeks.

26/09/2012

Croydon Crown Court

Details: No interpreters. Defence counsels were unhappy and asked the judge for Wasted Costs order. The counsel for Slovak defendant told the judge that he had no interpreter in last 4 hearings. Case was adjourned until further notice. 11:45 Slovak worker turned up, 12:15 the Lithuanian. After taking the oath the judge vigorously questioned both ladies about the reasons for the delay. The Slovak worker told the judge that she was booked just yesterday and travelled from Peterborough. Also she said that she only started doing this job 2 months ago and that she was a receptionist before. She had no badge. I wasn't able to find out if she is ALS or not. The Lithuanian worker had an ALS badge and arrived from Derby. No questions were asked about the qualifications. Very little was said in the court for defendants.

25/09/2012

Croydon Crown Court

Details: The requested interpreters were 2 Lithuanians, 1 Slovak and 1 Armenian. The number of interpreters supplied: NONE. The court was told that a Lithuanian interpreter would be available after lunch and a Slovak one the following day. The defence counsels reminded the judge that on previous occasions the case had also been adjourned due to the interpreters' absence and criticised the new system to which the judge replied "Yes".

25/09/2012

Bristol Magistrates' Court

Details: Yesterday I had a rare opportunity to travel to Bristol MC to observe an ALS interpreter. While waiting I heard that another ALS interpreter (Polish) was expected and court could not proceed for 2 hrs. The Czech ALS arrived 4 hrs late for afternoon hearing. She came all the way from London and was NRPSI.

18/10/2012

Winchester Magistrates' Court

Details: This Tuesday Winchester Magistrates' Court had a Romanian case (the defendant was produced from HMP Bedford), where the ALS interpreter attended at 12:00 pm (she was booked for 09:30 am) and informed the Court that she could only stay for one hour! She came

from London, without any ID or any form of ID; she only had an ALS timesheet! She also mentioned the fact that she had to be back to work in London at 14:00!

05/09/2012

Ipswich Crown Court

Details: Denisas Boicovas, charged with rape: During Boicovas's first hearing on the charges before South East Suffolk Magistrates' Court, his solicitor Andrew Cleal was unable to take instructions from his client relating to a possible bail application as there was no Lithuanian interpreter available.

05/09/2012

Taunton Magistrates' Court

Details: At Taunton Mags we had an 'interpreter' take the oath and then someone realised she was defendant's partner! Was sent away once magistrates' realised. She stated that she was sent by ALS.

August 2012

31/08/2012

Court tbc

Details: Despite loads of warning, no interpreter showed (Asylum Seeker case). Another postponement.

31/08/2012

Extracts from ALS Interpreter's blog (a care assistant):

"I'm seriously considering giving up my night shifts. I have signed up with a new interpreting agency (well, for me it is new, but it's an old, powerful and rich company). They have been offering me loads of bookings - each day I receive tens of assignments. To be honest, they need a Lithuanian interpreter and all the bookings are for courts, and my Lithuanian has somewhat rusted without being used. But I did accept one booking and went along. It was alright. So I've accepted three more bookings, one of them scheduled for the whole day with an anticipated fee of around £700. It's in London. If I do pull this deal off and actually receive that much money in one day, normally my monthly earnings at the madhouse (translator's note - nursing home), I am going to give up my job."

"I was invited to an assessment at the new agency. If I pass – it's all gravy. However, they do need a Lithuanian interpreter, damn. It's unlikely that I'm going to pass the Lithuanian exam. It's both a simultaneous and consecutive interpreting, as well as a written translation. I do have a

problem with written Lithuanian as I never studied it at school, I'm self-taught."

<http://notabler.livejournal.com/155777.html?thread=1575809>

"I don't think it makes sense for me to even try taking the exam in Lithuanian at this stage, I will focus on my Russian for now. And mostly, on my English. If I fail it in May, I'll carry on swotting up until I make it. And I will continue travelling every day to courts, teaching myself by "sink or swim". I'll be struggling, but becoming more experienced and learning from my mistakes. This is now my life's plan." <http://notabler.livejournal.com/156484.html>

23/08/2012

Merthyr Tydfil Court

Details: ALS book Polish interpreter from G Manchester for Merthyr Tydfil – 195 miles one way.

22/08/2012

Stoke-on-Trent AITribunal

Details: ALS failed to provide a Lithuanian interpreter second time after a judge had adjourned the bail hearing and ordered ALS to provide a Lithuanian interpreter for the witness for 16.8. No interpreter attended and the judge went ahead without hearing evidence from the witnesses

22/08/2012

Boston Magistrates Court

Details: Boston Magistrates Court comes to standstill after solicitor (no prizes for guessing who) tells justices that Lithuanian interpreter useless. I actually said he was incompetent, which he was. No real grasp of English language. Did not know what the word "wrist" meant. Thought a Probation Officer was a person who took mouth swabs! Told him he should not be doing job. He wasn't employed by ALS directly - came from an agency that they had sub-contracted to. Court have had to adjourn 3 cases. It transpires that he had driven up from London straight after coming off a 12 hour night shift.

21/08/2012

Bury Magistrates' Court

Details: ALS failed to send a Lithuanian interpreter. Another adjournment at taxpayers' expense.

21/08/2012

Liverpool Magistrates' Court

Details: ALS failed to provide a Czech interpreter. Case Adjourned.

21/08/2012

West Midlands Police

Details: I am told West Mids Police required a Thai interpreter over a week ago. Interpreter was flown from Edinburgh, (Scotland) by ALS. Just checked and there are 8 Thai interpreter on the NRPSI. Another example of allocating the nearest interpreter. Next time ALS might be forced to fly someone over from Thailand

21/08/2012

Ipswich Crown Court

Details: Chinese student working illegally as interpreter in courts after ALS told her she had the right to work.

20/08/2012

Boston Magistrate's Court

Details: No Polish interpreter in Boston Magistrates' Court this morning, defendant loses a day's work. [#ALS](#) [#Capita](#) unable to provide."

20/08/2012

Court TBC

Details: A Polish interpreter was offered a magistrates job 125 miles away from their address. Job was for 1 hr only. ALS offered to pay full travel time, 8 hours @ £10/hr plus full mileage £100. Total £200. This is an example of ALS locating the nearest interpreter and saving tax payers money. It would only cost £85-100 to have an interpreter for 3 hrs within the old system.

16/08/2012

Stoke on Trent AI Tribunal

Details: ALS failed to provide a Lithuanian interpreter for second time after a judge had adjourned the bail hearing and ordered ALS to provide a Lithuanian interpreter for the witness for 16.8.12. No interpreter attended and the judge went ahead without hearing evidence from the witnesses.

16/08/2012

Dewsbury Police Station

Details: 3 Hungarians have been bailed today because ALS couldn't provide an interpreter! They were arrested last night for theft. Will they turn up to answer bail?

13/08/2012

Lewes Crown Court

Details: Case Name; R v TROMPETTE. I interpreted for the victim and a witness, both Mauricians speaking Mauritian Creole, on the 13th, 14th and 15th of August. I left the Court at Midday when the prosecution closed its case. May I stress here that my services were retained by the CPS who have assured me that they do not use ALS. In the afternoon of the 15th, around 4pm, I was phoned by the Listing Office and by the police, in a panic, to ask me whether I could interpret for the Defendant in Court the next day as the trial has been stopped because of the lack of competence of the Court Interpreter supplied by ALS. It was clear the trial was going to collapse after 3 days unless I stepped in. The judge has specifically asked the Listing Office to contact me to ask me if I could return the following day. I decided to save the day and interpreted on the 16th and the 20th, the Court not sitting on the 17th.

The first thing I did on the 16th was listen to the Court recording of the Defendant's testimony. Though the recording was bad due to interference from a fan, it soon became clear that, not only were the Interpreter's English and French limited, but his Mauritian Creole was non-existent. This became clear to the judge, defence Counsel and the Prosecutor and the case was stopped. A member of the jury even sent a note to the judge expressing her concern that the Interpreter was not interpreting everything. She obviously understood some French.

It turned out that the Interpreter was from Burundi, an ex-French colony (?). Maybe he spoke some form of Creole but nothing to do with Mauritian Creole. The situation actually became farcical (it would have been were it not for the seriousness of the matter) at the end of the recording. The defendant, having realized that the Interpreter could not speak Creole, was desperately trying to communicate to him in FRENCH, not very successfully, I might add.

When the judge thanked me for coming in at such short notice to bail out the court, I took the opportunity to express my concern, not only about what happened in this case, but also about what happened in the Chinnarassen case and generally about what is happening up and down the country. He said that both Counsels and he were very concerned about what's happened and that he had requested the Listing Office to write to ALS.

10/08/2012

Newcastle Magistrate's Court

Details: Newcastle Magistrates resorted to telephone interpreting for a bail hearing on Friday, no interpreter

09/08/2012

Court TBC

Details: Reported by Jonathan Davies, Criminal Barrister via Twitter (@barristerjon). Interpreter just turned up 5 hours late! No apology! Attempted Murder case.

08/08/2012

Hammersmith Youth Court

Details: A 12-year-old boy who is about 4ft tall walks into the court with his father. He is accused of being found in possession of six items of stolen clothing on 15 February at Euston Square Station in north-west London.

"I've just literally been handed this case," says the prosecutor. "I understand he had a Romanian interpreter at the police station."

No-one has been booked to interpret for his court appearance - already delayed since February - so the case is adjourned until an interpreter can come.

"Delay is an enemy to justice," District Judge Snow says. "This is hopelessly inadequate." Adding that delays increase the chances of children being "traumatised and criminalised". The boy later pleads guilty."

05/08/2012

Brighton County Court

Details: This week I was at Brighton County Court where I had been booked by solicitors to replace a court-appointed ALS Polish interpreter who had been adjudged useless by their client. The other party in the case also had an ALS Polish interpreter. When told that the court had issued an "interim order", she translated it as "internal order" and was unable to translate the expression "final order". Scary, isn't it?

If this is the level of English ALS linguists have, how many more mistakes, basic or gross, are unnoticed?

03/08/2012

Swindon Crown Court

Details: This morning at Swindon Crown Court I was acting as the interpreter for the defence in an ATM fraud case and I had the chance to observe an ALS Interpreter. Unfortunately I didn't catch his full name. He was already there when I entered the Court room and I think the Judge was telling him off for being late. And this is the interesting part: The Judge asked the interpreter "I understand you need to be somewhere else this afternoon?" The Interpreter: "I need to be in Northampton at 2 pm". The Judge raising his eyebrows "And may I ask how are you planning on getting there?" [It was 10 minutes to twelve] Everyone laughed... The interpreter said he was driving ... Apart from that, he looked and acted quite professionally. He would sometimes simplify the legal jargon or summarise what was being said but I must say it wasn't too challenging since the main purpose of the short hearing was for the Barristers to ask for more time as some case papers were served on them only this morning.

02/08/2012

Court TBC

Details: Case of Shah, 28, adjourned 7 days as no Urdu interpreter turned up.

July 2012

30/07/2012

London youth court

Details: case adjourned because ALS/Capita failed to provide an interpreter. The minor is on remand.

30/07/2012

Peterborough Magistrates' Court

Details: A man has appeared in court today (Monday) charged with kicking Peterborough MP Stewart Jackson. Ivans Karanovs (20) appeared at Peterborough Magistrates' Court this afternoon. Karanovs is charged with criminal damage, a public order offence and common assault by beating. However, the case was adjourned until tomorrow because an interpreter was unavailable and the suspect unnecessarily held in custody.

30/07/2012

Northampton Crown Court

Details: Preliminary hearing and bail application adjourned 7 days for Mohibullah Armani, 22, because no Pashto interpreter turned up

25/07/2012

Canterbury Crown Court

Details: Defendant was Mr D. ARSALAN, Importation of drugs. Interpreter was booked and didn't show up. He could not be contacted by any means. Case was listed first on list this morning. Solicitor attended then had to leave due to other commitments in other court. This is 2nd time I have been called last minute. Took oath and told them I am not with ALS. Court aware it's 2nd time I stepped in last minute. Defendant was angry as he had to have other solicitor. From same firm but he appeared to object to having seen 2 solicitors today.

25/07/2012

Folkestone Magistrates' Court

Details: No ALS interpreter available (Dutch). Defendant has been at court since morning. Haskell case.

23/07/2012

Reported on www.lawgazette.co.uk

Details: Submitted by Ben Hall (solicitor) online.

I represented a client today who had been held in custody for shoplifting since Friday morning as ALS could not provide a Lithuanian interpreter. In desperation, the court phoned a local interpreter that they knew at 1.30pm who refuses to work for ALS. She arrived by 3pm and the case was concluded by 3.15pm. The current situation is a farce. How can keeping my client in custody for over three days be saving the taxpayer money? This is not an isolated incident. It occurs every day. Answer that MOJ.

19/07/2012

Folkestone Magistrates Court

Details: An asylum seeker who broke into an empty house to find somewhere to sleep was kept in jail for two nights as police tried to find an Arabic translator. His solicitor Sophie Reed, also being funded under the Legal Aid programme, told the court her client had spent two days in police cells because no one could be found who spoke the correct Arab dialect.

"Yesterday I went to represent him and there was no interpreter, so this is the third day this defendant has spent in jail for something that police said they would have issued a fixed penalty notice for, but couldn't because he was homeless," she said.

"This situation is a potential breach of his human rights because we are not able to supply any information to the arrested person. We are discriminating against him"

Prosecutor Mr Sweeney said: "A translator not being available is a failure of the system, this was not the fault of the police. We've all experienced difficulties under the new system."

17/07/2012

Interpreter offered jobs using fake details

Details: After reading about Jajo the rabbit I decided to register with ALS. I had (have) no intention of working for them. I only wanted to see how far I could go and how incompetent ALS is.

So I registered with a fake name (the name of a fictional character), a fake address (a well-known official residence of a head of state), a mobile number with only 10 digits and an obviously fake Skype name. No qualifications, no experience, no security vetting.

Two days after I registered I got my first job offer, a 45 minute job at a court in central London. Soon after that I received an email inviting me to take the assessment test, I did not reply, but I carried on receiving job offers. In total, up to now, I have received 12 job offers.

To me it's very clear that:

1. Anyone can register online on the ALS website and ALS will not check their identity, qualifications, experience, security vetting, etc.
2. ALS offer jobs to people who register on their website without even checking the profile/details people give when they register – if they did, they would have realised that all my details were fake.

I have screenshots of my fake profile and the 12 job offers emails.

16/07/2012

Oxford Magistrates' Court

Details: A man charged with three sex assaults has had his case adjourned.

Marek Stofej was due to appear at Oxford Magistrates' Court on Monday, but the case was postponed due to the lack of an interpreter.

The 35-year-old, of Linacre Close, Didcot, is charged with assaulting a 14-year-old girl off Cow Lane on May 25 and two assaults in the Orchard Centre on May 29. Stofej was bailed to appear again at the court next Monday.

16/07/2012

Westminster Magistrates Court

Details: Tihomir Georgiev, extradition case. Yesterday I was ordered out of the court room for pointing out the ALS-er's incompetence. Today: the same linguist left the dock to go to the witness stand with the defense witnesses. At one point the appellant was so frustrated with the inadequacy of her interpreting, he shouted from the dock "Translator wrong, bad translation" and the same judge ordered him taken down to the cells. His wife left the stand in floods of tears. She was deeply upset and told me that she simply could not understand the questions. They were full of English words she did not know, and when she said "I don't understand", the interpreter just repeated it and said "well, I'm translating word for word what he's saying." The poor girl told me: "It was like having it interpreted from one foreign language into another foreign language."

14/07/2012

Winchester Crown Court

Details: A murder trial turned into a farce when an interpreter confessed half-an-hour into vital evidence that he was a fake, filling in for his busy wife.

The judge halted the trial of Rejoinder Kauri, who killed her mother-in-law with a rolling pin, when the court realised interpreter Mubarak Lone was leaving out key words and phrases in his translating.

Mr Lone was interpreting for Kaur's husband, Iqbal Singh, who spoke Punjabi, but struggled to even get the oath right for the Sikh witness at Winchester Crown Court in Hampshire. He was finally caught out by junior counsel Sukhdev Garcha, who also spoke the language, half-an-hour into the faltering evidence. In the absence of the jury, Mr Lone was forced to confess to Mr Justice Barnett that he was not a qualified translator and was awaiting the results of his interpreter test.

13/07/2012

Peterborough Crown Court

Details: Representatives for ALS called by Judge Nic Madge ordered representatives of Applied Language Solutions (ALS) to attend Peterborough Crown Court on Friday to explain why a Lithuanian interpreter did not turn up for a hearing she was booked to attend on July 2. Laura Mackinnon, representing ALS, said: "At 1.19pm on June 29 the request for the hearing on July 2 at 10am was made.

"At 1.38pm an offer was accepted by Zivile Lebeikiele, a Lithuanian interpreter. Nothing was heard from her by ALS until 6.18am on July 2, when she telephoned ALS to say she was double booked and could not attend. "She had accepted three other jobs through a separate arm of ALS.

"She had accepted a job at 7.30am on July 2 on June 21, a 10am start on July 2 on June 25 and an 11am job on July 2 on May 30, all with NHS Peterborough. There is no link between the two booking systems."

Ms Mackinnon said after ALS received the call from Mrs Lebeikiele they made a number of calls, emails and text messages to find another interpreter but were unable to. The court heard that Mrs Lebeikiele has been given a warning by ALS and an internal investigation is taking place

13/07/2012

Crown Court in Kent

Details: Last week I went to observe a case in a Crown Court in Kent. I have to say the ALS interpreter in the dock was talking so loudly that the barristers had to pause in order not to get overtalked. He kept interpreting only a few words out of five sentences and was mixing up the dates. By skipping important bits, he managed to survive up to the review of previous convictions.

And then I could not believe my ears. Instead of interpreting what was said, he told the poor chap that he probably knew what they were talking about. How ridiculous is that? He then tried to catch up, mixing up robbery with burglary, accused the defendant of robbing the shop instead of stealing from it. A dishonesty offence was interpreted as "dirty business" and then it got worse. Because of the guilty plea the defendant was sentenced that day and when the judge was explaining aggravating and mitigating circumstances, the "interpreter" simply stood there in silence. No one cared. And then at the end, while leaving the docks, the defendant, who I happen to know, asked me: "Are you going to interpret everything to me, because I did not

understand a thing". I told this to court clerk and she managed to explain to the judge what had actually happened.

12/07/2012

Kent Magistrates' Court

Details: No Tamil interpreter at a Kent Mags Court today, case adjourned till October. Court staff furious.

12/07/2012

Croydon Magistrates' Court

Details: No Bulgarian interpreter, case adjourned. A Chinese woman waited for one all day yesterday, complaining

12/07/2012

North Shields Asylum Court

Details: I was due to appear as an expert witness at North Shields Asylum Court last Tuesday for an Asylum Appeal hearing with a client of mine and we were expected to start at 10am. The client, myself, the solicitor and the barrister were all ready before 10am as were the Home Office and the Immigration Judge. The French ALS interpreter arrived at 11.05am. As a result of him being late, the Court managers decided to go ahead with the case which was supposed to follow our hearing. So instead of our case being heard first, we had to wait until 2.30pm to start.

The solicitor and I both lost half a day's work. It distressed the client because they had to wait for nearly five hours rather than half an hour for the start of their case – the client is a vulnerable adult who has had psychiatric care following his torture in his home country.

I had to cancel a therapy session with an interpreter for a father & son that I see together, so it cost us, a small charity, the cost of the interpreter we had booked, the return travel of the father & son and it wasted the travel time it took them. It also means that I have to rebook that session into my busy schedule.

Alan Brice
Centre Manager
North East Centre

11/07/2012

Birmingham Crown Court

Details: I popped in to Birmingham CC at 9:45 and sat right outside Court 5. At 10:05 I was approached by a concerned usher:

- Excuse me... Interpreter?

- (pause) Well yes.
- Lithuanian?
- Erm yes.

-Oh great, nice to meet you! We've been waiting for you

-Oh, not for me probably

Blank face

-Well I wasn't booked for this case, I just popped in to observe it as part of my continuous professional development. Sorry.

-Oh ok (blank face)

Next thing I hear "Can a Lithuanian interpreter please report to Court Five!" Several people have arrived for the hearing and we are now waiting; the usher keeps pacing. I kept overhearing things like "stuck without an interpreter", "impossible to get one these days", "the barrister keeps asking if one has arrived", etc.

10:30. Another announcement for the missing interpreter. Then another at 11.00. Case display is now changed to "to be heard". I left about two hours with no ALS interpreter in sight."

Courtservice details;
For Trial (Floater) T20120329

ZAUNIERAVICIUS Tomas 20BW447112
LITHUANIAN INTERPRETER REQ TRL 11/7 10AM

11/07/2012

Cardiff Crown Court

Details: French Interpreter (Odile Giro) came all the way from Wiltshire. They booked her in a hotel so good saving! Anyway, as the trial started the truth unfolded...It is her first trial in CC and she had told the usher she didn't know where to go etc... I sat right behind in the public gallery and listened to it all. She couldn't cope with the speed of the prosecutor's opening speech nor the defence barrister. I would say half was translated. We had a break an hour later (matter of law) because the Judge decided that the prosecution didn't have a case. So when we were out the Barrister wanted to talk to the defendant who then said that she had to elbow the interpreter to interpret! She even asked her few times "is this true?" "did he do that? Regarding the incident!

We went in afterwards and the judge addressed the jury about his decision but absolutely nothing was said to the defendant! At the end he asked their verdict. They found her not guilty and the interpreter was quiet - not one word was said! The judge said "you are free to go now!"

Still not one word and I whispered from the back: "it's over you can leave", so the defendant left but the ALS interpreter was still standing still. The Barrister noticed and after speaking to her she agreed to write to the judge.

