

The PIA Bulletin, Issue 3, May 2012

Report on General Meeting: Unity and Solidarity

PIA held an Open-house General Meeting in Birmingham on 19 May 2012. Widely advertised through all channels, the broad turnout reinforced that Unity and Solidarity continues to be the profession's most effective strategy.

We were pleased to welcome PIA Members and Non-members, Sign Language Interpreters, representatives of other organisations in the steering committee of the 'Professional Interpreters for Justice' campaign and our speakers Mrs Yvonne Fowler and Mr Malcolm Fowler. Directors of WITS and CINTRA also attended.

The meeting opened with two talks that you can listen to online [here](#). Yvonne's talk reminded us of the Begum case, quoted David Cameron and Capita executive Paul Pindar, and highlighted further broken promises by the government that we had not picked up on before. Malcolm's talk gave us encouragement that we are making inroads to educating the Judiciary at large and that our steadfastness and resolve are much admired by legal professionals.

The talks were followed by an update on PIA projects and a financial report explaining how the Legal Fund had been managed since it was started in 2010. We were pleased to report that the Legal Fund now has a healthy balance since the Legal Ombudsman ruled last month that PIA should receive a refund of fees from the 2011 North West judicial review.

Moreover, PIA repaid all the interest-free loans that some members had kindly put up for legal costs at various critical times in the past two years. Members and others who

donated to the Legal Fund, held in trust by PIA, can contact PIA for more details.

The main business of the meeting was a general discussion about continuing the direct action that interpreters have been engaging in, especially the boycott by individual interpreters of ALS bookings and also the boycott of direct bookings from HMCTS.

The meeting was 100% in favour of continuing the ALS boycott. However, the direct bookings boycott is more sensitive and mixed views were expressed. The meeting did agree that direct bookings won't last. After so many refusals from RPSIs, HMCTS is using all kinds of agencies, bypassing ALS and the NRPSI.

There was an observation that in court RPSIs provide a contrast to the ALS workers. A general conclusion was that those individual RPSIs who take a direct booking should use a standard form of words outlining the basis on which they are attending, to try to educate other legal professions present.

By and large there was very little support for accepting direct bookings but it was recognised that people facing financial hardship must make their own choices. **In sum, the boycott continues.** However, we would like to reiterate that organisations cannot tell interpreters what they should do.

The organisations' joint strategy has not changed. It continues to be to force accountability over this contract through the channels of the Justice Committee and the National Audit Office. As was reported [here](#) recently, the joint lobbying so far of these entities by all the interpreter organisations is paying off and these inquiries will now be a reality. In addition, we are continuously keeping our media contacts informed.

The meeting heard about PIA's work with other ongoing projects especially the [Unlawful Detention Campaign](#); click here to see how you can help.

It has already been a long fight and the end is not in sight for a while yet so we must all hang on in there while the various inquiries move forward. Nobody said it would be easy - standing up for your principles rarely is.

Thanks again to everybody who attended the meeting, and special thanks to Rekha Narula, Yvonne Fowler and the Aston Interpreters Network for their help in organising the event and providing such an ideal venue.

Madeleine and John, Directors of PIA

PIA Communications Policy

PIA keeps its members informed through these Bulletins and other email updates. It does not respond to general queries posted in online groups.

We invite all members and non-members with a particular question or query to write to us at info@profintal.org.uk



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Legal Action: a promising development.

PIA has been liaising with some NGOs who share our concerns about the impact the MoJ contract with ALS is having. We understand that at least one NGO is currently exploring the possibility of it bringing legal action against the MoJ. Matters are at an early stage but there may be developments soon. We hope to bring you an update as soon as we can.

Legal opinion sought by PIA has emphatically advised us that no Judicial Review (JR) brought by interpreters themselves would be likely to succeed and that a JR by interpreters is not the right tool to achieve the result we desired.

Observing ALS workers

Based on evidence collected by you, PIA was able to submit a formal complaint to ALS Ltd and the MoJ, listing more than 250 instances when ALS Ltd's workers did not turn up at all, arrived late and left early, causing adjournments in most cases. The complaint also covered more than 70 instances where the quality and competence of ALS Ltd workers was called into question.

So please continue to provide reports.

- Report your evidence in a mini-statement at <http://rpsi.name/default>.
- Pass on stories you heard from staff and lawyers at <http://linguistlounge.org>.
- Log phone calls from courts and tribunals at <http://rpsi.name/default/calls.html>

Yes, it does matter and it will make a difference, so please do it.

*To send news to the PIA Bulletin or to contact PIA, email info@profintal.org.uk
Membership enquiries should go to membership@profintal.org.uk*