I spoke to the interpreter afterwards - she was a French teacher and was offered the job by someone she knew who works for Capita. She sat the test for free in London and was bombarded with work straight away! She goes all over the UK, they book B&Bs for her, pay £20 an hour and 0.40 p mile excluding 10 miles each way.

10/07/2012

Willesden Magistrates' Court

Details: Court 7 held up nearly 2 hours by ALS failure. Court not told until this am

04/07/2012

Woolwich Crown Court

Details: Unqualified Lithuanian interpreter arrives, subcontracted by ALS from ITL. Court decides defendant's English is fine.

02/06/2012

Hendon Magistrates' Court

Details: I received a call from Hendon Magistrates' Court at 14:10. I refused to take the booking, telling the lady that we were still boycotting court interpreting jobs because of the ALS contract. She told me she was not ringing from the agency and I would be paid direct by the court like it had been before. She sounded quite annoyed when I continued to refuse.

What this goes to show again is many bookings cannot be fulfilled by ALS, courts continue calling NRPSI interpreters direct and offering them the old rates. If NRPSI interpreters weren't taking direct bookings from courts, the system would have collapsed in the first 2 weeks of the Framework Agreement, as it was in mid February when the courts were allowed to turn away from the exclusive supplier and revert to the old system whenever necessary.

June 2012

29/06/2012

Maidstone Magistrates' Court

Details: Court 3; His Honour Judge Patience QC; a Bulgarian Defendant. Mrs Tsvetanka Lisiyska-Amirashayeri has been acting as a Bulgarian Interpreter for the Court, supplied by ALS. The above mentioned 'interpreter' is NOT on the NRPSI and has no relevant qualification for the job. After the short hearing the 'Interpreter' has joined the solicitor and his interpreter for a chat and a cup of coffee in the Cafe, because: '...to make it at least 2 hours, otherwise they won't pay me much'

28/06/2012

A London Magistrate's Court

Details: Before lunchtime the ALS Romanian interpreter simply left the trial in the air (for another job, in another town, another county) and the Court to struggle and find another interpreter for p.m., to continue the trial.

20/06/2012

Tribunal in Cardiff in Czech

Details: Czech interpreter (N/K) booked through ALS (Case: JW). This was the third adjournment because the ALS booked interpreter did not attend. NRPSI Interpreter who attended with Mrs Winklerova as a 'friend' had agreed to interpret for her to help her advance her case. He advised the Tribunal about the possible conflict of interest. However, the Tribunal was willing to take that risk to clear the case.

20/06/2012

Interpreter no show

Details: Somali interpreter booked for Anab Mohamed, 36, has not turned up (reported by Court Reporter)

17/06/2012

New court interpreting system open for abuse

Details: Last week I had a short encounter with a young Polish interpreter in a Magistrates' Court. I just introduced myself, told her that I am not working for ALS, and was just curious as to why some people signed up with them.

To all my further questions about the ethics of this voluntary 'submission' to an agency which doesn't care about the quality of the services they provide and thus helping this agency to continue with their flawed system, I received defensive answers.

However, this interpreter confirmed to me what we had already heard from others – there is a substantial difference between the ways interpreters are treated! She told me that she negotiated the payment for every single job and doesn't take a job if her demands are not met! She is paid £30.00 for the first hour, and £20.00 for all subsequent hours. She is paid for her travel time and for all her travel expenses – tickets, mileage, and parking. And if the job doesn't last as long as the agency anticipated, she claims for the whole time she was booked for! On the day I met her, she was booked for 3 hours, but she was free 40 minutes after arriving at the court. She told me that she would claim for 3 hours as there are no forms that the court must sign in support of the linguist's finishing time! (Under the old system our forms were signed promptly on leaving the court room.) On hearing this, the words from Mr. Blunt's statement came to my head: "The system was open to abuse..."

In the light of the aforementioned I have to point out that Mr. Blunt's statement requires some grammatical correction: the TENSE used in the sentence is grammatically FLAWED (it is understandable though as not everyone is a professional linguist!). In the Present Tense one should use the verb 'IS', hence the statement should read: "The system IS open to abuse"...

15/06/2012

Derby Magistrates Court

Details: Latvian Interpreter (Elina Seja) was booked through NRPSI – due to lack of ALS interpreter the defendant detained 6 days in custody from 9 till 15 June 2012.

15/06/2012

Northampton Crown Court

Details: Court listing for 15 June states...

Committal for Sentence

S20120155 NGUYEN Hoang 34NC0125712

Adjourned to 29/06 as an interpreter could not be provided

15/06/2012

Blackfriars Crown Court

Details: Blackfriars CC, no Bulgarian interpreter provided, judge decided to proceed with sentencing without one.

15/06/2012

ALS/Capita 'interpreter' sent to court despite admitting he has no qualifications or experience

Details: A few weeks ago I went to a Crown Court in London to monitor the situation with a colleague of mine and we witnessed an interesting situation. In one hearing a Spanish wannabe interpreter struggled to take the oath. After that we could not believe our ears when listening to the dialogue that followed between him and the judge:

"I must tell you now that I cannot do simultaneous interpreting, I can do consecutive only", the interpreter said. The judge repeated the interpreter's words asking him if he had heard right. The interpreter continued: "That is why you have to speak slowly and pause so I can repeat to the defendant." "Who sent you here? The new agency?" "Yes". "Are you qualified to do this? Have you got any interpreting qualifications and the appropriate training?" "No. And I told the agency I did not have qualifications and I can't interpret..." (I can't remember all his words. I was in such a shock I could not believe what I was hearing and that I was so lucky to witness such an incident). "And what did the agency say when you told them so?" "They said it did not matter. They said I should come here." Then he added that he had interpreted on a few occasions but did not really know what to do. The judge explained to him what was expected of him, what he should do etc.

Then the interpreter went into the dock. A few seconds later he interrupted the hearing by raising his hands and shouting at the judge: "I can't hear!" Everybody was flabbergasted. The judge asked him: "Can you hear me now?" "A little bit better!" he screeched. "Can you hear me better now?" the judge asked him again, raising his voice. "Yes, but you have to speak slowly too."

The prosecutor talked and talked for ten minutes or so. The interpreter was keeping quiet and scribbling something in his notebook. Later on the interpreter narrated the story in a few words. Again about ten minutes of silence on his part were followed by a few short words to the poor defendant. Then I hear the clerk pointing out to the judge: "Your Honour, the interpreter is struggling."

The Court tried to accommodate the interpreter's needs and I am sorry I cannot say for sure how many words he eventually said and how many times he actually opened his mouth or whether the defendant could understand what was going on or not. He was visibly scared nearly as much as the interpreter himself. Both in the dock, both in unusual circumstances probably, and struggling to cope with the situation they were facing. Welcome to the mad world of ALS legal interpreting!

15/06/2012

ALS consistently sending interpreter for wrong language

Details: Reports on interpreting service performance of Applied Language Solutions/Capita suggest a remarkable consistency of booking wrong language interpreters for court cases, since the company started the contract in England and Wales at the end of January.

On 23rd April a [Gloucestershire newspaper reported](#) that a Somali speaker was sent to Cheltenham Magistrates' Court by ALS while a Kurdish Sorani interpreter had been requested.

The prosecutor is described as disappointed after the booking had been made a month prior to the hearing.

On 18th May a colleague spoke of another case at Brighton County Court where a Latvian ALS contractor was incorrectly sent for a Lithuanian defendant. And although Latvia and Lithuania used to be part of one country, namely, the USSR with Russian as the state language, the Latvian and Lithuanian languages are totally different. By 18th May the case in question had already been re-listed three times. Since the same agency was used for the previous interpreter bookings of this case, this to a certain extent rules out the language confusion on the part of the court.

This month in Bradford Telegraph and Angus we have [another report](#) of a trial collapsing after a Czech speaker was sent to interpret for a Slovakian defendant in Bradford Crown Court. Recorder Christopher Storey QC is quoted as saying that it was “contrary to the interests of justice” to continue the proceedings. The jury was dismissed.

Just these three stories given above as examples make you think that considering the sheer number of cases where wrong language interpreters were sent by ALS, it cannot be simply put down to an administrative error. As a matter of fact, the question arises whether ALS gets paid after supplying wrong language interpreters and whether such cases count as “interpreter attended” in their own statistics they subsequently pass on to the Ministry of Justice (MoJ). There is an interesting NB in the Framework Agreement on Page 137: "NB if the interpreter is actually on site as booked and the interpretation doesn't go ahead, we implement just a one-hour charge. This is classified as a “did not attend” by the collaborative partner/detained person". So does ALS get paid for sending wrong language linguists and tick the box “service provided”?

12/06/2012

Harley Magistrates Court

Details: Harley Magistrates Court just rang for Czech interpreter, ALS let them down for tomorrow, I started to laugh and she said: "I know, you are boycotting too, aren't you?" Yes, I am indeed.

12/06/2012

MOJ refuses to answer FOI request relating to one court

Details: See letter below

Interpreters Project Team
Ministry of Justice
102 Petty France
LONDON
SW1H 9AJ

Email: Interpretationproject@justice.gsi.gov.uk
www.justice.gov.uk

Dear Mr McCafferty

Thank you for your letter of 10 May, in which you ask for the following information in relation to the provision of interpreters by Applied Language Solutions (ALS) at **Birmingham crown court**:

“How many cases have been adjourned by the court where no interpreter was provided since the ALS contract went live on 30 January 2012?”

Your request has been handled under the Freedom of Information Act 2000 (FOIA).

I can confirm that the Ministry of Justice (MoJ) **holds the information you have requested** but in this case, I will **not** be providing you with these details as **it would exceed the cost limit** set out in section 12(1) of the FOIA to do so.

The law allows a public authority to decline to answer requests under FOIA when it is estimated that it would **cost more than £600** to identify, locate, extract, and then provide the information that has been asked for. There are only certain activities that can be taken into account when making this calculation, but you may be interested to know that **the limit is equivalent to 3½ working days’ worth of work, calculated at £25 an hour.**

The difficulty with providing the information you have requested is that the central record of cases involving interpreters at courts does not go into the level of detail you ask for. Providing these details would require a manual search of the files relating to each case heard to establish whether an interpreter was used and the grounds for adjournment/cancellation where this has happened. It is therefore my view that providing the details you have asked for would take more than 3½ days.

You can find out more about section 12(1) by reading the extract from the FOIA and some guidance points considered when applying this exemption attached to this letter. You can also find more information by reading the full text of the FOIA, available at <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2000/36/section/12> and further guidance at <http://www.justice.gov.uk/guidance/foi-exemptions-guidance.htm>.

Although we cannot answer your request at the moment, if you refine it so that we can deal with it under the cost limit, then we will take it forward. For example, you may wish to narrow your request to ask for these details for a shorter period. However, you should be aware that, due to the manner in which the information you ask for is recorded, replying to a request in these terms may still exceed the cost limit.

Outside of the FOIA and on a discretionary basis I can tell you that the MoJ published a statistical report on the use of interpreters on 24 May. This publication included the number of requests for interpreters, the number and proportion of requests completed, and the number of complaints received. The report can be found at:

<http://www.justice.gov.uk/statistics/courts-and-sentencing/language-services-in-use>

I am sorry that on this occasion I have not been able to be of more assistance. You have the right to appeal our decision if you think it is incorrect. Details can be found in the 'How to Appeal' section attached to this letter.

Yours sincerely
Darren Fearnley

09/06/2012

Peterborough Crown Court

Details: 5 Lithuanian defendants - only one interpreter, hearing delayed.

08/06/2012

Courts resort to new tactics to fill ALS gaps

Details:

On June 6th at about 17:20 I was contacted by a lady from a firm of solicitors, asking me to attend Blackfriars Crown Court on Thursday, 7th June, with a possibility for attendance also on Friday, and to act as an interpreter for a listed hearing. Initially I assumed that I was being instructed by a firm of solicitors; but in order to be 100 percent sure I asked the caller whether I was expected to work for the court or solicitors. The response was crystal clear: it was an interpreting assignment for Blackfriars Crown Court.

At this point I mentioned it to the caller that, if this was a court interpreting assignment, why Blackfriars Crown Court did not get in touch with ALS as its sole interpreting service provider. The response was "We (Solicitors) have been given your details by Blackfriars Crown Court to book you as a Farsi Interpreter for tomorrow's hearing!"

I have to confirm that this has never happened to me before with the exception of Wood Green Crown Court, where interpreters are booked by the defendants' solicitors and at the end of the hearing they submit their invoices to the Listings Office and subsequently get paid by the court. I then told the caller that if I was expected to work for the court as a result of another ALS failure to provide an interpreter, I was not going to fill such a gap. Furthermore, as a qualified and experienced interpreter I've been boycotting ALS for its low quality and unacceptable work conditions since the beginning of the new regime and I will continue to do so! - I added. At this stage the caller thanked me, and I think she continued her search for another interpreter for the following day.

In summary, instead of approaching ALS to provide interpreting services required for the case at short notice, Blackfriars Crown Court Listing Office had provided the defendant's solicitor with my details and made them search for a Farsi interpreter.

I hope my other colleagues, who were possibly approached by the same solicitors that day and asked to fill the gap for ALS, also refused such a request. But the question remains: is this new tactics resorted to by courts in the country?

07/06/2012

ALS sends Czech interpreter for Slovakian defendant

Details: A Bradford Crown Court robbery trial was abandoned because a translator failed to turn up. But after a spokesman for Applied Language Solutions (ALS) had pledged to find out what went wrong, the contractor sent along a Czech interpreter for the Slovakian defendant the day after the jury was discharged.

On Thursday, the judge in the trial of Stanislav Jano aborted the trial and relisted it on August 29 after his interpreter did not turn up for the second day. A Czech interpreter arrived after 2pm, but Recorder Christopher Storey QC and the trial barristers agreed it was "contrary to the interests of justice" to continue. On Friday, ALS sent another Czech translator for the case.

He was then employed by the court to interpret for a co-accused Slovakian man who pleaded guilty in January and must now wait until after the trial to be sentenced.

An ALS spokesman, told the trial had been scuppered by lack of an interpreter, told the Telegraph & Argus: "We have been made aware of a Bradford case involving the non-supply of a Slovak interpreter for the second day of a trial and are investigating the court's concerns as a matter of urgency."

Yunus Valli, barrister for Jano, told the judge there had been similar difficulties with interpreters not turning up for cases at Bradford and Leeds Crown Courts. Local judges had raised concerns about ALS and he believed there was "a channel of communication to the Lord Chancellor's Department on this subject." Mr Valli said another trial at Bradford Crown Court had found itself without an interpreter on Thursday morning. Recorder Storey said ALS must "furnish an explanation". The question of a costs order would be raised when the Jano trial started afresh.

01/06/2012

ALS ignore request to remove data

Details: Applied Language Solutions not only ignored my request that they remove my data from their database, but they still have not acknowledged or replied to my letter of complaint dated 23/4/2012 sent by Recorded Signed For... are these the actions of an organisation of sufficient standing and repute to operate a national framework for interpreting services in the justice sector and to create and maintain a national register of legal interpreters? (Kasia Beresford)

May 2012

30/05/2012

Blackfriars Crown Court

Details: I would like to share with you my notes from monitoring at Blackfriars CC on Wednesday, the 30th of May.

I stayed for two hours in court 7 where two trials took place.

1st trial: Iranian defendant who required a Farsi interpreter. It was 2.30pm and no interpreter was present. The Usher said that there was an ALS interpreter around in the morning but he had to rush off after lunch. Any chance of calling an interpreter now? The Judge said "no, no interpreters available". And then I overheard something which I never thought I would hear in a court in the UK. The Judge asks the defendant's council: "How long has your client been in this country?" The council replies "10 years". "Well", the judge said, "there is no need for an interpreter then, it is expensive! I personally have quite few Iranian friends. They are very intelligent people. I am sure he will understand." The case was very complicated with fraud and immigration issues intertwined. The defendant looked utterly confused throughout the hearing.

2nd trial: a Romanian guy and his Chinese girlfriend in the dock. No interpreter present. The Romanian defendant's defence barrister explained that his client spoke enough English to be able to understand. All I can say was that it was painful to watch! The case was complex (they've each got an 18 month prison sentence)! The Romanian defendant was continuously asking his girlfriend what was going on. It lasted like this for a whole hour. When the words "custodial sentence" were pronounced, they both looked at each other not knowing if to laugh or cry. Only when they were not allowed to leave the dock did they understand what was going on. The screaming was unbearable!

I was fuming! Outside the court I launched a tirade at the barrister who replied coldly: "I know there is a problem but this is the situation now!"

26/05/2012

Unqualified Interpreter offered jobs

Details: This month I had an automated job offer from the ALS database. Yes, I confess, my details are still there as, I assume, are those of Jajo the Rabbit. The job was Greek-English interpreting at Southampton Combined Court. The case was described as a 'family_case_involving_children'. The name of the person who requires the interpreter was disclosed. It seems that all I would have to do is click a button that says 'Accept job offer' and turn up, if I had no morals at all, that is.

There are two problems: firstly, I am not an interpreter; secondly I have no Modern Greek qualification at all. I do list Greek as one of my languages but my level, using the ALS self-assessment classification, is given as 'D-Limited'. I do have a degree in Classical Greek, with Latin, but I don't mention that in their database. It is just possible that the person requiring an interpreter is very very old indeed, or is citing Euripides in support of his/her case. If that's true, ALS has done well to track me down. It's a shame I was fully booked but maybe Jajo was free?

It was the second time that ALS offered me interpreting work despite knowing that all my qualifications are for translating and not interpreting. The first time, the offer came by phone and I'm afraid I didn't bother asking which language they wanted. I just assumed that the individual making the call didn't know the difference between a translator and an interpreter: in other words, it was a human error. As the second offer came through their automated system, it would seem to prove that they are willing to assign work to people who have declared that their knowledge of the language in question is limited.

21/05/2012

Hull Crown Court

Details: On Monday, 21/05/2012, I attended Hull Crown Court for a job with the Crown Prosecution Service. I was asked to interpret for 2 Polish speaking witnesses in the case of affray and the defendants were 4 Polish speaking as well. It looked like a long day was ahead of me.

It started great (sarcastic): I turned up for 11 am, as requested, only to find out upon arrival that witnesses have not been asked to come before 2 pm and the case was not listed to be heard till about 12 pm. So I took the chance and tried to locate where the defendants would be. They were all answering on bail so it was pretty much easy. Probably every Polish interpreter is capable of recognising their fellow countrymen. The distinctive Slavonic outlook tells us everything. I sat in the concourse, quite near them and listened out for the ALS interpreter(s) to speak. I expected at least a couple since there was 4 defendants to interpret for.

The defendants appeared with their families so it took me a while to work out which one of them was the interpreter. There was only one!!! She appeared to be a well-dressed lady with curly hair and glasses. She spoke very good Polish, so I assumed she was native Polish speaking. Finally, when we first made it to court, she appeared to be a little confused as what to do. She first followed the defendants to the dock and had to be called out by the usher to stand in the witness box to affirm. Although it did not look as though she knew what to do, I can excuse her, as all of us had their first time in courts (so much for the sole provider's "experienced linguists").

The judge was running late, as he was tied up in another courtroom. 15 minutes later, the barristers decided we would all wait outside for the judge to be free. About 5 minutes later, we entered the court again, only to find out the case would open "in chambers". What was my surprise, when I heard the ALS lady said "you have to leave, the case was closed". The defendants' families and defendants themselves looked a bit surprised too, but we did as we

were told. Unfortunately, opening in chambers did mean I would not be able to see if the interpreter got sworn. Nevertheless, when they finally let us back in, I started to observe how she worked.

Was I at all surprised when she did not interpret simultaneously what the barristers and the judge were saying? Not at all. How can you do simultaneous interpreting for 4 people without any equipment? Unfortunately, at some point the barristers started presenting some evidence to the judge, so I had to leave the room, so that my interpreting might not get contaminated by what they presented (I do it just in case). When I got back, they were about to read the charges to the defendants.

Then it went like this:

Court Clerk: Mr, you are charged with affray.

Interpreter: You caused a brawl.

CC: The particulars are that on..... you used or threatened unlawful violence

INT: You used aggressiveness.

CC: towards another and your conduct was such as would cause a person of reasonable firmness

INT: towards other and behaved so bad other would fear for their safety

CC: present at the scene to fear for his personal safety.

INT: that they were scared.

I thought: brilliant, a classic example of lack of experience and knowledge of the appropriate vocabulary. Then it was even worse. When the barristers finally put it to the judge that all 4 defendants wished to plead guilty, the judge started addressing them. Quite usual, he was explaining what the impact on the victims was and so on.

About 20% of it was interpreted to maybe one or two defendants at time. It was not surprising, as the ALS linguist sat with two defendants on her left and two on her right. Nevertheless, there was very little simultaneous interpreting. At some point I started wondering, how she would cope with at least getting the sentence across to them. It seemed to me she only interpreted to them what they were given in months (suspended) without telling them they were getting community orders and restraining orders, too!!! I can only hope she was not as bad when it came to consecutive interpreting and that barristers explained to their clients what the implications of breach of those could be.

And one more thing, the Court Clerk told her she would only get her form signed from 10:30 am, as that is what it said on her paperwork the interpreter was supposed to turn up at. I am not sure what time she was ordered to appear by ALS, however, she was not too happy with it.

17/05/2012

Taunton Magistrates Court

Details: 5 Romanian gentlemen in the cells. The police had arranged via ALS for an interpreter

to attend Court. At 9.30 am they ring the police. No one is available. CPS ring ALS and are asked if they would like to book for another day!! The Court is left trying to unravel.

16/05/2012

Magistrates Court TBC

Details: A few days ago I paid a visit to my local Magistrates court which I will keep unnamed. While I was there, I had an interesting conversation with a Lithuanian ALS worker who travelled 4 hours each way to do this assignment. He was quite friendly and so was I and he told me he was on the NRPSI. Later checks showed that he wasn't. How many more ALS linguists are claiming they are registered and qualified while checks are no longer made by court staff and all they see is a valueless ALS badge?

I asked him if he was going to renew his NRPSI membership which at the time I thought he had. His answer amazed me. He said that he would, as the courts may book interpreters direct again! At this point I asked whether there was a clause in his contract with ALS to prevent him from taking direct calls from courts. He smiled and was rather evasive, but from what he did say I understood that taking direct court jobs as well as working for ALS was not at all unthinkable. And we all know very well that because ALS is unable to cope with all of the bookings a lot of court assignments still go to registered court interpreters direct.

I managed to talk to the court staff, too. They said they'd never seen such an astonishing number of double bookings, no shows and other cock-ups in the whole of their working life. A few days before they'd had 4 Lithuanian linguists for only 3 defendants! (Just look at the brilliant, super-efficient, money-saving ALS booking system!) Other days either no one turns up at all for a few defendants or someone does turn up eventually after travelling half-way across the country. All were saying to me in chorus that they couldn't wait for the old system to come back. A solicitor I know told me his Polish linguist the other day didn't know what she was doing at all. He said the situation with ALS was absolutely appalling and that he'd written to his MP and to Kenneth Clarke!

11/05/2012

Solicitor takes over from ALS interpreters

Details: The officer in charge of a case was left 'in shock' after a solicitor took over from the Bulgarian Capita (ALS) interpreter in Southwark Crown Court on 11th of May.

The Bulgarian Capita linguist informed the court that she could only stay for 15 minutes on her arrival and promptly left. The defendant, a Bulgarian of Roma origin, had some basic understanding of Greek as she had spent some time in Greece, though she was, by no means, fluent. The defence solicitor, a lady of Greek extraction, suggested that she should interpret for her client. The court agreed, shockingly, and before long the solicitor was in the dock, interpreting! The officers who told me this were in a state of complete and utter disbelief.

11/05/2012

Court TBC

Details: On 11th May there was a court hearing taking place, and to my astonishment and disgust the person present at court was no other than the same Hindi ALS worker who had been dismissed by the judge from another case I observed earlier in the week.

Upon seeing me she became very distressed... The next thing I observed was that a court employee was holding her hand and comforting her! He appeared very concerned about the state she was in and he spent about 15 minutes reassuring her. Although she was very nervous, she obviously had no concern about the fact that she had caused the previous trial to collapse and the inevitable re-trial is going to cost the public purse an enormous amount of money.

The defence solicitor was known to me, I informed him of what had occurred during the previous week. He promised me that he would keep an eye on her, as both the solicitor and the barrister spoke and understood Punjabi themselves. However, I did not get the chance to observe her interpreting as the case had not started and I had to leave.

There were two other (ALS) workers present in the court and I was lucky enough to see the actions of one of them outside the court room. This Tamil worker from Manchester was very nervous and he kept asking everyone about the legal terminology. He kept going back to the information monitor to see if there were any updates as well as pestering the usher.

Court security made a call for the Tamil interpreter to go to the security (I think this was requested by the barrister), but the worker ignored the call and stayed by the monitor. The barrister came to the waiting area, found the worker and introduced herself.

He was talking to his barrister and I was standing close enough to hear everything.

Worker - Can I see the defendant's file?

Barrister – No, you cannot.

Worker – But I need to see the file.

Barrister – There is no need for you to see the file.

This continued for a short time when finally the barrister told him 'you only need to interpret whatever I say in English', however, the worker kept on insisting that it was his right to see the file, and the barrister told him 'no, you don't, it is not your right to see the file'. Then both of them went down to the cells.

They came back after a little while and I could see the barrister was not happy. The ALS worker came back to the monitor and after realising that the case was for mention, he became very nervous. There were two random solicitors chatting and the ALS worker approached them to ask the meaning of "mention". The solicitors did not tell him the meaning, saying it could have several and he then started asking the public.

Unfortunately, I had to leave shortly, but it was a totally amusing experience.

11/05/2012

Experience of ALS interpreter

Details: After the mistake of registering with ALS, doing four jobs for them, and then informing them that I am not satisfied with them, for a long period of time I kept on getting calls and e-mails for many new jobs.

I kept on declining politely; informing them that I was not interested and I did not wish to get any job offers. Then in April someone called me and I let them have a long chat with me and insisted on my name being removed from their database. I thought that was it, now thankfully no one would call me again. Still I am getting job offers through email with estimated payment details.

These estimated payments are worrying; who are the people who are doing these jobs? I am copying the time offered and the expected payments offered:

- 1 Duration: 2880 minutes, Payment Estimate: £435.28
- 2 Duration: 1440 minutes, Payment Estimate: £175.6
- 3 Duration: 34560 minutes, Payment Estimate: £5641.55

First job converted in hours is 48 hours, the estimated payment is a little over £9.00 per hour (excluding travel time and travel expenses).

The second job converted in hours is 24 hours, the estimated payment is a little over £7.00 per hour (excluding travel time and travel expenses).

The third job converted in hours 576 hours, the estimated payment is a little over £9.00 per hour (excluding travel time and travel expenses).

I noticed the pay rates are even less than half of what ALS said it would pay (which was little enough).

So what is the integrity of this Agency?

What will be the integrity of the people who will work with an agency which does not have any integrity?

What will happen to people who depend on these services?

08/05/2012

Crown Court (London) & Boston Mag Court

Details: At a crown court in London two Romanian defendants appeared in custody today. It was a joint case listed for 3 pm.

By 3.30 pm there was no interpreter from the court supplier, Applied Language Solutions, owned by Capita. The clerk mentioned there was an interpreter in the building in another court and it would take 40-45 minutes for that interpreter to become available. The judge had to adjourn the case until another day. The defendants were taken back to the cells without a clue of what went on.

On this occasion an ALS interpreter was unable to handle both cases in the same court; however, here is another observation. Four Russian interpreters were booked for different defendants on the same day in Boston Magistrates' Court a few days ago. I thought this is exactly the situation Nick Herbert (the Minister for Policing and Criminal Justice) said we would avoid under the new ALS system when he spoke at the adjournment debate on 10th October 2011. Specifically he [said](#): "The difference with our new framework agreement is that the court staff and the CPS each make a single phone call or send a single e-mail to ALS. ALS then not only contacts the interpreters, but its infrastructure means that it knows about the two jobs and can ensure that one interpreter is used for both jobs - saving on costs for the justice sector and providing a more worthwhile piece of work for the interpreter who is booked."

The reality has turned out exactly the opposite: ALS sends same-language interpreters for separate cases, one interpreter can't often handle more than one case and court staff make more than one phone call or send more than one email trying to chase ALS interpreters the company can't supply!

04/05/2012

Leeds Crown Court

Details: I have been asked by a solicitor to attend Leeds Crown Court today to assist them and their Hungarian-speaking client who was due to be sentenced today after a long trial in March.

There were four Hungarian defendants in this case. ALS managed to send two Hungarian interpreters for those four defendants. Hungarian linguist no. 1 (HL1) was wearing her NRPSI badge despite the fact that she is not on the National Register anymore. I guess wearing an expired NRPSI badge is still less embarrassing than wearing an ALS badge. When she swore in, she went into the dock and sat down in the back between two of the defendants.

And then came Hungarian Linguist no. 2. (HL2) She was asked to take the oath but first she did not understand what she was asked to do. Then she started reading out the oath in broken English and with a very strong accent. She could not pronounce some words and generally really struggled. So the judge asked her: "Madam Interpreter, how good is your English?" She was just staring blankly. So the judge asked again, slowly, loudly and clearly: "Madam Interpreter, do you understand me?" Obviously she still didn't because then she was trying to hand over her ALS Claim Form to him. Then the usher went over and asked if she understood the judge. This time she said yes, she just could not hear him first. She said something like "I

think my English is good.” The judge promised he would speak up. She went into the dock and sat in the first row between the other two defendants.

The hearing started, HL1 was simultaneously interpreting more or less everything for the two defendants in the back, but HL2 was just sitting in silence. After about five minutes the judge asked her why she had not been translating the proceedings. Again, it felt that she did not understand the judge because she did not say a word. The judge explained that she should have been translating everything because so far the two defendants next to her did not have a clue about what had been discussed in the court room. She was very nervous and then suddenly HL1 stood up and told the judge that it did not matter if HL2 was not translating because she was and the other two defendants could just listen to her! The two barristers of these defendants stood up immediately and demanded that their clients should have a competent interpreter, too. Then HL2 suddenly said (still sitting) “But I have understood everything that has been said so far”. The judge got really mad and asked HL2 to leave the court! He explained that her role is not to “understand” but to “translate” the proceedings.

Then the barrister who had booked me told the judge that there was another Hungarian Interpreter in the court room (me). He told him that I was a qualified and competent interpreter but do not work for the new agency (Applied Language Solutions). The barrister asked the judge if I could go in the dock and interpret for his client. I stood up and gave a little speech: I told the judge that I was a qualified interpreter who used to work in the “old system” but refuse to work for ALS. I explained the reasons briefly but he seemed to have heard all about it anyway. He was very understanding and sympathetic. He described the new system as a “disgrace”. I told him that I did not just boycott ALS but also all direct bookings and would normally refuse a request like this. However, I appreciate the seriousness of the situation and I am happy to help. In return I asked that he lodged a complaint about this incident. He assured me that he would have done that anyway and he was very grateful that I helped. So I stepped inside the dock and we carried on.

When we finished, the judge thanked me again and left the court room. After this all solicitors and barristers came up to me to “congratulate me on my speech”. They all had lots of stories to tell me about ALS, how bad they are, how many problems they are having every day with ALS interpreters, etc.

After the hearing even HL1 disappeared very quickly so it was me who stayed for another 1.5 hour to help all barristers one by one to consult with their clients who were now in custody.

01/05/2012

Leeds Crown Court

Details: Yesterday morning I had two pleading phone calls from DCs from Leeds, who desperately needed a Polish interpreter for a court session in the morning to deal with an extended detention hearing for a suspect arrested on suspicion of a serious assault. They told

me that ALS had let them down and they were unhappy with their service. One of them said that professional interpreters were greatly missed. I sympathised with their situation, but had to refuse as firstly, don't work for ALS and secondly, I had other commitments.

One of them even suggested that they should pay me directly from their petty cash funds. I apologised and said that I could not help, even though I would be more than happy to attend the police station and court if the Framework Agreement was abandoned.

The saddest thing is that they recognise how good we were and say that we are greatly missed when they need us because Applied Language Solutions/Capita have let them down, so how can other police forces even consider joining this insane Framework Agreement?

April 2012

24/04/2012

Uxbridge Magistrates' Court

Details: One Somali and one Punjabi interpreter were requested for two very minor offences for which the defendants would normally have been dealt with on the day by way of non-custodial sentences. Neither ALS interpreter showed up. The two defendants were remanded in overnight custody.

If suspects are held in custody because no interpreter came, they can claim compensation for unlawful detention and should contact the solicitor who represented them in their case.

20/04/2012

Bradford Crown Court

Details: Today we had a chance to read a news story about this Bradford man who was jailed for a "nasty" gang attack, as the BBC put it on their website. Just read the article to find out what happened during the hearing. The question is though - did the defendant himself understand what happened in court? Today I popped in to Bradford Crown Court to view the case, and I was not disappointed.

So, it was the sentencing case of Bartolomej Makula who was charged with GBH. Bartolomej Makula does not speak English and an ALS interpreter was booked for him. Upon the Judges remark "you should have been here 20 min ago" the interpreter replied "I was standing outside for 15 min". He then swore on the Bible with terrible English and went to the dock to join the defendant. The prosecutor gave a 20 minute summary of the facts, while the interpreter only interpreted approximately 5 sentences, and nothing about the complex injuries the victim had sustained. Nothing whatsoever of the defence's speech was interpreted, and only every 10th sentence of the Judge's speech.

What really got me was that the Judge never enquired as to why the interpreter's lips were not even moving. The clerk did look at the interpreter a lot, but didn't say anything either. The interpreter wasn't asked his name or the language. The sentence of 15 years in prison was not interpreted, and the interpreter himself looked puzzled most of the time. Nobody seemed to care if the interpreter was actually doing their job.

I later waited for this interpreter outside the court room; I introduced myself and asked him how long he had been interpreting for. Apparently, only two months and he already worked on four court cases. I was very polite and tried to get his name but was unsuccessful. The only thing I do know is that he is a Slovakian Roma.

Yes, what the defendant did was, of course, terrible, and certainly, the man deserves his sentence. But does he not deserve a fair trial, where he is actually able to understand what is being said about him and in his defence? What has happened to Justice in this country?

16/04/2012

Bournemouth Magistrates Court

Today, on 13/04/12, I got a call from a defendant for whom I had interpreted in Bournemouth Magistrates before. As I refused to work at this hearing, he was allocated an ALS interpreter and he was so annoyed and shocked by him!

This ALS interpreter had just turned 18, it was his second interpreting job and he had travelled from Leeds down to Bournemouth! The defendant who's English is not bad at all told him he'd better not interpret in Crown Courts as he would be a liability with this level of interpreting! He was mixing up dates, was very nervous and the solicitor kept pushing him to interpret all the time as he was not familiar with legal terms!

13/04/2012

Snaresbrook Crown Court

Details: A Romanian defendant giving evidence at Snaresbrook Crown Court said the claimant had "beaten them" but the interpreter said "bitten".

The mistake came to light once the prosecution questioned the defendant. The judge has now ordered a retrial.

It comes as a new contract privatising court translation services in England and Wales has come into force.

Defence solicitor Dhaneshwar Sharma said the interpreter from Applied Language Solutions told the court she realised she had made a mistake but had kept quiet about it.

When the prosecution cross-examined the defendant on Friday, towards the end of the four-day trial for burglary, they asked for evidence of the defendant being bitten.

The defendant then said they had been "beaten".

Mr Sharma said it was bad that a re-trial had to take place as not only had the victim had to recover from the experience, but they would now have to go through the alleged incident for a third time, having already given evidence at this week's trial.

The retrial could cost £25,000.

13/04/2012

SOCA: Birmingham Police

Details: Yesterday morning the Serious Organised Crime Agency (SOCA) called me to check if I was available for an urgent booking at one of the police stations in Birmingham. Before I asked her about ALS etc, she took the initiative to inform me that they had not signed up with any private agency or anything for the provision of interpreters and that they still used the previous arrangements. It seemed to me that she was aware of our opposition to ALS and FWA.

Anyway, I arrived at the police station within the next hour and the first person I met was the solicitor for the suspect, who on seeing me started complaining about interpreters and asked me what the problem was in the morning. I told him that I was not aware of any problem and that I had just been called less than an hour ago. He asked me if I was from ALS and I said no.

The solicitor then informed me that he had come to the police station four and a half hours before that, but there was no interpreter. The custody sergeant was on the phone with ALS for 40 minutes and the call handler had no idea about how to handle the situation and even found it hard to understand what the officer was saying and what was required. Anyway, after 40 minutes the custody sergeant gave up and the solicitor was sent home to come back when an interpreter was available.

Apparently, two SOCA officers one of whom had travelled down from London to speak to the suspect were extremely confused and had no choice, but to inform their office in Birmingham that the interview could not go ahead. SOCA then informed them that they should not have contacted the ALS in the first place, because SOCA is only using NRPSI interpreters and at that point I was called.

Whilst SOCA officers were trying to make arrangements through their own office, the custody sergeant went on the phone again after 20 minutes they had promised to send an interpreter, however they could not confirm what time the interpreter would arrive. The decision was made to wait and see.

So I arrived and the officers were relieved to know that I was not from ALS and told me "you are a proper interpreter then". Anyway, we went into the interview room and after a while we came out for a break, at which point the custody sergeant informed the officers that an ALS interpreter also arrived when we were all in the interview and she was sent back.

I then overheard one sergeant saying to the other "it's a nightmare to get an interpreter when we have a foreign suspect" and the other one said "what can I say".

Anyway, the suspect was charged and SOCA officers kindly asked me to attend XXX magistrates' court this morning. When I went to court, I was greeted by a SOCA prosecutor who started by thanking me for arriving so early (it was 09:55). I told her that I was booked for 10:00 so I was not early. She said, "well, I hardly ever see interpreters arrive before 11:30, if ever they turn up". I told her that I was not working for ALS.

Later, I saw the defence solicitor for the defendant and went to the cells with her. On our way back, she said "we have a lot of problems with your company and they have to sort it out". I told her that I did not work for ALS. Interestingly she kept referring to ALS as ASL.

11/04/2012

West Yorkshire Police

Details: A colleague of mine and I got a desperate call from a DWP Officer yesterday who we had worked with in the past. He told us that they had arrested a number of Hungarian suspects in Dewsbury and the interpreter who had been booked by West Yorkshire Police through ALS arrived at 8.00 am and left at 9.00 am saying she had another job at Sheffield Crown Court!

They told her that she had been booked for a full day but she said she could only do one hour. So West Yorkshire Police were desperately looking for another Hungarian interpreter to interview all those suspects in custody (not sure about the number). I also spoke to a PC in Dewsbury who told me that a colleague of his had been complaining about a Punjabi interpreter supplied by ALS who could hardly write in English!

10/04/2012

Snaresbrook Crown Court

Details: I attended Snaresbrook Crown Court on 10 April 2012 to observe the performance of ALS, the contractor for the provision of interpreting services to the Courts. The first case on the list of Court No 1 at 10.00 am was the PCMH (Plea and Case Management Hearing) hearing of a Somali defendant and the court clerk announced that the ALS interpreter was booked but did not attend. The brother of the defendant was there to accompany him and he speaks English. Before the judge came in to the court room, the counsel for the defence explained to the defendant (through his brother) that the interpreter booked did not turn up and the case would be heard with the help of the brother. The hearing was adjourned to 22nd May 2012.

The judge came in to the court room, aware of the situation and said: "It is intolerable that the defendant's sitting in the dock and not knowing what is being said or going on. All I can express is that I regret we have to work in these circumstances". The counsel for defence said: "I came to this court for the same case on 12th March 2012 and again there was no ALS interpreter. The case was adjourned for today and yet again there is no interpreter from ALS".

The second case in the morning of Court No 1 was for a Turkish defendant, another PCMH hearing, there was an Iranian or Azerbaijani interpreter who had a very poor command of Turkish and a rather poor command of English. It was clear that he had no experience, training or qualification as he struggled to read the interpreter's oath. It was also clear that he had no idea about his role in the court room as an interpreter. When the judge and the court clerk were addressing the defendant in a clearly audible level of voice, the interpreter should also be speaking in the same level of voice so that everything is recorded into the audio system. But the interpreter chose to whisper, so that nothing was audible, nothing was recorded and this is also unacceptable and unprofessional. The hearing is adjourned to 18th May 2012.

After the hearing finished I left the court room to speak to the person who purported to be the interpreter and introduced myself to him in a friendly manner and said I was an NRPSI registered interpreter and told him my name. He didn't even want to tell me his name. I had a chat with him for 5 minutes in English and Turkish, mixed, that is when I had a better understanding of his level of incompetency.

I also spoke with Ms. Sarah Abraham, a barrister who mainly works for the CPS as a prosecutor, who also described her experience as "the No Show of ALS interpreters is causing a lot of difficulties in the courts and the way the cases are run".

10/04/2012

Stratford Magistrates Court

Details: A colleague reported from Stratford Magistrates Court today, 10th April. The trial finally happened after at least two previous adjournments due to the lack of an ALS interpreter. My colleague interpreted for the victim who was giving evidence while the ALS interpreter was supposed to interpret everything to the defendant in the dock.

To my colleague's astonishment, the ALS interpreter was sitting there in silence most of the time and would only occasionally whisper something briefly to the defendant. When my colleague tried to draw the usher's attention to the fact that the defendant's interpreter was not really interpreting, the usher did not seem interested and just said, 'Yes, we know'. No one else in the courtroom seemed to be bothered.

Has the MoJ given their staff an instruction to hush up ALS failures or do court staff feel so helpless that they turn a blind eye to such striking incompetence of ALS linguists and the agency which sends them?

04/04/2012

Court TBC

Details: There was a lady linguist sent by ALS for a 10 am start. After interpreting accurately only about 40-50% of what was said, she gave her ALS form to the legal adviser to sign it. The legal adviser wrote down the times the case was actually heard in court: 12.05-12.40 and signed next to them.

The lady linguist stated that she attended Court at 10 am and the legal adviser should sign her from 10 am. The legal adviser told her in very clear terms that: "our instructions are to sign for the times the case has been heard in FRONT of the bench; I understand that you've been here since 10am, but this is something you have to raise it with ALS."

The linguist insisted and even addressed the magistrates who told her "it's out of our hands, please take it up with the agency".

The linguist was clearly not happy and I understand that. What I don't understand is WHY people sign up with ALS?

I've heard her saying to the solicitor, outside the courtroom, that she would never accept a videolink again (as this case was heard via a videolink). I wonder why? No risk of just mumbling something in court? And does ALS pay for the time spent in the court building before and after the actual hearing in Court or not?

04/04/2012

Norwich Crown Court

Details: A Lithuanian ALS linguist, Mr D. L., who is not on the National Register of Public Service Interpreters and who does not profess to hold any language-related qualifications whatsoever, arrived at Norwich Crown Court on 04/04/12 to interpret for a preliminary hearing. However, throughout the hearing the ALS linguist concentrated on actively discussing the case with the defendant over the videolink, instead of interpreting for her! He also complained to the court that, apparently, he is severely underpaid and would only receive £20 for this job - even though he had travelled from Harrogate (366 miles for a return journey)!

04/04/2012

Chichester Crown Court

Details: I wish to draw your attention to some of the methods used by ALS in recruiting interpreters.

On 2nd April I received a telephone call from Chichester Crown Court enquiring why I had not attended the Court where, it appears, I had been booked by ALS to act as an interpreter. I was outraged and shocked as I had never registered with them, nor had I ever given them my details. When soon after ALS telephoned me, they said that this occurred in error, and they claimed that according to their records I had agreed to take the job on.

It is very disturbing, the more so as it is apparent that they had used my details without my knowledge or permission and in the process even given me a fictitious address. This surely must be illegal and, I believe, steps should be taken to prevent ALS in engaging in such practices.

Marta Moore

NRPSI Interpreter
Reg. number 11391

03/04/2012

Winchester Crown Court

Details: A sentencing hearing involving 2 Nepalese defendants for perverting the course of

justice took place at Winchester Crown Court. The hearing had originally been listed for 2nd March, but adjourned after no interpreter turned up on that day. On 2nd March it was re-fixed for April 3rd to enable ALS to provide an interpreter. They failed to do so.

Apparently Applied Language Solutions promised the Court that they would be able to provide an interpreter next week. Given their utter failure to provide one on two consecutive occasions nobody believed them, so eventually, rather than endure yet another adjournment the defendants were sentenced with a relative doing his best to interpret for them. He had never done so before, he had no experience of courts or the justice system. After the judge imposed suspended sentences, the probation officer rather plaintively asked if he could borrow "the court interpreter" (i.e. the relative) to interpret for the probation service.

02/04/2012

Nottingham Crown Court

Details: The preliminary hearing was scheduled for 11.30 and indeed, at 11.30 the name of the defendant (Lithuanian) was announced after which the solicitor and ALS linguist appeared from around the corner (I knew it was a linguist as he had a blue lanyard with the ALS logo on it and he clutched a Russian dictionary under his arm). I followed them into the court room and took my seat in the second row. We waited for a video-link to commence after which the linguist was sworn in, and answered the question about his name. However, he didn't say which language he was going to interpret in.

The Prosecutor started to talk. The linguist started to interpret. The first sentence was in a language I didn't recognise, but after that the linguist did switch to Russian. He wasn't interpreting everything, but summarised. I cannot say that his Russian was non-existent; he did produce utterances I could understand, but it is not what I would call the level of a professional interpreter! It was pigeon Russian, maybe to the standard of GCSE. The Lithuanian (!) defendant didn't say a word and it was difficult to assess whether he understood anything at all. Here are just some examples of the ALS linguist's interpreting:

- "We need to organise another date" - «Время даётся когда на другое время» (time is given when for another time);

Prosecutor -"I think that we will manage it in two days even with the interpreter"- «значит он думает, что всё будет нормально и займётся точно два дня даже присутствие переводчика» (so he thinks that everything will be normal and occupy exactly 2 days even the presence of an interpreter);

- "I would like to remind you that you will receive a credit for your guilty plea" - «если сегодня признаетесь, то вам будет лучше» (if you admit today it would be better for you);

- "The record will show that credit was offered to you" - «Вам бы дали положительные пункты сегодня, если вы признали» (positive points will be given to you if you admit);

- "You will have to prepare your defence statement" - «Ваш адвокат готовит ваши данные» (your solicitor is preparing your data).

It's shocking that ALS "stars" can get away with such poor performance on a daily basis. What he does is absolutely criminal.

02/04/2012

Swansea Family Court

Details: I was asked by ALS to go to Swansea Family Court on Monday 02/04/2012 in a case where children were involved. Initially I agreed but then I realised I could actually be losing money, I have contacted ALS and informed them that I could not attend.

On the day, The family were told by the Interpreter that, The Judge ruled that, the father was not to have access to the children.

What actually said by The Judge was,. Father could have unsupervised access to the children at any time, he could even visit them at home.

Which was confirmed by Hayley Price, Social worker who was present at yesterdays meeting. I am in great difficulty to find words to explain my feelings; I could only say that, I felt so sorry for each member of the family concerned.

March 2012

30/03/2012

Birmingham Crown Court

Details: Court 1, Pre-trial review. Punjabi interpreter required for one of the three defendants. An ALS linguist arrives on time, but that is his only achievement of the day. The case is called in, and the linguist pulls out a sheet of paper and reads out his affirmation, stumbling over it a couple of times. He introduces himself and states "Urdu" as the language he will be interpreting into. Hold on, did he really say "Urdu" and not "Punjabi"? Yep, he did.

He then joins the three defendants in the dock and completely ignores the judge when HH asks the defendants to stand up. Uncomfortable pause. The judge then repeats his request, now gesturing, and this time it works. The next 45 minutes are spent in complete silence for those in the dock - the ALS linguist does not even attempt to mumble, he puts his thoughtful face on instead and barely utters one sentence every 5 or 10 minutes. I have to pinch myself to ensure that this is really happening, and nobody does anything about it.

When the hearing is finished, the ALS linguist is after a signature on his timesheet. He approaches every wigged person with his request, however to no avail - they all say he needs the court clerk for that. The poor ALS linguist is unsure who the mysterious clerk is, so somebody has to walk him over and do the talking on his behalf.

I left the courtroom and sat outside when I was approached by a friend of the Punjabi lady, for whom the interpreter was booked. They wanted to speak to the press. He and the client (who said she did not understand much Urdu!) then shared with me their opinion of this particular interpreter - apparently, he made it clear to her straightaway that he was unable to interpret at the same time as others were speaking. Sorry, what was that?!

Has he ever heard of SIMULTANEOUS interpreting?! Have ALS ever mentioned to him that court hearings are very likely to require simultaneous mode? How can ALS claim that they only employ qualified linguists, all RPSIs apparently, if this particular linguist is not even aware of this crucial interpreting technique and still gets to interpret for Crown Courts?!

30/03/2012

Birmingham Crown Court

Details: Court 10, Vietnamese defendant, for sentence.

An ALS linguist arrives 1 hour late, but with a smile! Usher: Are you the Vietnamese interpreter? ALS: Yesss :) Usher: Are you aware that you are 1 hour late? ALS: Yesss :) Usher: Did the agency ask you to arrive 15 minutes prior to the assignment? ALS: Yesss :) Usher: OK. Oath or an affirmation? ALS: Yesssss :)

The affirmation part was hilarious – even though he was asked to repeat after the usher, the ALS linguist managed to badly mispronounce just about everything, adding his own words into the text and omitting bits of what was said. I have never heard anything like that before! The judge raised his eyebrows a couple of times, but decided to proceed nevertheless.

In the public gallery, I sat next to two Vietnamese ladies. As soon as the case started and the ALS linguist started his interpreting, their faces turned very emotional - the ladies' eyes widened with surprise, they vigorously shook their heads on many occasions, hid their faces in their hands, and even giggled amongst themselves a few times. They were asked to keep quiet. I scribbled on the paper "Is he good?", pointing at the ALS linguist in the dock - they vigorously shook their heads.

The hearing lasted for an hour. As soon as it was finished, the ALS linguist demonstratively wiped his forehead, muttered "See you next time" with a smile, and rushed out of the building. The two Vietnamese ladies rushed to the defence counsel and I overheard them say that the Vietnamese interpreter was a complete joke and should have never been allowed to work in courts! According to them, not only did he translate all the basic dates and names wrong, he misinterpreted just about everything that was said! The ladies were convinced that the Vietnamese defendant had no chance of fully understanding the sentencing guidelines that were discussed, the explanation behind his imprisonment, or any other aspects of his future (incl. being on the sex offender register, Home Office's involvement, etc). They insisted on a re-sentencing hearing, and the barrister confirmed that she would appeal.

28/03/2012

Ipswich Magistrates' Court

Details: SOLICITORS have criticised a new court interpreter system after a North East translator was forced to make a 564-mile round trip for an eight-minute court hearing.

The Vietnamese interpreter had to get up at around 3am to catch a train from Newcastle to Peterborough, before changing trains to Ipswich, to be at the town's South East Suffolk Magistrates' Court by 10am.

Following the four-and-a-half journey to Suffolk the hearing began at 10.43am and finished at 10.51am.

Last night solicitors branded the situation as a farce. They claimed their clients have been left in jail when interpreters fail to turn up for potential bail hearings because of the distance they had to travel. Lawyers said they and court staff have even had to resort to using the internet web service Google Translate to be able to communicate with their clients.

In some cases it has been claimed friends of the defendants have had to stand up in court to help explain what is going on to the defendant. The Newcastle interpreter had travelled from the region to assist defendant Phuong Van Duong, who is accused of the production of cannabis.

His solicitor, Neil Saunders, said he had not been able to understand what was happening in court on four previous occasions as no translator had turned up. Mr Saunders said: Farcical is not the right word. It's actually a tragedy. Whilst justice must be blind, it should not be mute. People are not being represented.

29/03/2012

Tottenham Magistrates Court

Details: I [solicitor] acted for the defendant who was due to make a 2nd bail application on this date via video link. No interpreter attended the hearing, no other interpreter was available. The hearing was abandoned and adjourned until the following day.

The defendant had not previously been able to supply the court with an address but on this occasion a friend had attend the court hearing to provide him with a home and give him a chance of securing bail. He spent another night in custody unnecessarily. He is a man with no previous convictions. I lost half a day's work for nothing.

I applied for wasted costs against HMCTS because their agent (ALS) had acted negligently. I was awarded £103.

28/03/2012

Bradford Crown Court

Details: I attended Bradford Crown Court today and spoke to a female police officer who had been there since Monday, 26th March. She informed me that yesterday 3 Punjabi interpreters booked by ALS failed to appear. This morning, Wednesday 28th March, a Czech interpreter did not arrive and a Polish interpreter booked for 12 o'clock to interpret for a Polish witness in the JD case did not materialise (I was then called to interpret for the witness and accepted this booking as I believed at the time that Witness Care still use solely registered interpreters).

She also told me that whenever police officers try to call ALS they are kept on hold "for ages" and are generally very dissatisfied with the new system. A lady from Witness Care told me she made a complaint to the judge and the court manager about ALS's Polish interpreter not turning up.

24/03/2012

Bradford Police Station

Details: Today I met a Latvian interpreter from Stirling. No qualification in interpreting. He took the ALS test in Glasgow. He got in Tier 3.

He is inundated with work from ALS. Next week he is going to do a court job in Cornwall. (Look at the map! As I say he is from Stirling!) Before he registered with ALS he had absolutely no experience in court or police work.

Last week he had to go to Bradford to a police station to get a statement from an accused. He was left with him alone. When he was ready, a policewoman came in and said it was too short and asked to do a longer one. Then he was left alone again with the accused to make a longer one.

23/03/2012

Southampton Crown Court

On Friday, 23rd March, I went to Southampton Crown Court to find an unqualified Polish “interpreter” in Court 3. The so-called interpreter’s first name is Pawel. I was told that Pawel now attends this court most days, since the Framework Agreement came into place in February.

I was informed that Pawel sat the Metropolitan Police Test last year but failed. This means that he will not be covered by any kind of indemnity insurance, and is putting himself and his clients at risk.

Hence, with the new Framework Agreement, unqualified so-called interpreters get to work at Crown Courts, whilst qualified interpreters cannot attend court because they refuse to be associated with such an unprofessional organisation (ALS).

23/03/2012

Civil Justice, Bridge Street, Manchester

Details: The case was adjourned for lack of ALS interpreter for the Farsi language

22/03/2012

Court TBC

Details: An interpreter was warned to attend court c/o ALS and its preferred supplier of Sign Language Interpreters. The interpreter had little experience of court work generally and no knowledge of the defendant, no knowledge of the indictment and no knowledge of the type or stage in proceedings. The booking had been made a mere two days earlier by the agency’s assessment that it was ‘*straight forward, quick and well within the interpreters’ capability*’.

The interpreter had been informed that a relay interpreter would attend also to facilitate communications. They did not know the relay interpreter, had never worked with them before and actually had no idea why in fact a relay interpreter was required for the case...

The relay interpreter arrived not only late but also dressed most inappropriately for a court case. They too had no idea of the indictment, defendant, stage of proceedings etc. The relay interpreter immediately declared that they had *never worked* in a court before. The defence lawyer had immediate and very serious concerns about the communication provision for their client. Representations were made immediately to the court. Meanwhile, as it is a small community, it was quickly discovered that the relay interpreter had a fairly substantial court career with a number of both recent and historic criminal convictions – with even further cases pending!

The relay interpreter admitted, to the hearing interpreter, that there were many reasons why they **must not and should not work in court** or other legal settings. The relay interpreter stated it had 'been a mistake' to accept the job from the agency, but that no CRB clearance had been requested and no proof of experience had been required. The relay interpreter, instead of reporting to the usher, decided to leave the building with no explanation to the court whatsoever.

The hearing interpreter entered the courtroom and explained to the judge that they had no choice but to withdraw from the assignment. The withdrawal was put on the following grounds that: 1. they had been falsely warned to the assignment; 2. they were unable to function effectively alone; 3. they would not be able to perform the task satisfactorily unto the language need and complexity of the case and 4. that it would put justice in too greater jeopardy. The interpreter further disclosed to the court the full details of the concerns pertaining to the equally inappropriate and dangerous relay interpreter.

22/03/2012

Bournemouth Magistrates Court

Details: At the end of January, Bournemouth Magistrates' scheduled a trial for a Russian-speaking person for yesterday. Meanwhile this person was arrested overnight for breaching his bail, and brought the next day to court on 12 March with no interpreter present. The Court tried to find one and couldn't. The court asked the duty solicitor how good his English was. The duty solicitor could not say.

The guy was remanded in custody until his trial – which was scheduled at the end of January. Yesterday I got a call from Bournemouth Magistrates' to come along – which I refused. Then, feeling a bit nervous, I decided to go and see what was happening. However, when I got there, everyone in court was sympathetic. And this is what they told me:

The trial was scheduled for 10:00. No ALS interpreter turned up. The court kept calling ALS, it was very difficult to get through to them, and when you do get hold of them, they will answer your first question and then put the phone down before you have a chance to ask a another one. ALS told the court that an interpreter, who was coming to this trial (Dr somebody) called ALS at 08:50 to tell them that his car had broken down. When the Court rep asked ALS why they did not tell them that the interpreter could not make it, ALS replied that his phone had kept breaking up. The user and solicitor I was chatting with were laughing about this. After that the court got authority to call interpreters directly. I got a call from them at about 10:50, and I know an interpreter in Gloucestershire was then called and refused. After not getting anyone from the

NRPSI the Court called ALS again and now they said they would supply an interpreter for 12:30 – and they did. The ALS Russian interpreter did not do simultaneous interpreting, but listened and then talked. In my opinion, the way she interpreted the word "bail" was wrong, and she struggled with some technical things. This guy's hearing started finally at about 14:50 – the witnesses had been waiting all day. The trial had to now be adjourned by another four weeks and it will be a Newton hearing. I spoke with the prosecutor – if ALS had provided on time they guy would have had his trial yesterday. He would remain in custody – but for three weeks rather than four awaiting a pre-sentence report. So this guy will spend an extra week on remand because of ALS.

A few other things I learnt yesterday:

Either on Monday or Tuesday a Romanian was caught shoplifting and kept overnight in custody. The next day ALS did not provide an interpreter for him, so he was kept on remand. This guy had no previous convictions. The next day a Romanian interpreter was dealing with another case in court. She agreed to interpret for this guy as well. This guy got an apology from the Judge because he was kept on remand due to there being no interpreter. Yesterday no Portuguese interpreter was at Bournemouth Magistrates despite the need, and I believe this was also the case for Romanian. The Court people were telling me how bad things are. There are no slips in solicitor rooms for how to complain about ALS. I even offered to go and talk to people in the office. One usher kindly took me to the office, she went in, came out and told me all complaints were going to the management.

22/03/2012

Reading Magistrates Court

Details: I have been booked ages ago to interpret for two Polish witnesses. I came to court at 09.15 am. Witnesses ready, prosecution ready, defendant ready but then whoops the defendant was also Polish so he needed a Polish interpreter as well. Initially we were told that ALS interpreter was on his way. Indeed ALS interpreter came eventually to court at 12.37 pm. By then the whole trial has been adjourned until July as it was a full day trial.

22/03/2012

Maidstone Crown Court

Details: Two interpreters were booked by ALS for two separate cases. One for Kurdish: Sorani and the other for Lithuanian. Guess what? They BOTH did not turn up. The Judge was spitting nails and absolutely outraged.

Kurdish case: Multiple murder, obviously high profile with local media and public interest. Interpreter booked through ALS and NO SHOW, no explanation. The interpreter was sourced out NOT LOCALLY but from Ipswich. As Ipswich is 184miles return journey and 4 hours travel time it was INEVITABLE that the interpreter will never come because they will end up out of pocket. The interpreter booked for this serious case is not on NRPSI and he is not a member of any professional body.

Lithuanian case: As for the Lithuanian case, the interpreter is also not NRPSI and not a member of any professional body. The interpreter had to travel from London; therefore NOT LOCAL as ALS misled the Mom that they have more than 3000 linguists and can source them locally.

22/03/2012

Luton Crown Court

Details: Judge Martin Griffith explained how this was the third occasion in three weeks the Romanian defendant had been brought to court - and this week's hearing was the only time an interpreter had turned up.

He was told by prosecutor Geoffrey Porter that Applied Language Solutions (ALS) linguist Florin Graham was, in fact, late that day as well - arriving at 2.30pm when she was required to be at court before 2pm.

The Judge said: "The defendant has been here twice and there is nobody here who can tell him what is going on. He is told 'I'm sorry you are going back to prison for another week'. Luckily once before a barrister was here who could speak Romanian. That was a Godsend but we can't rely on that."

The Interpreter in question was Mrs Florina Graham. In January, ALS linguist Mrs Graham hit the headlines when she won £250 in damages at the High Court when Thames Valley Police admitted they had carried out an unlawful search of her home in 2008 after she was arrested for harassment. Mrs Graham was given a 'first harassment warning' in 2009 after sending a police inspector at West Mercia Police a series of suggestive messages in 2008. She was removed from the National Register of Public Service Interpreters as a result.

21/03/2012

Minshull St. Crown Court Manchester

Details: Court-8 (plea management) with a Bengali interpreter: Minara Begum (taken als assessment but no result yet). Never been to crown court before (very nervous).

21/03/2012

Court TBC

Details: 3 ALS interpreters turned up at court (on time) today. They are not on the NRPSI. One was from Exeter, one was from Teignmouth and one was from Cardiff. The interpreter from Cardiff said that she had a lot of work but needed to travel a lot - in fact, she goes to Manchester, Birmingham and Yorkshire. She was of Polish origin but did not speak great Polish.

She asked us whether we wanted to become interpreters and if we came as a part of our training (!). We asked her whether 'she had that diploma that you need for court interpreting' and she replied that she did (as I said I have checked the register and she's not on it).

The trial was adjourned so I only had a chance to listen to both interpreters in the court room for 5 minutes or so. I have picked up the following:

- "trial" was interpreted as "case"
- "unconditional bail" was interpreted as a "conditional discharge"
- "the prosecutor needs to review the case due to the new circumstances and the trial will be adjourned to 16th April" = "the judges need to have a think and the case is being postponed"
- and now to make my Polish colleagues smile: "please switch off your phones" = "prosze zgasic telefon" and "jestem w 2 trizze" :)

Before the trial started they were all talking amongst themselves about ALS, their rates, the fact that they were not being paid the amount they were supposed to be paid etc. They also complained that they were booked for a whole day but will only be paid for 1.5 hours.

21/03/2012

Dartford Magistrates Court

Details: At 3pm today I received a phone call from a solicitor I know, asking me if I could attend Dartford Magistrates Court as the ALS interpreter who was booked for today had left at lunch and had not come back after lunch. I attended the court and the court staff told me that they were regularly having problems with ALS interpreters not attending or not being capable of doing the job. The court staff said that it was very frustrating for them and they were now keeping a log of what was happening. Their words were "this new system just does not work".

20/03/2012

Dead dog offered jobs

Details: I registered my late pet dog at ALS Linguist Lounge recently. He was invited for an assessment and I did not reply, however, on 20th March he received a job offer and the following is the e-mail message received:

(I have removed the details that ALS could use to identify my late dog. Clearly it says that the job matches my skills. I am asking which skills and whose skills. And yet, ALS claims on Channel 4 News that all their interpreters are qualified.)

Dear XXX

The following job contains a First Hour Automation Supplement on top of the normal expenses under the existing system. The supplement will be automatically added to the payment.

A new MoJ job matching your skills has been created.

Job Number: XXXX

Duration: XXX minutes

Town/City: XXX

Date: XXX2012 at XXXX

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If you wish to be considered for the assignment then please register your interest by visiting the following link.

<http://www.linguistlounge.com/profile?xxxxxx>

Alternatively please call us on 0333 111 0060

Kind regards

Linguist Relations Team
Applied Language Solutions

20/03/2012

Chippenham Magistrates Court

Details: Chippenham MC tomorrow am - ALS is looking for a Turkish interpreter (got these details from one of my Turkish colleagues in the area). Apparently it is Tier 2 job. In fact she received 2 notifications from ALS today and she has never even registered on their linguist lounge (she has however been registered with them as an interpreter before they got the contract), has not been 'assessed' by them and is not on NRPSI. Last week they called her and asked whether she could go to Bristol for them (court).

20/03/2012

Skegness Magistrates Court

Details: I visited Skegness Magistrates Court yesterday (20.03.2012) where I worked for the CPS and their 3 witnesses. The defendant, a Polish national, had an ALS linguist present to interpret for him. It was a male, wearing black trainers, mudded jeans, long sleeved sweat shirt and a cardigan. He was not wearing any ID badge and was absolutely unprepared as he didn't even have a notepad.

I spoke to this ALS linguist and he informed me that he had been working for ALS for the past 3 months and they were sending him to courts from the very beginning. Mr. XX registered with ALS and was allocated to Tier 3 because he had no qualifications. He told me that because ALS is short of interpreters they offer him Tier 2 jobs and he was ever so happy to accept them. He told me he had no qualifications whatsoever, he had not been vetted, and/or assessed in anyway (oral or written). He told me he only had an old CRB certificate but ALS had not seen it. He said he was not bothered to do the DPSI diploma, because he worked for courts without any qualifications and there was no point for him to spend money on this.

He also said: "ALS is a mess...they do not know who works for them...they send anyone just to fill the gaps...I have heard about their assessments, but they were not bothered to assess me yet".

This ALS linguist travelled from Northampton to Skegness. According to maps.google.com this is around 100 miles journey each way and according to my calculations that's at least 3.5 hours of travel each way. He said he would make a claim for 8 of hours travel for yesterday's job. How cost-effective can it be?

Mr. XX was interpreting for the defendant when he was giving his own evidence from the witness' box, which took about 20 minutes. From the very beginning Mr. XX wasn't behaving very professional and was omitting up to 30% of the message he was meant to interpret. The things that he was interpreting were only about 60% accurate. He was discussing matters with the defendant (maybe trying to establish the facts) and not informing those present about what was going on. He was adding a lot of things from himself and clearly making some things up. When he was trying to interpret he was not making any notes and obviously he was omitting a lot of things e.g. he didn't interpret one thought of the defendant when the latter said he was talking with his friend K, present at that time. Mr. XX was gesticulating with his whole body to describe the defendant's movements and he didn't interpret some of the prosecutor's questions to the defendant.

Some other examples of his performance:

Defendant (D): she sat at my table with her feet on the table, where I kept my lemonade

ALS linguist (ALS): she sat at my table and she was holding my lemonade

D: I was talking to my acquaintance

ALS: I was talking to my accountant

D: she was staggering

ALS: she was moving funny

D: it happened at night

ALS: it happened in the evening

D: a moment later

ALS: after a while

D: a week ago I had been to Poland, where I stayed for 2 weeks

ALS: two weeks ago I had been in Poland

D: she has hit to my face

ALS: she hit in my face

D: few minutes later

ALS: two minutes later

D: 2 minutes later

ALS: 20-30 seconds later

Luckily the defendant could understand some English and therefore was replying to the questions that he was asked and not the ones that were interpreted to him.

After the case was over, I spoke to the legal adviser and to the District Judge and raised the above concerns. Both, the District Judge and the legal adviser were worried and under the impression that the ALS linguist was not up to the job. Despite the fact that they could not speak or understand the Polish language they were convinced that the quality of ALS linguist's services was not satisfactory. The legal adviser made a note in the case file about all above mentioned concerns and was told by the District Judge to report this to the HMCS Manager.

This ALS linguist was travelling from Northampton to Skegness. According to maps.google.com this is around 100 miles journey each way and according to my calculations that's at least 3.5

hours of travel each way. He said he will make a claim for 8 hrs travel for yesterday's job. How cost effective it can be?

He said he was not bothered to do DPSI diploma, because he works for courts without any qualifications and there was no point for him to spend money on this.

He also said: "ALS is a mess...they do not know who works for them...they send anyone just to fill the gaps...I have heard about their assessments, but they were not bothered to assess me yet"

20/03/2012

Kirklees Magistrates Court

Details: A VIETNAMESE man has appeared in court accused of producing cannabis. Som Huy Vu was before Kirklees magistrates sitting in Huddersfield yesterday. He is accused of production of the Class B drug at a property in the town on December 2, 2009. The 47-year-old faces a further charge of dishonestly using electricity without authority. The case was adjourned until tomorrow to allow for an interpreter to be present. Vu, who gave his address as HMP Nottingham, was told via an internet translation programme that his case could not go ahead. He was remanded in custody until his next hearing when he will be produced for court. (Reported in Huddersfield Examiner, 20th March)

19/03/2012

Burnley Crown Court

Case: MJ

Details: A long wait and a non-NRPSI linguist provided, also wrong interpreter for that language but acceptable to the defendant. This Crown Court trial was listed for three days hearing starting 10am Mon 19th of March 2012. The defendant (a taxi driver) was facing charges of indecent assault on a female passenger. I was assigned by the defence counsel, a court interpreter should have been assigned through new FWA with ALS but there was no-one. The Court Clerk started ringing around; finally at 3pm a linguist, Mr GA appeared who said that he is from Bradford (over 30 miles distance from Burnley Crown Court). He stated in the courtroom, "This is my first ever court job, I am an Urdu, Panjabi, Mirpuri and Pahari interpreter." Upon agreement from the defendant a decision was made to proceed with Panjabi interpretation.

Then Mr Ali told me in the waiting area that he had recently paid £100 and taken ALS assessment in Urdu language, passed it and was given Tier 2 status. He also told me that he has no formal qualifications or experience in interpreting field. I mentioned to him that according to MOJ & ALS FWA, crown court work falls under Tier 1. He had no idea of ins and outs; he said that he simply accepted the job over the phone by ALS. I also gave my opinion to Mr Ali that he should only work in the language that he has actually taken and passed the assessment in, otherwise he could be in a difficulty at some stage but this concept was far above his understanding of the law and guidelines for the interpreters.

During the trial, when the defendant was giving his evidence, on at least 4 occasions I had to

show my concern where there were additions by Mr Ali to what the defendant actually said and on other occasions where mistranslation occurred as Mr Ali could not find the appropriate words in English, i.e. for stutter or stumble, he said shivering. I can't comment on how his simultaneous interpreting was because that was done whilst the defendant and Mr Ali were in the dock and I was in the main courtroom.

In short, this (ALS) interpreter has no formal training, qualifications or experience; he took a 45 minutes controversial 'assessment' in Urdu language, given Tier 2 status and assigned for Crown Court work, claiming to be an interpreter in 3 other languages as well.

19/03/2012

Bristol

Details: Allen Hoole Solicitors-Bristol: Court hearing with Vietnamese interpreter provided by ALS, he couldn't translate the word "guilty"!!!!

19/03/2012

Chelmsford Magistrates Court

Case: K (Ed: A Lithuanian surname, not Russian)

Details: On the 19th March an interpreter had to be booked through the NRPSI due to the problems that had occurred before. They turned up and did a fantastic job. The client was remanded on the 21st February and at the subsequent hearings interpreters were booked through ALS and on each occasion failed to attend. This meant that the defendant had to be remanded again as no instructions could be taken.

Between the 21st Feb and 19th March this happened on 4 occasions. The client had been keen to plead guilty but couldn't. On the 19th he was able to and an NRPSI interpreter was booked for the Sentencing Hearing. This could have been resolved far sooner but instead the client spent a month needlessly remanded in custody with no idea what was going on.

19/03/2012

Chester Magistrates Court

Detail: The trial had to be adjourned because ALS interpreter ... could not stay in the afternoon. Only booked for half a day by ALS. Also the victim's statement was translated by the victim's daughter who is also a witness in this case.

19/03/2012

Chester Magistrates Court

Details: Another trial had to be adjourned today at Chester Magistrates Court because ALS interpreter Jana Betakova (who confirmed to me is working for ALS) had to go for another appointment in the afternoon.

19/03/2012

Minshull St. Crown Court Manchester

Details: Court-10 (indecent assault) 2 days trial with Urdu interpreter: Masood (taken ALS Urdu assessment but no result yet). Never been to court before (very nervous). They sent him straight for this trial which is clear violation of contract with MOJ (should have been NRPSI/DPSI). One of the Asian juror complained that he was advising the defendant while interpreting. Trial was stopped but then allowed to continue with same interpreter. That's the kind of people they are sending to courts.

19/03/2012

Canterbury Magistrates Court

Details: I received a direct call on Monday morning, at about 09.25, to attend Canterbury Mags for a hearing at 10.00 (clearly very short notice!). The detainee had been arrested last Thursday but had to be remanded in custody over the weekend as no interpreter (presumably from ALS) could be found for last Friday.

19/03/2012

Norwich HMP

Details: I was in Norwich HMP last Thursday with a probation officer who was preparing a Pre-Sentence Report for a Polish defendant. At some point my Polish client asked what he'd been sentenced to, because an interpreter booked for him at court "could not speak English, he just stood there, mute". He then went on to add that he didn't even realise he was in Norwich Prison, he thought he was in Peterborough!

He was obviously remanded awaiting his sentencing hearing, having pleaded guilty to an offence he had allegedly committed but I don't think he's aware of it....I am assuming he had a Polish interpreter from ALS with him. Unfortunately as he was charged with an assault, not murder or anything more serious, no one will ever notice anything...

16/03/2012

Bournemouth Magistrates' Court

Details: On the 16th March in Bournemouth Magistrates' a Vietnamese male had a remand hearing. He spoke no English whatsoever. The hearing went ahead with no interpreter, because the court could not get any. Instead of asking this guy for his date of birth and full name (and all the usual routine questions) he was asked "Is your name...? - he replied "OK", "Is your date of birth...?" - he replied "OK" – they said they would keep him on remand... He replied "OK" and so on.

To the credible witness to this who told me about it, it was absolutely obvious that this guy had absolutely no clue what he was being asked. His case has been adjourned until the end of March and I intend to go and witness this.

16/03/2012

IAC York House Tribunal, London

Details: Interpreter was incorrectly sent to IAC Taylor House for a 10am hearing & therefore our hearing was put back to 2pm.

Noticed by: Immigration judge, Sponsor and a witness who had taken the day off work to attend The Sponsor, witness & the sponsor's 6-year old son, who had taken the day off school, along with the legal representative and interpreter were all forced to wait until 2pm to start the hearing. The case could also not be concluded on the day, so had to be adjourned for a further hearing. This caused the witness to lose a day of work unnecessarily, the sponsor's child to miss a day of school and wasted costs for the legal representative and the interpreter's attendance, which will cost further public funds as the client is legally aided.

15/03/2012

Greenwich Magistrates Court

Case: DK

Details: I was booked to interpret for the victim. The trial, however, did not go ahead as there was no interpreter present for the defendant.

The case was adjourned.

15/03/2012

Folkestone Magistrates Court

Case: Z

Details: No interpreter at court.

Case adjourned to the following day.

15/03/2012

Ealing Magistrates Court

Details: No ALS interpreter for a Polish defendant's sentencing hearing

14/03/2012

Bolton Crown Court

Details: I was at Bolton Crown Court today, 14 March 2012, and observed the following: the defendant failed to appear for an assault trial in Court 3, but the witness was present - a young Lithuanian man. The decision was made to proceed with the trial, in the absence of the defendant. The only problem was: the Lithuanian ALS interpreter did not show up. Apparently, this Lithuanian interpreter had been booked a week in advance, and according to the lawyers present, ALS confirmed that morning that a Lithuanian interpreter would definitely attend. Except they never materialised. The court did not have any time left to start ringing RPSIs.

13/03/2012

York House IAC Tribunal

Details: Friday 9th March - No show from Applied Language Solutions interpreters in 10 courts at York House IAC Tribunal

12/03/2012

Derby Magistrates Court

Details: Interpreter booked by ALS didn't turn up. At 4pm the case was adjourned to the following Monday in the afternoon.

12/03/2012

Derby Magistrates Court

Details: The interpreter was 45 minutes late, apparently she travelled from Wolverhampton. She had no ID and presented the usher with some form of written confirmation.

12/03/2012

Bradford Magistrates Court

Details: The defendant contacted the court a month prior to hearing to make the court aware he needs a Polish interpreter. He also contacted court in the week preceding the hearing to confirm the interpreter would be present. The interpreter did not appear though.

Nobody informed the defendant the case may not be heard if he wishes to have an interpreter present. The defendant did not protest as he thought he might understand the proceedings, however, he is now not sure if he understood everything correctly. His case is now adjourned for further advice from DVLA and Police. The next hearing is on 26/03/2012 at 9:30am. The defendant will contact court again to state he would like an interpreter present, as he is not sure if he understood everything in the first hearing.

12/03/2012

Newcastle Upon Tyne Crown Court

Details: The defendant was Kurdish Sorani accused of RAPE (Case Number T20117658) and the Judge was recorder of Newcastle, the highest Judge at the Crown Court of Newcastle. ALS has booked an Interpreter but on Monday it was discovered the Interpreter does not speak any Sorani and the Judge asked ALS to provide another interpreter.

ALS send another Interpreter but this time the Interpreter was needed by the Police and Court and the third Interpreter that was sent to the case by ALS was involved in something to do with the case. Judge went mad and the case, court and everyone was delayed and had to wait and all the money spent on Barristers, Jury and everything.

THIS TIME for the fourth time an Interpreter was provided but the Defence barrister as well as the prosecution barrister were not happy with the quality of Interpreting and when the Interpreter was questioned about his qualifications it was discovered he has NONE. The Judge asked to go back to the old system and get an NRPSI interpreter who started from 14/03/2012 because of all the delays and the case was finished. The NRPSI was praised by Judge, other Barristers.

11/03/2012

Birmingham Magistrates Court

Details: On Monday 5th March I went to Birmingham Magistrates' Court where I witnessed a ridiculous situation. The defendant's solicitor told me what had happened the week before. The guy had been in custody since 2nd March as the ALS person, who had been booked for the morning hearing, didn't turn up. When the court's staff chased ALS after midday on 2nd March, they said no interpreter was coming. They re-booked for the afternoon but no one showed up. They adjourned the case until Monday 5th March, leaving the guy in custody for the weekend. No ALS person showed up on Monday again leaving listings no choice but to look for an NRPSI interpreter.

Now the beautiful part – when I got to the court, the defendant had been moved to prison, leaving his solicitor furious! I went into the court room with her and the judge read out the notes on the case, calling the situation with interpreters "confusing". They adjourned the case for Tuesday but despite a request from the solicitor to book a "proper" interpreter in advance, they decided to make sure that the defendant could be transferred back and the hearing would take place before booking an ALS person at a short notice again. The solicitor felt it was Catch 22 as she knew very well that ALS wouldn't provide an interpreter for her client. It was very apparent that ALS was viewed as nonsense by both the court staff and solicitors present. I was told that solicitors were very well aware of the contact details of people they needed to complain to.

10/03/2012

Llanelli Magistrates Court

Details: Dyfed Powys police called ALS at 3am today requesting a Polish interpreter for a defendant charged with rape to attend Llanelli Magistrates' Court in the morning. At mid-day today ALS has still not provided the court with an interpreter nor given any indication of when one may arrive (if at all). Court staff are desperate and ringing NRPSI interpreters and other agencies directly, who say they cannot assist.

9/03/2012

Reading Magistrates Court

Details: There was no Polish interpreter provided for Defendant.

09/03/2012

Thames Magistrates Court

Details: No Romanian interpreter available.

At 12.40 the two defendants were brought to the dock, one was dealt with without an interpreter, the other sent back to the cells, in an attempt to find an interpreter.

08/03/2012

Highgate Magistrates Court

Details: No Romanian interpreter turned up.

How bad:

The court, accepted the solicitor's submission and adjourned the case at 12.20, for 15 March.

08/03/2012

Reading Magistrates Court

Interpreter: Mrs H

Details: Defendant in custody, ALS failed to supply interpreter, solicitor insisted that Registered Interpreter attends. All local interpreters refused to come. Solicitor made application for wasted costs against ALS as no interpreter at 09:15am.

At 15:20 an Interpreter arrived. She introduced herself as Mrs H. No NRPSI badge but unconfirmed if on NRPSI.

08/03/2012

Birmingham Crown Court

Details:

Defendant wearing suit/tie, ALS interpreter wearing black jeans and sport jacket. ALS interpreter did not interpret ONE single word in the doc. There was a 15 minute Expert Witness evidence which was not interpreted at all. Judge spoke to the defendant at the end for about 5 minutes and again, not one single word was interpreted. Nothing!

08/03/12

Birmingham Magistrates Court

Details: Having taken part in the protests in Birmingham today, we went to the Magistrates Court afterwards to observe. Outside the court room, hearing us talking Polish, we were asked by an ALS interpreter whether she could sit with us and chat.

We talked about what we were doing in Birmingham, and we went on to ask about how she had ended up with ALS. She joined them in December, having taken her DPSI, but failed sight translation into English (Task 2A). She registered with ALS because she was not able to go on the National Register. By the definition of the Framework Agreement, she is not qualified to interpret at Tier 2, as partial DPSI is only permitted for failure of written translation into other language (Task 3B).

ALS has lowered the standards required to interpret in court, but even then they are not abiding by the terms of the Framework Agreement, as much as they are swearing blind to MoJ that they are.

07/03/2012

Reading Magistrates Court

Details: No Polish Interpreter.

05/03/2012

Birmingham Crown Court

Details: Yesterday, on 05/03/12 a colleague attended a plea and case management hearing at Birmingham Crown Court for a murder case. The hearing had been adjourned by a week due to lack of an interpreter. ALS sent an interpreter who, as far as I know, has no DPSI therefore is not on the NRPSI. When the defendant was asked how he pleaded to the indictment of murder, the interpreter interpreted it as manslaughter!!! My colleague wrote a note to the Judge about the serious misinterpretation to which the Judge said that it was not the right protocol and returned the note to the usher. My colleague passed it on to the defence barrister and that was the last of that. Later that day the ALS interpreter managed to find my colleague's phone number on the website and sent her a few threatening texts warning her that she would get in touch with solicitors and sue her for slander!!

05/03/2012

Worcester Crown Court

Details: Judge Toby Hooper QC apologised to 20-year-old Mr T, a Polish national, for having to adjourn his case for a fourth time because of the non-appearance of an interpreter. Dealing with Mr T's case at 11am, he was given a message by the clerk that an interpreter could arrive by 3pm.

The judge said he had little confidence that an interpreter would arrive by that time so he adjourned the case for a week.

He understood that Mr T could understand a little English. He told him: "I am ashamed of the system which fails yet again to provide an interpreter for you."

Mr T, of Cowl Street, Evesham, is accused of violent disorder in Bridge Street, Evesham, but has yet to enter a plea. He was remanded in custody until Friday.

05/03/2012

Leeds Crown Court

Details: A HIGH Court judge has apologised to a jury after a whole day was lost in a trial because an interpreter failed to turn up. The case began at Leeds Crown Court on Monday of two men accused of conspiring to murder the ex-wife of one of them in Pakistan. But after more than an hour delay yesterday before the six man six woman jury was brought into court, Mr

Justice Andrew Smith told them the reason for their “frustrating morning” was not because of any legal issues to be decided in the trial.

“The position is that one of the interpreters for one of the defendants has not come to court. Thus far I have found it impossible to either understand why or whether it is likely he will arrive.” He said he was continuing to make inquiries about the situation and asked the jury to “bear with us for another half hour or so.”

He told them: “If I don’t make progress what I have got in mind is to abort today. I am sorry about that but I’m trying everything I can to deal with it and shall make inquiries as to why this has come about.”

After a further half hour when no interpreter had appeared the judge brought the jury back into court and adjourned the case for the rest of the day “for the reason I indicated earlier.” He told them: “I don’t want to elaborate the explanation I gave to you as it is possible I will have to adjudicate questions as to who bears the costs.”

03/03/2012

Huntingdon Crown Court

Details: At the beginning of the hearing an ALS interpreter had to be reminded to hold the Bible when reading the Christian oath. After finishing the oath, the ALS interpreter carried on reading the Affirmation wording as well. This had to be stopped. This example clearly shows that the interpreter had no idea of the court procedure, probably didn’t understand the meaning and purpose of taking the oath and we can only guess the level of interpreting when it came to it.

02/03/2012

Wigan Police Station

Details: Hungarian suspect has been kept in custody since 16.00 yesterday at Wigan Police Station. ALS promised to send an interpreter for 14.00 today.

02/03/2012

Cambridge Magistrates Court

Details: Mr A case adjourned from Wednesday to today due to the lack of an interpreter. No ALS interpreter attended today. The only means of communication was through a homeless Polish male who tried to help the Lithuanian defendant. As you can imagine, the courtroom did turn into a circus. The case has now been adjourned for 3 weeks to accommodate ALS.

02/03/2012

Highgate Magistrates Court

Case: MI, custody; IN, bail; GI, bail

Details: Ushers were told that ALS was unable to provide an interpreter. Case of N adjourned

for a second time (first time on 29/02 for lack of interpreter)

02/03/2012

Peterborough Crown Court

Details: Interpreter failed to attend for the morning session as well as for the afternoon. Case was adjourned to 05/02/2012.

02/03/2012

Leamington Spa Police Station

Interpreter: JN

Case: 2 Czech detainees in custody, police urgently needed interpreter

Details: I was called at 8:11am by X, desperate to find interpreter from NRPSI, having been let down by ALS. She had called ALS repeatedly, but they DID NOT ANSWER the phone. She said she had better things to do than this. She'd already tried all West Midlands RPSIs and they, like me, had refused to attend. I am East Midlands based, but I understand she also phoned much further afield, to no avail.

02/03/2012

City of London Magistrates

Details: What happened: When the case was listed for 02/03/2012, City of London police booked an Interpreter through ALS. No Interpreter attended by 3pm, no progress was made on a plea and case management hearing therefore the hearing was not effective. The solicitor made an application for costs from central funds pursuant to Section 19 (3) (a) Prosecution of Offences Act for his time spent on a non-effective hearing. The Magistrates granted an application for £885.

02/03/2012

City of London Magistrates Court

Details: When the case was listed for 02/03/2012, City of London police booked an Interpreter through ALS. No Interpreter attended by 3pm, no progress was made on a plea and case management hearing therefore the hearing was not effective. The solicitor made an application for costs from central funds pursuant to Section 19 (3) (a) Prosecution of Offences Act for his time spent on a non-effective hearing. The Magistrates granted an application for £885.

01/03/2012

Sheffield Crown Court

Details: 2 Portuguese defendants didn't have an interpreter as ALS couldn't provide.

February 2012

29/02/2012

Lincoln Magistrates Court

Interpreter: no interpreter attended

Booked through ALS

Case: B

Details: No interpreter provided for sentencing, case adjourned until the 30.03.2012.

29/02/2012

Birmingham Crown Court

Booked through ALS

Case: 4 day trial at Birmingham Crown Court

Details: ALS left a voicemail for one of their interpreters who is on tier 3 and asked him to interpret in a 4-day trial at Birmingham Crown Court between 5-8 March 2012. The interpreter is a friend of mine and he did not call them back, because he is busy.

How bad: Very bad, Tier 3 being used for Crown Court trials.

I just explained to him that it is extremely difficult to interpret during trials and because he has no experience of doing that, he must not attempt to do it.

29/02/2012

Southwark Crown Court

Interpreter: none

Booked through ALS

Case: FS

Details: ALS did not provide an interpreter for the second time.

29/02/2012

Luton Magistrates Court

Details: I was in Luton Magistrates court having been assigned to interpret for witnesses by the Crown Prosecution Services. After I finished my job I noticed that in the waiting area there was a Polish interpreter from ALS. It was a very young looking man probably 20 or 22 years old. I was sitting quite close to him while he was talking to one of the defendants. She asked him what one has to do to become a court interpreter. He answered that he is a student and he is studying to become an interpreter. He expressed how happy he is with his job and also said that he is very busy and he has to travel all over the place as he lives in South London. When the first of the defendants was called in I asked the usher if I could sit as an observer and she agreed. Without going into details about this case, the ALS interpreter was struggling with simultaneous interpreting and was paraphrasing a quarter of what was said. When the sentence

was passed he struggled to understand what the sentence was and therefore he summarised it. As I left the court room the defendant was standing outside with a somewhat bewildered expression on his face. He realised that I was Polish (he heard me earlier when I was using my phone in the waiting area). He asked me if I can explain to him what his sentence was. I was not at all surprised as I was there and I realised that the 'interpreter' did not interpret this part as he probably did not understand himself what was said not due to his lack of English, as it was good but due to lack of knowledge about the legal system and lack of knowledge of legal terms. I replied to him that he should talk to his interpreter.

29/02/2012

Derbyshire (police station)

Details: On the 29th of February, in Derbyshire, a Romanian defendant who was remanded in custody for an extra day, because there was no interpreter available to assist with his hearing in the morning, threatened to kill himself once he was brought back to custody. The police used a telephone interpreter to explain why he would spend another night in custody. He promised he would start a hunger strike because he felt discriminated since all the other defendants had their cases heard and he didn't.... The Police Officer insisted that it was the Judge's decision and there was nothing she could do, however they would monitor him. So much for equality of rights...

28/02/2012

AIT Taylor House, London

Case: The learned judge, Mr E G Ruth, Firm of Solicitors representing the Appellant: PICK UP SCOTT Solicitors, Court Room 17

Details: The ALS interpreter provided for three languages of FARSI, DARI and PASHTO caused two adjournments for speaking only PASHTO. The learned judge asked DR Hassan Sobati NRPSI 12077 to comment. Dr Sobati is an examiner for DPSI FARSI and DARI and attended court as an observer. His evidence was found credible by the learned judge. This is a clear case of ALS providing just anyone to keep up the numbers of attendances and charge the courts. Dr Sobati is happy to testify at court if this matter goes further.

28/02/2012

Preston Crown Court

Details: There was a Polish defendant listed for sentencing plus a Polish interpreter arranged to attend at 12.00. I went there at 13.00 and Court 1, where the hearing was supposed to be taking place looked empty, the light was off, so I started walking away when the last lady leaving the court room said: "Excuse me, are you an interpreter?" I said: "I am, but not the one booked for the hearing", she said: "We are still waiting for an interpreter, she/he did not turn up."

I came back after lunch time and there was a Polish gentleman waiting near Court 1, I thought he was from ALS, but no, he was booked by the defence to interpret down in the cells for the defendant (he was booked by Lancashire Interpretation Translation Services and was the

defendant's friend). Then the barrister came round, so I introduced myself and asked if she was happy with ALS and she said that she knew all about them, that it was happening all over the country and it was the third time ALS failed to provide an interpreter (for this case only).

28/02/2012 Crown Court

Blackfriars Crown Court

Case: ARP

Details: ALS interpreter didn't turn up. Case had to be adjourned. Female defendant was suffering from depression and didn't speak English at. Barrister couldn't communicate with her without an interpreter.

28/02/2012

Bromley Magistrates Court

Interpreter: no show, then friend of defendants

Details: Today I volunteered to observe court proceedings at Bromley Magistrates' Court. There were 2 cases involving Lithuanian defendants, 3 defendants were in Court for their bail conditions to be changed. They told me their case had been adjourned 5 times, 4 times due to no interpreter in Court. Because of that they had to spend 7 days in prison. On this occasion they had a friend of theirs with them who could speak a little bit of English. The Judge agreed for her to act as their interpreter in Court. She was wearing an Adidas tracksuit; I saw her nodding her head in the dock.

28/02/2012

Wood Green Crown Court

Details: It must be my lucky day today. I just had a call from Wood Green Crown Court saying that ALS has let them down and the judge had authorized the listing office to call an interpreter from the NRPSI list. Told her that it was against my principles to help ALS and turned down the offer. I would like to say thank you for all the other Turkish colleagues who said no.

27/02/2012

Reading Crown Court

Details: This was a short preliminary hearing. I sat next to the dock where the five defendants were with the three interpreters. There were about periods of 15-30 seconds when none or not all of the interpreters spoke while proceeding were going on, important information may have been omitted.

The court has been subsequently made aware of this incident.

27/02/12

High Wycombe Magistrates Court

Interpreters: no show

Case: Marcin Pastuszczak (120078092)

Details: Case adjourned- reason?? Guess what, NO POLISH INTERPRETER! Second time being adjourned

27/02/2012

Highgate Magistrates Court

Case: 3 in custody

Details: At 11.30 no Romanian interpreter had arrived

Duty solicitor could not consult with first two defendants

Court was waiting to see if interpreter was going to turn up

All defendants were at the first hearing and the duty solicitor was very unhappy, said he would complain.

27/02/2012

London Crown Court

Interpreter: Did not appear

Booked through ALS

Case: 2 joint defendants:

Details: When an interpreter failed to appear at Inner London Crown Court for a PCMH, the court decided to use a family member of one of the defendants. The Judge was told: "There is no official interpreter but we will get by today with the help of the defendant's brother-in-law".

26/02/2012

Experience of ALS Interpreter

Details: I created a profile on ALS linguist lounge sometime in December; I was automatically assigned to Tier 2. I never attended any sort of ALS assessments and was not issued with any sort of ALS identification. I started to receive Tier1 job offers straight away. I explained to the ALS representative that I was not interested in the job offers for a few reasons.

1. I have never been assessed by ALS.
2. I have never been issued with any ALS form of ID.
3. I was strangely assigned to Tier2 in the interim, why would I be offered Tier 1 jobs?
4. I had language X on my ALS profile, but was strangely enough also offered jobs in other sister languages.

The number of job offers increased day by day, I finally agreed to attend an assignment yesterday at a Police Station. I just wanted to see how the interpreting system works; I accepted this offer for my own experience to examine the ALS interpreting system from the inside.

I was not advised by ALS what language I would be interpreting for, but was told instead to attend a police station and take a victim statement from a national of X country. This was my

first time ever to take a victim statement. I took the statements, but obviously not in a professional way.

From my personal experience, I found that anyone can create a profile on ALS linguist lounge and start taking important jobs of interpreting/translation straight away. It doesn't require any qualifications, experience, security clearance, Criminal Record Bureau checks or passing any assessments.

I found the ALS desperation not only unprofessional but also intimidating in a sense that the lack of professional interpreters in the judicial and legal system can affect humans and their future. Victims may not be able to get justice and perpetrators may not be punished for their criminal activities.

26/02/2012

Experience of UK interpreter on ALS register

Details: I am not on the National Register, in fact, at the moment I am preparing to sit the DPSI exam in June. I am registered with ALS and have a profile on linguistlounge.com

I was called on my mobile before Christmas when a lady from ALS asked me if I was going to take their assessment and why not - I said I was not going to do it, at least not yet.

I can see I am a Tier 1 interpreter on ALS linguist lounge - no assessment, no formal qualifications, no proof whatsoever I can actually interpret.

Also, I have stated I have a CRB check - but have not uploaded it, so again - ALS do not know if it actually exists.

Next, I have been getting phone calls asking me to interpret at Magistrates' courts, have received text messages notifying me of "suitable" court or tribunal jobs.

I have offers waiting for me to accept them on my ALS linguist lounge profile - all for courts and tribunals.

Now, I am sure this is not something the MoJ would approve of and would like to make them aware of it.

24/02/2012

Manchester Magistrates Court

Interpreter: n/a

Case: Custody case

Details: I have just received a complaint from a solicitor whose Romanian-speaking client has been remanded in custody on 3 separate occasions due to the lack of an interpreter.

24/02/12

Boston Magistrates Court

Details: On Wednesday morning at Boston Magistrates' Court, a Russian lady turned up.

Initially, there was some shock ... a Russian interpreter was supposed to be attending for two cases. Could this be her? The usher asked if she was from ALS. The lady seemed unsure - it is

fair to say that her grasp of the English language was only a tad better than my knowledge of Russian - but held up her mobile phone to show the usher a text telling her to be at Boston court in the morning. The usher - one of the best, it has to be said - showed astonishing patience as she tried to ascertain whether she was, indeed, the interpreter required. She asked the lady if she had any identification. No ... she did not.

Was she here to translate? She could if she was needed to, she said, looking a little surprised. It transpired that she thought she had attended for a security check and that she had not been told she was acting as an interpreter. Again, to be fair to her, one suspects her clients would have known more English than she. She even offered to pay! The usher had to explain to her that, no, she didn't have to pay and that she might get paid.

Not sure what happened after that. She spent some time on the phone (presumably to ALS) asking what she was doing there and then seemed to leave.

24/02/2012

Leeds Crown Court

Details: I was at the Leeds Crown Court on Tuesday and Wednesday this week (21st and 22nd February 2012). I was booked by a solicitor - for witnesses, not by the court. An ALS non-RPSI interpreter from Manchester attended in casual clothes and was booked for this trial only the night before. He was told it'd last only half an hour so accepted a booking from ALS at Birmingham police station to take a statement at 4.30pm. He postponed it till 6pm. Needless to say, he was still in court at 5pm and Birmingham custody clock was to run out at 8pm, which he was fully aware of.

Now back to the trial. It was a floating trial so we waited the whole day on Tuesday for our turn to come. Due to the time, the jury was just introduced and an opening speech made and the case was due to commence properly on Wednesday.

The ALS interpreter was not available to continue so the court was trying to arrange another one through ALS, but they did not come back to court, hence there was no interpreter on Wednesday for the defendant – only me for the witnesses. The judge was trying to see if I could interpret for the defendant as well, that's if the prosecution and defence sides would agree. The defence solicitor explained that it is not possible and I also said that even if it was possible and as much as I would like to help, I cannot and I explained my reasons why. I felt quite bad as the defendant was sitting in the dock not knowing what was going on. Then there was a conversation as to why 2 interpreters are needed and so on. The judge was very fair, but got upset, as there was no interpreter present even though there was an ample opportunity to arrange one and wanted the press to be present to record this

23/02/2012

Grantham Magistrates Court

Booked through ALS

Case: theft matter - unable to provide further details

Details: A Romanian-speaking defendant has been remanded in custody for approximately two weeks until 23rd Feb due to the lack of an interpreter.

23/02/2012

Thames Magistrates Court

Interpreter: n/a

Booked through ALS

Case1: Co-defendants KP, MC, K. Case2: JH. Case3: B

Details: Re 1. Interpreters were booked via ALS. Nobody from ALS turned up. At the end, two co-defendants failed to attend, the warrant arrest was issued, and Mr C was however in custody awaiting a Polish interpreter. An interpreter finally arrived at 2pm, not from ALS but from an agency run by one of Russian interpreters. The interpreter was not NRPSI registered.

Re 2. Mr H was also today awaiting a Polish interpreter. He informed me that he was waiting for one all day on Monday. Finally, the matter was adjourned for the Polish interpreter to arrive. For the whole morning there was no sign of a Polish interpreter. At 2pm, the same Polish interpreter from the above mentioned agency arrived and she was to deal with the matter as well. The interpreter in question completed an old court booking form.

Re 3. The case of Mr. B (youth court/remanded in custody) was adjourned from 2 weeks ago. An ALS interpreter was to be booked. Again, no sign of interpreter for the whole day. When I enquired, I was informed that the interpreter was to arrive after 2pm. At around 3pm, the court usher started to search for any available interpreter and managed to locate the interpreter dealing with cases 1 and 2 above. She was asked for the assistance with this third matter.

23/02/2012

Cambridge Magistrates Court

Case: shoplifting

Details: Mr P, Lithuanian, arrested for shoplifting last Wed - remanded due to lack of interpreter till today. PLEASE NOTE: ALS have asked for the case to be adjourned for 2 weeks last Wed so that they could provide an interpreter. The length of the adjournment was not suggested by the courts but REQUESTED by ALS!

The hearing itself lasted almost half an hour - Mr P does not speak a word of English. The whole hearing concentrated on the fact that if he were to remain on remand in custody, his human rights would be breached. The magistrates said: 'We do not feel that it would be proportionate under these circumstances to keep the defendant on remand in custody. The bench finds itself in great difficulty today. Any action under the Human Rights' Act must be proportionate. And 7 days in Peterborough prison is quite enough. The powers that be must get negotiating.'

The Legal adviser explained that there are interpreters that are prepared to help courts but they live so far away that asking them to attend simply does not make any financial sense.

The case has now been adjourned until 8th March. The magistrates have asked both the CPS and the defence solicitor to complain to the MOJ. They understand that there is an 'industrial action in essence' going on.

23/02/2012

Coventry Magistrates Court

Details: I am a RPSI Latvian interpreter in West Midlands. This week I attended as a CPS interpreter for a trial in Coventry Magistrates'. The "interpreter" used for assisting in taking the victim statement was the victim's daughter. Moreover, the defence solicitor complained about the accuracy of the agency's interpreter's interpretation during the PACE interview. The trial was adjourned till next month.

23/02/2012

Stratford Magistrates Court

Booked through ALS

Case: G

Details: I attended Stratford Magistrates Court at 10 am today for a Prosecution witness (outside ALS remit) for a trial. At 12.30 the prosecutor came to see us and asked me to convey to the witness that an interpreter for the defence was due to arrive at 1 o'clock. We had a further update at 2 pm that an interpreter was now due by 2.30. At about 3 pm we went down to court as the DJ had decided it was too late to commence a 4 hour trial at such a late time. There were issues with custody time limits, meaning an adjournment for the application to be heard and another date set for the trial. The judge and the barristers were furious and discussed an application for wasted costs against ALS!

I offered to at least explain to the defendant why he had been kept in the cells all day and why he would remain in custody for at least the next 4 days and possibly until the end of March (new trial date). Just before 4 pm after the judge had risen, a frail looking old lady (she must have been well into her 80's) scurried into court saying that she was the Polish interpreter explaining that she had taken a job in Southampton earlier returning to London as soon as she could. I asked her if she was there for ALS and she muttered the name of another agency. I didn't admit I was an interpreter and asked if she was on the NRPSI to which she replied that she was, but that at her age she couldn't afford to argue with anyone and would take any work she could get!! I rest my case.

22/2/2012

BARKINGSIDE Magistrates Court

Interpreter: GP

Booked through ALS

Case: MS, LP

Details: Spoke to the interpreter who stated that he has NOT got any former qualifications as an interpreter at all.

Very limited knowledge of court cases but the interpreter was happy to do the job being recommended by his sister EP who is a NRPSI Interpreter. Unbelievable!

22/02/2012

Peterborough Magistrates Court

Case: 4 Lithuanian defendants

Details: ALS could not provide an interpreter, therefore an interpreter was provided by another agency from BIRMINGHAM. The charge was GBH with intent: she only said 'you on purpose injured another human being.' When it came to the Crown opposing bail, NONE of the reasons as to why bail was opposed were interpreted. Every time the word evidence was used, she interpreted it as 'charge.' So, charges against you are strong instead of evidence against you is strong. When DJ reiterated that he has substantial grounds for refusing bail, she said the judge does not think you should be let out today. And when DJ finished by saying bail is refused, she said 'you will not be let out for money.'

Solicitor representing one of the defendants informed. She explained that the interpreter was one of the better ones that they have seen in the past two weeks.

My comments:

Absolutely outraged - the defendants did not understand why bail was opposed, what they have been charged with and that they are definitely facing extremely long prison sentences.

22/02/2012

Bennett House Stoke on Trent Tribunal

Interpreter: M

Booked through ALS

Details: ALS interpreter was dressed inappropriately and was incompetent when in the courtroom. I was observing.

22/02/2012

Nottingham Crown Court

Interpreter: G

Booked through ALS

Case: P

Details: Unqualified interpreter in Crown Court (failed her DPSI last year).

21/02/2012

Leicester Magistrates Court

Details: Interpreter was speaking Pakistani Punjabi. The defendant was speaking Indian Punjabi. Oath was not taken properly, he called Quran a book, he did not give his name or language or translate oath in Punjabi. He was not translating what was said by the clerk, prosecutor or the defence lawyer and seemed nervous.

21/02/2012

Leeds Crown Court

Interpreter: V

Booked through ALS

Case: DB

Details: ALS booked a Slovak interpreter for a Czech defendant

How bad: not qualified, not the same language, unsuitable clothing

The case was adjourned until tomorrow as it was a floating trial. I think just jury might have been introduced

My comments:

The interpreter was a University student, living in the UK for the past 6 years. He does not hold any interpreting qualifications whatsoever and only passed the ALS assessment. Cannot comment on his interpreting as I have not had a chance to witness it and he is not available tomorrow so another interpreter will be called. This interpreter was not wearing any formal/court clothes - just casual trousers, polo T-shirt and a jumper and casual shoes. He was told that today's trial would only last half an hour therefore he accepted a booking for the police in Birmingham at 15.30. He was from Manchester. I told him that it is very unlikely that we would be able to get to Birmingham by the required time. He soon realised that and postponed the statement taking until 18:00 knowing that there is someone in custody and can be kept only until 20:00.

I left the court at 16:00 as I was no longer required and he stayed behind as jury was to be introduced. I was booked for this trial by a defence solicitor for a witness. There was a little chance for the interpreter to make his Birmingham booking on time. When he swore under the oath he was very nervous, although he was reading the oath. He really appeared very nervous, which can happen to anyone but this was so obvious. I told the interpreter that he should not be interpreting for the Czech defendant if he is Slovak, but he did not see it as an issue. I also told the defendant the same, but he did not seem to mind either so I did not intervene, but will do tomorrow depending who and if ALS sends. During the day the ALS interpreter received several bookings from ALS. He says he is very busy with them and it suits him well as he is a student so he needs a flexible job. One of the bookings was to go to Southampton. He said ALS does not pay parking and was not happy that they do not pay 20 miles of his journeys. Despite that he felt that this was a good opportunity for him and felt that his English was good enough. He has never been to trial before and had no idea how it will work. He says ALS gives him usually very

little notice and that the majority of bookings are last minute ones - even court bookings. When ALS is desperate for interpreters he asks them for more money.

21/02/2012

Harrow Crown Court

Case: IF

Details: Teams of barristers waited for an interpreter.

Case was adjourned for the FOURTH time running.

21/02/12

London Blackfriars Crown Court

Interpreter: FO

Details: Letter: I was booked to attend Blackfriars Crown Court yesterday (21 February 2012) in my capacity as interpreter in the case of RI. I was to interpret for the witness (victim) in the case, CI. An incident occurred at court which I would like to describe to you. Once at court, I waited in the witness room with Mrs CI. She was supposed to appear as a prosecution witness in the case against her husband RI who was charged with making "Threats to kill". Just before lunchtime the PLO in charge of the case came to inform us that the defendant had pleaded guilty and that Mrs I would not have to give evidence. Mrs I was told that her husband had received a Restriction order for 3 years and that he would not be allowed to contact her himself or through a third party during that period.

After this discussion we were told that we were free to go and I accompanied Mrs I to the court exit. Just before going out, an unkempt-looking man approached Mrs I and told her that he had some messages for her from her husband. I was concerned that this appeared to be a breach of the restrictions order that had just been made. I asked the man his name. He said in poor Romanian (he was not a native Romanian speaker) that his name was FO, and that he worked for an agency (he was not sure of the name, but told me it was something like "Appliances" - I believe the agency in question was ALS). He said that he had been sent by the agency to interpret in court for RI, the defendant. Mrs I seemed utterly confused, and mindful of the apparent breach of the restrictions order I suggested she go home. I then went to report this incident at CPS offices.

I should state that Mr O's Romanian was so poor that it is possible that he did not manage to convey the meaning of a restrictions order to the defendant. It may therefore be the case that the defendant left court without knowing the conditions that had been imposed on him.

Wrote this letter (above) to Witness Care Officer| Camden & Islington IPT| Holborn Police Station.

20/02/2012

Southampton Tribunal

Interpreter: the interpreter did not introduce herself after taking oath

Booked through ALS

Case: JC

Details: Interpreter's opening line once she met the Claimant was: 'sorry, I did not have time to discuss your case with you'(?). During the 7 hrs hearing: omissions, inaccuracy (the Claimant himself corrected her mistakes a several times. Her simultaneous interpreting was a complete failure - all witness statements/ evidence/closing speeches were left without interpreting, except for a few not very accurate summaries.

Noticed by: The Claimant, his legal representative (Polish), Observer delegated by Charity supporting migrant workers (myself, Polish)

How bad: the Claimant was upset - his English was not good but sufficient enough to understand how bad this was.

20/02/2012

Reading Magistrates Court

Interpreter: NA

Details: No Polish Interpreter

20/02//2012

Romford Magistrates Court

Interpreter: ET

Booked through Language Group

Case: SL

Details: Rather than booking NRPSI interpreters, they have used a local agency Language Group which is run by a NRPSI interpreter Russian NO. Bad interpreting into Romanian language. The issue is that this agency is using not vetted or qualified interpreters. The terminology used was not adequate for court.

20/02/2012

London Crown Court

Interpreter: Did not appear

Booked through ALS

Case: VR

Details: At SNARESBROOK CROWN COURT. No ALS interpreter, so the hearing for Sentence was cancelled in court. The case was adjourned for 2 days, till 22/02/12. The defendant is in custody.

18/02/12

City of Westminster Magistrates Court

Case: AT, extradition

Details: A hearing was conducted without interpreter present; case was opened but adjourned for judgement because there was no Hungarian interpreter present

17/02/2012

Boston Magistrates Court

Details: Lithuanian cases adjourned until Monday due to the absence of an interpreter. A Polish interpreter turned up at 2.30, Tier 3, ALS couldn't provide Tier 1 or 2. Her interpretation was inaccurate, e.g. confusion of vehicle weight with registration plate.

17/02/2012

Boston Magistrates Court

Details: 3 Lithuanian cases, one Polish and one Russian. All defendants are there, ALS cannot provide. The Magistrates are going to adjourn the cases, complain to the local branch of the Magistrates Association and apply for an adverse costs order. Lithuanian chaps are furious they have wasting their time, the usher is very optimistic that this can't go on like this to a point of laughing at it.

17/02/2012

North Shields Tribunal

Interpreter:

Booked through ALS

Details: Linguist had driven from Manchester, had been working for ALS for a few weeks, hadn't taken ALS assessment. She hadn't any interpreter qualifications and hadn't seen inside a tribunal hearing room and had no idea what would happen at the hearing. Level 2 interpreters have been requested but she would not have been level 2, even if she had been tested. No ALS linguist arrived for other case. There had been a number of adjournments since contract had started because of ALS default. Judges have been recording and complaining.

17/02/2012

Boston Magistrates Court

Booked through ALS

Case: GD

Details: No Russian interpreter was supplied by ALS. As the defendant was mentally ill and it was only a committal hearing, his carer was allowed to interpret.

17/02/2012

Croydon Magistrates Court

Case: FYA and 3 others

Details: On Saturday 11 Feb due to the court being unable to arrange an interpreter I attended a first hearing on behalf of SOCA at Camberwell Green (paid by them) The 4-handed matter was adjourned until Friday 17th and transferred to Croydon.

On Friday 17 Feb I attended Croydon purely as a spectator to see what would happen. By 11.00 no interpreter had turned up and SOCA had to take it upon themselves to call one (not me on this occasion) saying that they would pay again despite it not being a first hearing.

Unfortunately, I was unable to stay later than 11.30 and do not know what happened in court although the SOCA officer did tell me that he would ensure that the court were made aware of the fact that the interpreter was there only because SOCA was paying and that neither ALS nor the court were able to provide one!

16/12/2012

Manchester City Magistrates' Court

Interpreter: me - KB

Booked through NRPSI

Case: SW

Details: I was called by Listings at 1140 to attend asap. I said I would not work for ALS and was assured it was a direct court booking, so I did attend and interpret.

16/02/2012

Isleworth Crown Court

Details: Frantic phone calls from court trying to book a Dutch interpreter after being let down by ALS. NRPSI refused to come even when offered the 'old' National agreement terms.

15/02/2012

Boston Magistrates Court

Details: Lithuanian, Polish, Latvian didn't turn up, and one Russian interpreter turned up and took all of these cases.

14/02/2012

Exeter Magistrates Court

Interpreter: ALS could not provide

Case: KS

Details: ALS could not provide an interpreter so the listing officer was advised to book someone from NRPSI. Apparently the guidance is to close any request not fulfilled by ALS 48hrs before the hearing date and use alternative methods to find someone.

14/02/2012

Skegness Magistrates Court

Details: No interpreters provided

14/02/2012

Stratford Magistrates Court

Case: Defendant SS; 2 victims - Russian speakers.

Details: Case had been already previously adjourned on 2 Feb. 2012, reason not confirmed. 14 Feb. everyone was there but not the interpreter for defendant. Everyone waited till lunchtime and case was adjourned yet again, now till 10 April.

Witness stated she will not be coming to court for the 3rd time.

Court was unaware of any changes in interpreter provision. CPS interpreter enlightened everyone in court about ALS.

14/02/1202

Lewis Crown Court

Details: ALS HAS FAILED TO BOOK THE INTERPRETER, CASE WAS SUPPOSED TO START ON THE 13TH OF FEBRUARY. THE LISTING HAD TO CALL AROUND TO FIND NRPSI INTERPRETER; ALL HAVE REFUSED EXCEPT ONE WHO RESCUED THE ALS MESS.

14/02/2012

Bolton Crown Court

Case: N and G (defendants)

Details: Yesterday at Bolton Crown Court I represented two Hungarian Defendants on a committal for sentence. They were both remanded in custody. Their case had previously been listed at the Crown Court on Friday 10th Feb, when I did not represent them, but the case had to be adjourned until Tuesday 14th because no interpreter attended, despite apparently being booked by the Court.

Yesterday, no interpreter attended at first. The Court informed me at 10am that all they knew was one was 'not coming'. Later in the morning there had been further contact, where it was reported the agency would get back in touch by around midday with an 'ETA'. They did not do so. At 2.30 the case was called on. The Judge had been in contact with the agency who said an interpreter would arrive by 3.30pm at the earliest. The Judge indicated her intention to adjourn to Friday, which would have meant 2 men unjustly spending a total of 7 days in custody solely due to the failings of the interpreter agency, rather than the 4 days, they in fact served. I was able to convince the judge to sit late.

The interpreter eventually arrived at around 4.10. She informed me that the agency had contacted her on the 13th to book her but she had said she was engaged with other cases in Liverpool on the morning of the 14th. It would appear no or no sufficient further efforts were made to secure an alternative interpreter. Remarkably, she was not contacted again until 2.15 on the 14th, when she made her way to Bolton. The case was called on at 5.02 and concluded at around 5.30.

The men were released with suspended sentences, having already served on remand the equivalent of the maximum sentence they could expect under the guidelines. In my view they served 4 days in custody unjustly. Prosecution and defence counsel lost money for the ineffective hearing on the 10th and the LSC and CPS incurred unnecessary expense because of that ineffective hearing. The court staff and probation were inconvenienced.

14/02/2012

Hendon Magistrates Court

Interpreter: CS

Booked through ALS

Case: GO

Details: The ALS Interpreter did not interpret important information in court, namely, that because the defendant did not arrive in time the court issued an arrest for him but eventually withdrew that warrant. The ALS Interpreter also did not interpret very essential information - the registration mark of the vehicle in question! The interpreter was not dressed appropriately – she was wearing jeans and generally untidy.

14/02/2012

Stratford Magistrates Court

Case: GR

Details: One of the victims was Portuguese.

We waited until 11:50 and the interpreter for the defendant did not turn up - neither did the defendant!

At about 11.50 Prosecutor came to the Witness Room to release both of us. Then they applied for adjournment.

14/02/12

Uxbridge Magistrates Court

Booked through ALS

Case: IV

Details: Russian interpreter required for person in custody. No interpreter at court!!!

14/02/2012

Hull Magistrates Court

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Details: Got a txt message from ALS to book me for a job in Hull. I do not have DPSI and am not registered with NRPSI and I was not assessed by ALS who do not even know the language I speak.

How ALS can book someone on a court job without checking their language skills at all?

14/02/2012

Peterborough Magistrates Court

Details: I received another txt message from ALS about booking me for a job in Peterborough Magistrates Court on 15/02/12 at 9 am.

I am still not registered with NRPSI, have no DPSI and was not assessed by ALS.

13/02/2012

Bexley Magistrates Court

Details:

A Spanish Interpreter was booked a week in advance by the court via ALS but on the day of the hearing i.e. 13th Feb the computer system did not show any allocation. The admin lady in the Bexley Magistrates Court, called ALS at 1.30 and was told that they were still looking for one and that it was not yet 14.00. She received a call back at 15.20 informing her that ALS would not be able to provide an interpreter that day. The case was adjourned.

I was also told by an usher that the previous week the Bromley Magistrates Court experienced the same problem with a booking made via ALS concerning a Lithuanian Interpreter and that the Bexley Court never had problem with interpreters in that language before.

13/02/2012

Great Yarmouth Magistrates Court

Details: ALS failed to provide an interpreter, the case was adjourned for a week
The case was heard a week later with an ALS interpreter present.

Adjournment of the case caused additional expenses; the interpreter provided at a later stage was not qualified for court interpreting

13/02/2012

Ealing Magistrates Court

Booked through ALS

Case: GK

Details: No interpreter

13/02/2012

Lewes, E.Sussex Crown Court

Case: RL

Details: INTERPRETER DIDN'T TURN UP. ALS GIVEN TIME UNTIL 09AM ON 14/02/12

13/02/2012

Hammersmith Magistrates Court

Case: GA - Romanian; other languages were overnights

Details: Nobody turned up to interpret.

I left at 4:15pm. Defendants were sent to prison.

All cases were adjourned till tomorrow.

13/02/2012

Nottingham Tribunal

Case: OA/25301/2011

Details: They had to adjourn the matter as the ALS can't provide interpreter.

11/02/2012

Westminster Magistrates Court

Details: No interpreter in the morning. Case was adjourned to pm. The Judge adjourned the case for Monday at 15:45. Again no interpreter. The defendant was sent to prison till Monday.

11/02/2012

Lincoln Magistrates Court

Details: No Russian interpreter was provided by ALS for a remanded, mentally unstable prisoner.

No Polish interpreter was provided for the other prisoner.

11/02/2012

London Magistrates Court, Highbury Corner

Details: ALS failed to provide an interpreter This overnight case was listed at Highbury Corner MC and it had to be adjourned to Monday 13/02/12 when the defendant will appear in custody at Enfield MC.

The judge explained to the defence lawyer (who was unable to take any instructions from her client) that MoJ has signed a multimillion pound contract with a commercial agency for the provision of interpreting services. The existing interpreters did not sign up with this commercial agency, hence the shortage of interpreting services across CJS. She mentioned that the court has sent a few complaint letters but that unless a few Crown Court trials collapse as a result of this move she does not expect any action to be taken soon.

11/02/2012

Norwich Magistrates Court

Details: Remanded by Kings Lynn force on Friday to appear in Norwich mc on Sat. ALS informed Sat at 4am. Court phones police at 11.45 asking where is the interpreter. Nobody knows. Sgt rings ALS to ask and finds out they couldn't find anybody did not bother to inform the police. Sgt complaints to his governor. Solicitor attends court, no interpreter, complaints to magistrates who are aware of situation and are not happy.

Case has been adjourned till Monday and defendants further remanded. Two complaints made which I'm aware of.

10/02/2012

Basildon Crown Court

Case: MK sentencing for death by dangerous driving

Details: Facing a lengthy sentence for admitting to causing death by dangerous driving MK, in court 1 in front of Circuit Judge, had no interpreter arranged.

There was family of the dead child in court and other parties to this serious matter.

10/02/2012

Ealing Magistrates Court

Booked through ALS

Case: RD

Details: He was brought to court in custody on Monday 6th February and no Polish language interpreter. Eventually bailed by the court to attend on bail on Friday 10th February but no Polish language interpreter attended.

10/02/2012

Basildon Crown Court

Interpreter: NA

Case: VV

Plea And Case Management - Case Started - 15:08, court 1 in front of Circuit Judge

Details: No Lithuanian Interpreter

Noticed by: Polish Interpreter RD who was booked there via the old system back in Dec for another case in Court 1. Defendant spoke no English and notice board said that Interpreter was booked.

Case was adjourned, defendant had no idea what happened.

10/02/2012

Basildon Crown Court

Details: No Polish Interpreter. Noticed by: Polish Interpreter RD who was booked there via the old system back in Dec for another case in court 1.

Defendant spoke insufficient English and notice board said that Interpreter was booked.

Interpreter RD stepped in: This was a matter where a child was killed, the child's mother was in court crying, there was a number of media officers, police officers and others ready to proceed with sentencing. Sentence was of substantial length.

10/02/2012

Ealing Magistrates Court

Case: Mr. VK

Details: ALS was contacted by the Court at 9.00am to provide a Russian speaking interpreter. By 12.30pm no interpreter. Phone call made to chase. No idea when they can get one!

10/02/2012

Harrow Crown Court

Details: I was monitoring the provision of ALS interpreters in Harrow Crown Court on 10/02/2012. A Romanian defendant in Court 2 in the morning did not have an interpreter at all. Two other defendants (Punjabi and Iraqi Kurdish) found themselves in the same situation as their interpreters did not arrive either. As for the Romanian defendant, a relative in the public gallery was trying to whisper to him so he could understand when to sit down or to stand up. When the not guilty verdict was announced, the relative was simply communicating with him using body language.

In the case of the Punjabi defendant, a cousin sitting in the public gallery had to explain to him that his case would be adjourned for the third time consecutively due to the lack of a Punjabi interpreter in the last two weeks. The Judge was extremely furious about the new interpreter booking system via Applied Language Solutions and specifically demanded official court-approved interpreters for the next court dates.

10/02/2012

Slough Magistrates Court

Booked through ALS

Case: Defendant MT (video link case)

Details: A Polish interpreter was booked from ALS but nobody arrived to interpret for MT.

10/02/2012

Lincoln in Crown Court

Details: IM was booked by defence solicitors to interpret for witnesses. ALS interpreter didn't show up. The defence had to book another interpreter to act for the witnesses and IM was used as a court interpreter.

09/02/2012

Hull Magistrates Court

Details: I was in court this morning for Mr J who was in remand. The police had requested ALS to provide a Lithuanian interpreter. They could not do so as it is a "rare language"!! They asked if he spoke Russian: Yes. They still could not provide by the end of play. The defendant had to spend a second night in custody. The situation is dire in all the courts of Hull and East Riding and I understand that Hull MC Senior LA has sent a complaint to MOJ.

09/02/2012

Romford Magistrates Court

Details: INTERPRETER IS NOT QUALIFIED OR VETTED but in fact a student. Interpreter was not translating what the defendants were saying. The interpreter was struggling to keep up with the magistrates.

9/02/2012

Manchester City Magistrates

Details: Today I was doing a trial that was booked before the 'new system' kicked in. I was working in Court 12, but was told by the usher in Court 11 that the Polish interpreter arranged by ALS was not there. She was very unhappy and complained that the court had rung ALS to chase the interpreter, but they were told that the interpreter in question was in court somewhere else. In the afternoon, the same usher told me that ALS could not provide another interpreter to attend, and the court was very angry and frustrated and had to cancel the case to re-list it for another day.

09/02/2012

Lincoln Magistrates Court

Details: No interpreter arrived for 2 polish females. Court adjourned the case and bailed them out at 15:45. They spent over 5 hours waiting for an interpreter who didn't show up.

09/02/2012

Luton Magistrates Court

Interpreter: Language Line (telephone)
Booked through Court
Case: W; R: S + 2 others

Details: This was a 1st hearing for which the police had (according to the Clerk in Ct 1) forgotten to book interpreters. There were at least 5 defendants; 4 Eastern Europeans and a Muslim man, all of them on bail. One of the defendants W was seated alongside the Clerk at her desk on the other side from where the other defendants were in the dock. This was because W had to be as close to the Clerk's telephone as possible so that the Language Line interpreter could hear the answers to the questions. In other words, rather than go through ALS to get an interpreter (no

doubt Luton has already given up on this policy), the court is now ringing Language Line to use their telephone service in court. There was no security officer next to W who was a metre away from the Clerk. Sometimes the words of the Magistrates were not translated as the interpreter was understandably unsure when to translate & when not to.

09/02/2012

Milton Keynes Magistrates Court

Details: I was there for something else and I discovered that these three interpreters had not turned up. The desk clerk told me this and he had reported it to the authorities.

08/02/2012

Isleworth Crown Court

Details: ALS interpreter never arrived.

08/02/2012

Slough Magistrates Court

Details: I spoke to an usher in East Berkshire Magistrates Court in Slough and was told that the biggest problem with ALS interpreters is the fact that they do not attend court. He also said that the Polish ALS interpreter arrived at court after a delay on 8/02. Apparently she was very helpful and the only problem was that she did not interpret in the dock. When he mentioned this to the clerk and the interpreter was addressed with regards to this issue, she said that the solicitor had spoken to the defendant before the hearing so he was aware what was going on so she did not believe interpretation was necessary.

08/02/2012

London Magistrates Court

Details: Interpreter translating 1/3 of what was said using 3rd person. Dressed in jeans and scruffy scarf.

Legal adviser and judge not happy after waiting 5 hrs for this so called interpreter to arrive. Interpreter asked everybody 3 times to speak more slowly

08/02/2012

Cambridge Magistrates Court

Details: Client was remanded in custody at Parkside P.S. in the early hours of 7/2/12 & taken to Cambridge Magistrates for the morning sitting on the same day. No ALS interpreter was forthcoming, so, at 11.39, I was phoned by the Listings Office at Peterborough (I know the lady to be called A) to ask if I would step into the breach & attend Cambridge Mags. I refused, giving reasons. At 13.07 I called Cambridge Magistrates and spoke to someone I believed to be a Court Clerk (male). He was aware of the M case and said it had been adjourned till tomorrow 8/2/12. I went into Cambridge Magistrates Court on 8/2/12 to see what would happen. There

was no sign of M's name on any list. I phoned the cells to see if he was there. They told me he had left court yesterday. I asked if he had been bailed for another date. They said no he had been released with a fine with time served. He hadn't understood anything but the magistrates had wanted to deal with the matter quickly.

08/02/2012

Chester Magistrates Court

Interpreter: None

Case: MM

Details: Police stated they would book arrange an interpreter for first hearing, but no one in attendance. Court made a number of enquiries throughout the morning and was told one was on its way, but when no one attended at 1pm, during a further telephone call, the court were told that no interpreter was available. The Client waited for 4 hours for an interpreter and then the case was adjourned.

08/02/2012

Basildon Magistrates Court

Case: ED

Details: Defendant was twice produced via a video link from Holloway prison but twice the interpreter did not turn up.

08/02/201

Brighton County Court

Case: RZ

Details: ALS failed to provide a Lithuanian language interpreter and booked an RRPSI on National Agreement terms. The interpreter was practically blackmailed by a desperate court listings officer or whoever called her, as she was told it was an emergency and a child's welfare was at stake.

07/02/2012

Beverley Magistrates Court

Case: SS

Details: Asked to go to court as court unable to get an interpreter from ALS. Court comment: "Everyone's fed up. It's hopeless trying to get an interpreter from them".

07/02/2012

Hendon Magistrates Court

Case: RM, EB

Details: A least two Romanians kept overnight in custody, were still waiting for an ALS interpreter at 15.30h, when I left the court.

07/02/2012

Huntingdon Crown Court

Case: Mr S

Details: Interpreting was a Polish lady, ALS interpreter. This lady told me herself she has no interpreting qualification whatsoever and has never been on NRPSI. She also said she has never interpreted at a Crown Court (or any court) before.

I listened to part of the consecutive interpreting during the cross-examination of the defendant and then to the simultaneous interpreting through the rest of the proceeding right to the end of the closing speeches.

I was very disappointed and concerned with the quality of interpreting I heard. The consecutive interpreting was grammatically incorrect and very inaccurate. The simultaneous interpreting was very vague and incomplete. I would say a fifth of what was being said in court was interpreted to the defendant. I was sitting right behind the defendant and the interpreter and could hear quite well. At one stage the interpreter instead of interpreting what the Judge was saying, was telling the defendant that she thought the Judge was nice and sympathetic towards the defendant's case.

07/02/2012

Saint Asaph Police Station

Case: IC and 4 other Romanian speaking suspects in custody.

Details: ALS was unable to send a Romanian interpreter to St Asaph custody, thus myself and my colleague assisted instead and filled in claim forms entitled "Interpreters Services Other than ALS". Suspects had been detained for much longer than necessary and the custody time limit was running out.

07/02/2012

Westminster Magistrates Court

Case: N

Details: I observed part of the full hearing, the interpreting about 50% what's said, poor interpreting skills, lack of legal vocabulary and lack of attention to detail. DJ asking additional questions, solicitor looking unhappy with evidence heard.

Solicitor mentioned intention to apply for wasted costs, judge responding "we are not unsympathetic to that kind of application in circumstances, how much do you have in mind?" No figure given but intent to apply for his costs, travel costs of the def and witnesses. Judge's reply: I wouldn't like to pre-judge the application but can you have the figures ready for the next hearing.

07/02/2012

Cambridge Magistrates Court

Details: This is a correction to a previous entry. The detainee was processed by having the decision of the court typed up & translated via Google Translate. A copy of this translation was printed off & handed to the detainee through the glass panels of the box. The detainee was then released having had no interpreter all day.

07/02/2012

Westminster Magistrates Court

Case: extradition details not known

Details: Arrived 4.10 pm, cases scheduled from 10.00 am.

07/02/2012

Snaresbrook Crown Court

Details: The interpreter's English was not good enough.

Turned up late as he/she was tired. Was not suitably dressed for Court.

Bad enough for the Judge to give instructions to complain to ALS and talk of a wasted time cost order.

Another interpreter (qualified) attended court the following day being late as he/she had only been booked by ALS at 09:00 for 10:00.

07/02/2012

Market Drayton Police

Details: I received a call from the Home Office at approximately 1.30pm asking me if I would call a number where I'd be given a interpreting session. I did so, only to realise it was a DC from West Midlands police. He begged me to help him do a charge at a prison in Market Drayton. I said to him "why are you phoning me, why don't you use the back street phoney agency, the one you have a contract with?"

He said he had called them the previous night and ALS had promised an interpreter would be there at 9am, he also said he had been calling ALS since 9.15am till 1pm but he could not get through to them! And that out of desperation, he had rang the Home Office to obtain a NRPSI number!

I did go and help him out on West Midlands Police rates. DC made me aware of his concerns and that all 12 officers in his team had complained against ALS on numerous occasions. He said they were extremely unsatisfied with the new system but he said it seemed like their concerns were brushed under the carpet!

07/02/2012

Huntingdon Crown Court

Details: On 7th February, in the second week of Applied Language Solutions in action, I met a female Polish ALS interpreter at Huntingdon Crown Court. This lady didn't hide the fact that she had no interpreting qualifications whatsoever and had never been on the NRPSI. She also said she had never interpreted at a Crown Court (or any court) before. I listened to part of the consecutive interpreting during the cross-examination of the defendant and then to the simultaneous interpreting throughout the rest of the proceedings right to the end of the closing speeches. I was very disappointed and concerned about the quality of the interpreting I heard. The consecutive interpreting was grammatically incorrect and very inaccurate.

The simultaneous interpreting was very vague and incomplete. I would say that only a fifth of what was being said in court was interpreted to the defendant. I was sitting right behind the defendant and the interpreter and could hear quite well. At one point instead of interpreting what the Judge was saying, the interpreter was telling the defendant that she thought the Judge was nice and sympathetic towards the defendant's case. Moreover, the interpreter did not interpret in the first person, she only spoke to the defendant by his first name and referred to the Judge as 'him' when interpreting the Judge's questions.

Could such bad interpreting substantiate grounds for an appeal?

07/02/2012

Slough Magistrates Court

Details: Registered Interpreter MM attended for matter of MT (booked via the old system). There was one more Polish defendant but refused to deal with him as Court said that needed an ALS booking.

07/02/2012

Westminster Magistrates Court

Case: W

Details: Defendant in criminal case waited all day, from 10.30 till 4.30, no interpreter. There was an ALS person in court, MN but he did not respond to repeated calls for "polish interpreter to go to ct9", sitting and waiting for 1 case he was booked for which started after 2.00.

07/02/2012

Peterborough Crown Court

Case: VK

Details: When interpreter walked out of the court room he was approached by barrister/CPS (I'm not sure) who told him directly: "The judge has pointed out that you were not translating for the defendant in the dock". Interpreter replied something like "We were talking about all this in the cells with him so there wasn't much point translating it all again".

This linguist was asked to go down to cell to speak to the client to explain to him what happened in court. This ALS linguist confirmed to me that he is not NRPSI member and does not have any legal interpreting qualifications.

07/02/2012

Enfield Magistrates Court

Details: Two interpreters booked by ALS for the same job at Enfield MC, one booked at 11.00 (to come from Cambridgeshire to London) by an operator from a call centre and another interpreter was booked for the same case at 12.00, by another operator, from another call centre.

06/02/2012

Steinbeck Police Station

Case: PC

Details: ALS could not supply interpreter all day. Detention was extended.

How bad: defendant was very upset

Officers were allowed to call interpreter from the register after request

Due to the delay caused by waiting for interpreter from ALS, he was released in the evening and wasn't quite sure where he was going to spend the night. PC dealing with him was extremely helpful.

6/02/2012

Luton Magistrates Court

Case: PE

Details: Held in custody over the previous weekend. Produced on 6/2/12. No ALS interpreter.

After 2pm he was brought into court and sat at the clerk's desk near the telephone, after the main doors to the court had been locked and everyone had been ushered out of the courtroom.

The hearing was then conducted via Language Line on the phone. It took 45 minutes.

This information was relayed to me by a solicitor.

06/02/2012

London Crown Court

Case: NE

Details: Defendant in custody, no interpreter provided between 09.30am-16.00pm.

The defendant was produced at a previous hearing on 1st Feb when there was no interpreter.

Case adjourned to 10.02.12. Judge recommended "after 12pm hearing as this may increase the chance of the Agency to send an interpreter".

06/02/2012

Peterborough Magistrates Court

Case: SMM

Details: ALS failed to provide an interpreter for the defendant. The case had to be adjourned.

06/02/2012

Westminster Magistrates Court

Interpreter: EP

Case: AL & MCP; EB

Details: The Court made the phone call on Saturday to book an interpreter for a case that was adjourned on Friday. However ALS did not manage to send an interpreter before 14.45 on Monday (today). The interpreter had to come from Northamptonshire; defendants in custody; ALS interpreter-NRPSI listed. ALS said the interpreter would arrive at 13.30 but she arrived at 14.45.

06/02/2012

Westminster Magistrates Court

Interpreter: AP

Case: Mr M

Details: The NRPSI Lithuanian interpreter who was in Court for other cases had a chat with the new ALS linguist who confirmed she had no CRB check yet. She had applied for the security clearance recently but has not received it yet.

06/02/2012

Oldham Magistrates' Court

Interpreter: BC

Case: IB

Details: ALS failed to provide Oldham Magistrates' Court with a Romanian interpreter for a defendant who was in custody and I received a direct call at 2:05pm to attend Court asap.

06/02/2012

Boston Magistrates Court

Interpreter: no interpreter supplied

Case: ZD, PSF, BM

Details: No interpreter supplied for these 3 murder suspects.

06/02/2012

Hull Crown Court

Interpreter: PG

Case: A

Details: Asked to go to court immediately. (10 min prelim hearing). ALS interpreter had broken down on the way to Hull...from Cambridge!!

06/02/2012

Ealing Magistrates Court

Case: RD

Details: Overnight custody from ACTON police station. No Polish language interpreter. Eventually bailed to attend on bail on Friday 10th February, still no Polish language interpreter.

06/02/2012

Thames Magistrates' Court

Details: Received information from XXX Solicitors that one of their solicitors and defendant waited all day for an Italian interpreter. ALS could not supply an interpreter. The valuable Court time was wasted.

04/02/2012

Luton Magistrates Court

Case: Ms B

Details: Ms B was kept in custody over night and the following day, which was Saturday (half working day), until 13.00. No Romanian interpreter from ALS present at that time. The Court was going to close. Clerk still waiting for an ALS interpreter. The victim was going to be remanded or to be dealt via phone. The Court was still not sure what to do next.

04/02/2012

Loughborough Magistrates Court

Details: No ALS interpreter arrived for Saturday court. Client remanded to Hinckley Mags Ct on Tues 7/2/12. No ALS interpreter again. Client remanded again back to Loughborough Mags on 8/2/12. Eventually a NRPSI interpreter dealt with the case when NA rates were offered. Client had information supplied to him/her at Hinckley Mags Ct via Google Translate using a Smartphone in the cells. Detainee spent at least 4 days in custody at an approximate expense of £4000.

03/02/2012

Chester Magistrates Court

Details:

Legal adviser complained that in the last three days ALS failed to provide a Romanian and a Slovak interpreter. The Romanian defendant was kept in custody overnight due to no show from ALS and the next day Prosecution had to drop the charges and release the prisoner without prosecuting him due to further no-show from ALS.

Another case: Slovak interpreter did not turn up and the case had to be adjourned.

03/02/2012

Uxbridge Magistrates Court

Interpreter: GM

Case: Not recorded, time called was about 13.00 hours

Details: Requested to attend ASAP. Replied unable due to agency situation. Told it was OK as manager has given authority to book us directly when agency could not supply. I apologised and explained we were boycotting the agency. Asked if that was all of us and replied 'pretty much'.

03/02/2012

Worthing Magistrates Court

Case: Defendant RZ

Details: The interpreter was 2 hours late. 7 professionals, solicitors' interpreter, defendant, legal adviser and magistrates had to wait. The legal advisor called the supplier (ALS) about 8 times during the 2 hours. At first she was given a name of a male interpreter who "was on his way", then it was a name of a lady "who was just getting out of the train in Worthing". They lied, as the woman interpreter said she got the booking yesterday.

Her interpreting was not accurate, she tried to summarize and in most cases just interpreted the beginning of a sentence and then kept silent. She substituted those words and phrases she was unfamiliar with other words or phrases, not reflecting the content of information she had to convey.

03/02/2012

London Police Station

Interpreter: AI

Booked through Met Police

Case: Confidential/minor

Details: After the interview, outside the Police St, I was approached by 3 of the defendant's family members. This is what they said: We speak very little English but we've heard that there are no interpreters in Courts or the Interpreters who are called are not saying anything. We are here to help our family member. Between us three we may be able to understand what is going on.

03/02/2012

Bennett House, Stoke on Trent Tribunal

Details: I attended Bennett House today for the AIT, 24th Feb. being my last booking. I was informed by one of the clerks there that on 3rd Feb. the ALS interpreter failed to deliver as he was incompetent and lacked confidence. Immigration judge had to intervene several times and noted this on the feedback form. After the hearing, the judge made the court clerk aware of the ALS interpreter's incompetence.

03/02/2012

Doncaster Magistrates Court

Case: Defendant name: P

Details: The court has been waiting since 10 am for an interpreter to arrive and the defendant was being kept in custody all the time. At 15:20 court decided to remand Mr P in custody with a view of obtaining an interpreter for a Monday morning session.

03/02/2012

Uxbridge Magistrates Court

Details: I have received a phone call from Uxbridge Magistrates Court. A member of staff was desperately calling to book an interpreter ASAP. When I asked whether they had signed up with ALS, the answer was that they had. However, I was told that none of ALS interpreters were available so they were calling registered interpreters. Needless to say, I refused to take this job, giving them the obvious reasons.

03/02/2012

Redbridge Magistrates Court

Case: GD

Details: Client had been adjourned from 2/2/12 due to no interpreter. Whether this was due to ALS or not is not known. ALS probably not involved on 3/2/12 as Listings said no interpreter request form had been received from the Clerk on 2/2/12. Client was heard in youth court without interpreter and case adjourned for a later date.

02/02/2012

Westminster, Magistrates Court

Details: Full hearing with witnesses to give evidence coming from Peterborough, father in wheelchair. They had to pay for the return tickets, waited all day, everybody present, no interpreter. Adjourned for a week.

02/02/2012

Basildon Magistrates Court

Interpreter: AB

Case: CDC

Details: Interpreter did not have any identification, did not know what an oath is, was her first time ever in a court environment, translated very badly most legal terms and had no knowledge of any court procedures (for instance to stand up when magistrates are coming in a courtroom).

02/02/2012

Leeds Magistrates Court

Interpreter: None attended

Case: AB

Details: ALS did not send an interpreter. It should have been heard in the morning.

02/02/2012

Wimbledon Magistrates Court

Case: DS, GS (co-defendants)

Details: Trail adjourned. The court Clerk from CT 11 told me they had been trying book an interpreter through ALS from the morning. They cancelled the booking with ALS just before 3pm but a Polish ALS interpreter appeared 3.05pm whilst everybody had already gone.

The same court Clerk read out to me a written complaint she had written to MOJ claiming excessive costs due to adjournments.

02/02/2012

Wimbledon Magistrates Court

Details: Interpreter requested from ALS, no interpreter till 4.00 or at all.

02/02/2012

Boston Magistrates Court

Details: Client charged and kept for court previous evening. Police booked interpreter for ALS for 9.30am. At 11.00am, I rang police to confirm booking. They confirmed it. Rang me back to say ALS had acknowledged booking but had not actually booked anyone. Rang court listings and they got someone to court for 1.36pm. Client was in custody - could not take instructions or advise him as to reason for delay. Case proceeded smoothly after interpreter arrived - appears to have been ALS to blame.

02/02/2012

Luton Magistrates Court

Case: not known

Details: Luton MC rang NRPSI interpreter asking 4.00 pm, to come asap, been waiting for ALS since morning, offered NA rates, NRPSI interpreter refused.

01/02/2012

Westminster Magistrates Court

Case: BT, OG, co-defendants

Details: The linguist not qualified and not trained for the job. For the first time in a Court and had to be explained by the defence solicitor what to do, where to sit etc. Whilst the two magistrates and all parties were waiting for the defendants to be brought up from the cells, the linguist was playing on the phone, IN THE DOCK. The usher put things right. She did not understand and did not translate any of the legal terms and was overwhelmed by the whole experience. During

the sentence hearing she only said 1-2 words every 4-5 minutes. She had no idea about simultaneous interpreting and did not seem to be able to understand anything let alone translate anything. The magistrates had to interrupt the solicitor and the prosecutor a few times as they could see she was struggling but the sentence was passed although the defendants could not understand what was being said. In the end the male defendant had to ask the magistrates for clarification in broken English. The solicitor said to NRPSI interpreters who were in Court on the day that he was not happy and sure his clients had understood nothing of what he had explained to them.

01/02/2012

North Shields Tribunal

Interpreter: N/K

Case: N/K

Details: I was informed the following day by HOPO that on 01/02/12 Kinyarwanda interpreter from ALS had to leave at lunchtime, causing an adjournment. The Judge was still annoyed the following day (02/02/12). On 02/02/12 I was told that ALS Kinyarwanda interpreter did not show up at all for a case on 02/02/12, and that case was adjourned too.

01/02/2012

Chesterfield Magistrates Court

Case: Custody case - Theft from shop

Details: A Romanian-speaking defendant has been kept in custody for 10 days due to the lack of an interpreter. His case has been adjourned on two separate occasions until 1st Feb, when an ALS interpreter attended Court.

01/02/2012

Boston Magistrates Court

Details: A Polish interpreter booked for the morning arrived at 14:30 wearing overalls and hat with no notebook or personal badge. She didn't understand the solicitor when he told her to go down to the cells.

01/02/2012

Westminster Magistrates Court

Interpreter: SL

Case: 2 extradition cases

Details: ALS person appeared in court 3.30 pm, court waiting for Polish interpreter since 10.00. No badge, presented an Oyster card as ID.

01/02/2012

Westminster Magistrates Court

Interpreter: not known

Case: new extradition cases

Details: All interpreters requested before 10 am; Lithuanian arrived 1pm, Polish 3.30 pm, no Punjabi as of 3 pm.

January 2012

31/01/2012 Magistrates

Westminster Mags London

Case: 2 defendants, male and female, attempted theft from a person

Details: No interpreter supplied by ALS, defendants remanded till 01/02/12.

31/01/2012

Westminster Magistrates Court

Details: ALS person was refused entry to custody area with solicitor because he had no badge, said "Fuck this, that's part-time" and stormed off.

31/01/2012

Hammersmith MC

Case: Defendant, can't provide the name, it might be youth

Details: Defendant was in court on 30.01.2012 and waited for an interpreter for the whole day.

Was sent to prison and brought back on 31.01.2012. I was asked to assist after I had finished my case before lunch break and I said NO as a principle. I had to go. I was told by the usher that they had been waiting for the ALS interpreter for the second day.

30/01/2012

Southampton Magistrates Court

Case: Polish defendants x 2

Details: No interpreter for two Polish defendants - drink driving, first hearing.

The court waited until 10:30 in case an interpreter booked by the police was late. No interpreter, a request sent to ALS. No reply. ALS said there was a fire and they could not promptly reply.

Polish ALS interpreter turned up at 16:20 but the defendants had already been bailed out until the following week.

28/01/2012

Walsall Police Station

Interpreter: GO (NRCPD)

Details: I was booked to attend a witness interview and the first thing the officer said to me was, "Please tell me you're not from ALS". I said I wasn't and asked him why and his response was,

"They are crap. Complete and utter crap". I didn't ask any further questions: the client was at my side and it felt unprofessional to pursue the matter any further.

27/01/2012

Oldham Magistrates' Court

Details: Oldham Magistrates' Court rang me on Friday 27th January 2012 confirming that ALS could not send a Bulgarian interpreter to Court and they were getting desperate - thus Listings were allowed to call interpreters directly in such exceptional circumstances.

26/01/2012

Reading Magistrates Court

Details: Defendant was arrested in Liverpool on 25 Jan 2012 for breach of Reading Mags Court bail, transported to Reading on the morning of 26 Jan 2012. Registered Polish Interpreter RP was in court for an unrelated matter. He was asked to deal with Mr S. A female appeared saying that she was paid £40 to come from Stoke on Trent to interpret. Mr PR asked if she was registered, she ran out of the court unable to show any ID whatsoever. Cells Manager became concerned that she could have been a friend of the defendant. Police were notified.

25/01/2012

Huddersfield Police Station

Details: L was arrested on suspicion of false representation on 25th January 2012. She was booked in to custody in the afternoon and was told to be interviewed shortly as soon as an interpreter arrives. As ALS was unable to provide an interpreter, they had to bail L on 25th January 2012 around 9.00pm to come back to Huddersfield Police Station on 5th February 2012 for 15.30.

24/01/2012

Carlisle Police Station

Details: Carlisle Police needed a Portuguese interpreter asap. They told RPSI X the detainee had been arrested the evening before, they phoned ALS on that same evening (Mon, 23rd), they were given a booking no. and were told to wait. On Tuesday morning, the police rang ALS again asking for the interpreter and were told that although they had been given a booking no., ALS could only provide the interpreter on Thursday the 26th. The police obviously could not keep the detainee that long and were desperate. RPSI X agreed to go on the basis that he/she would get paid the normal police rates, they said they would confirm with the "bosses" and call back. Ten minutes later X got a phone call saying they were happy to proceed and pay X the normal rates. X accepted the job and it ended up going to court the next day, where they booked X straight away, knowing that if they did so through ALS they wouldn't get an interpreter on time.

24/01/2012

Oldham Magistrates' Court

Interpreter: CH and MI

Case: Two Romanian speaking defendants,

Details: Two Romanian interpreters attended Oldham Magistrates' Court on exactly the same date (24/01/2012) and exactly the same time (09:50 hours) for two separate cases.

24/01/2012

Manchester Crown Sq (Main Crown Ct)

Interpreter: Mrs AH, Mrs X, Mr Y

Details: Mrs H & Mr Y BOTH showed their std ALS job printouts to Reception (these contained SCANT vital info). Mrs H's showed post-code for THIS court, but Reception suggested her case might instead be at Mags, nearby. [She had travelled from Leeds-Harrogate].

They told Mr Y: "You want Minshull St!" to which he responded: "What does this Minshull St mean!?" and he didn't know what to do next. [He had travelled some considerable distance, too - he definitely WASN'T local]. After a few hours, Mrs X was told that her case had been re-scheduled and Listings had informed ALS of this (noting the person's name and the time) on Mon morning, 23/01/12. But ALS had failed to notify Mrs X and, hence, she feared that ALS would now refuse to pay her. Mr Y didn't have any idea what to do next, despite being told of correct location of case in OTHER Crown Ct (Minshull St).

Mrs H went to Mags nearby to check if her assignment was maybe there. Mrs X eventually secured a written note and a signature from the Senior Listings Officer, confirming that they HAD informed ALS the previous day, of this cancellation.

18/01/2012

Preston Crown Court

Interpreter: Ms DP

Case: AA; Witness WH

Details: Case listed for 3 days at Preston Crown Court. It became apparent Urdu interpreter was required for Mr H for witness statement, but Gujarati language interpreter Ms P working for ALS was assigned who told police and witness that she was the right interpreter. She made her own MG11 statement and stated that witness spoke Hindi, in fact he speaks Urdu. In crown court when I (Urdu interpreter) was given that original statement, I could not read it, as it was written either in Hindi or Gujarati, it created real problems and statement was inadmissible, even Judge was not happy about wrong interpreter being used for statement. The police officer assured me that he will take Ms P to task.

Ms P is only qualified in Gujarat, she acted unlawfully and deceived police officers about the language suitability just to earn her fees. She is well known in interpreters' community for these

kinds of deceptions around North West Police stations. Police officers easily believe her and don't check her ID as she hides it under her clothes.

17/01/2012

Ormskirk Magistrates' Court

Interpreter: BC & GD

Details: ALS was unable to supply the Court with the services of a Romanian interpreter and thus Lancashire Constabulary rang my colleague directly asking him to attend Court whilst I was booked for the same urgent custody case directly by the Magistrates' Court. This resulted in a double-booking and a waste of tax payers' money due to ALS' failure to supply.

12/01/2012

Westminster, Magistrates Court

Details: Court dealt without an interpreter being present. NRPSI Interpreter was called by court after 12:30, but by the time the interpreter had got there Court had ordered extradition. Case: C, extradition

01/01/2012

Birmingham Police Station

Case: 5 Polish people in custody at Stechford Police Station

Details: I received a phone call from an officer who informed me that 5 people have been arrested the previous night but ALS told him they won't be able to provide an interpreter until the following day (2nd Jan).

01/01/2012

Ipswich Magistrates Court

Case: Romanian National

Details: Court requested Romanian Interpreter from ALS but ALS not able to provide one. Judge decided to remand Defendant till next day. Person sent to prison for a night.

December 2011

08/12/2011

Bradford Tribunal

Case: IT

Details: Interpreter did not interpret remarks of judge, UK Border Agency representative or the client's own counsel into English for the client (asylum appellant) when they became technical - i.e. matters of legislation. She made the same mistake 3 times regarding distance between two locations, adding 100 miles to what the UK border agency rep had said.

The appellant was very unsettled that there were large parts of the hearing which she did not understand and for which she had no explanation at all; I was very shocked at the mistake regarding the distance, since it was part of a question challenging the appellant's integrity in her statement: 'but you said that x was 127 miles away from y ' (when the question should have been 'but you said that x was 27 miles away from y). The appellant was quite distressed, because clearly she had never said x was 127 miles away from y. I pointed out the mistake regarding the distance to the tribunal, and the question was put again.

I resumed the missing information during a break. No doubt I should not have done this as I was only booked for the pre-hearing with counsel. The missing information was not majorly significant in itself, but the impact on an already stressed person of not knowing what was being said was quite considerable.

05/12/2011

Liverpool Magistrates' Court

Case: Custody case

Details: Liverpool Magistrates' Court rang me as they were desperate for a Romanian interpreter due to ALS failing to supply the services of such interpreter in a custody case.