

## Milestone meeting as Justice Minister engages interpreter groups

Helen Grant MP, Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Justice, Women and Equalities, held positive discussions on 4<sup>th</sup> December with nine organisations who united as umbrella group *Professional Interpreters for Justice* and whose representatives were invited to talks.

In the meeting Helen Grant MP said that the system needs the professional interpreters' organisations and that if all can work effectively and positively together it will be good for the running of the justice system.

Problems with the operation of the Ministry of Justice contract awarded to Applied Language Solutions (and acquired by Capita at the end of 2011) prompted a critical National Audit Office (NAO) report earlier this year and more recently there have been two parliamentary inquiries by the Public Accounts Committee and Justice Select Committee, who will publish their findings in coming weeks.

*Professional Interpreters for Justice* has been invited to submit ideas on how the Ministry of Justice can carry out the recommendations of the NAO report, with particular regard to commissioning an independent evaluation of whether the new contract's quality standards for interpreting and translation are adequate and the incentives which might attract professionally qualified members of the interpreter organisations back to court work.

The NAO highlighted in its report that as few as 300 (13%) of the 2,300 professionally qualified interpreters on the National Register of Public Service Interpreters (NRPSI) are still working in the courts, which has caused problems with both supply and quality of interpreting in courts under the new contract.

Keith Moffitt, Chair of the Chartered Institute of Linguists, representing *Professional Interpreters for Justice*, says: "There's a real

risk of the legal interpreting profession collapsing and we are encouraged that the Justice Minister wants to listen and properly engage the profession in the interests of delivering justice. Our members are principled individuals who feel their professional status has been watered down by the absence of quality in this private contract. We'll be writing to the Minister with our proposals for working groups to tackle the issues."

The Justice Minister invited *Professional Interpreters for Justice* to provide proposals about setting up working groups within 14 days.

*PIA was represented at this meeting by Madeleine Lee.*

## PI4J

*Professional Interpreters for Justice (PI4J)* is an umbrella group representing over 2,200 NRPSI registered and qualified interpreters in 135 languages. Its aim is to work in partnership with the Ministry of Justice to safeguard the quality of interpreting services for the Criminal Justice System. The [PI4J website](#) is currently being updated.

Until the PI4J website is back online, reports of meetings of PI4J are available from the NRPSI Interpreters' Room ([www.nrpsi.co.uk](http://www.nrpsi.co.uk)). You must be on the NRPSI and log in to see the full set.

Meetings between interpreter organisation representatives have taken place monthly and sometimes more often. Unite the Union provide a phone-in facility for meetings, meaning we avoid travel costs.



## Directors' apologies

It is 6 months since the last Bulletin and so time for us to update you with events. We're sorry for the delay but we know you are aware of other sources of information such as <http://tinyurl.com/newsbase>.

## Parliamentary Inquiries

Much time and energy has been put in to preparing and taking part in Parliamentary inquiries by the National Audit Office, Public Accounts Committee and the Justice Select Committee. Go [here](#) for links to the written material, evidence hearings and transcripts from both Select Committees.

The Public Accounts Committee published its [report](#) on 14 December 2012. Margaret Hodge, chair of the PAC, said:

*"when the Ministry of Justice set out to establish a new centralised system for supplying interpreters to the justice system, almost everything that could go wrong did go wrong" and: "This is an object-lesson in how not to contract out a public service".*

We expect the Justice Select Committee to publish its report soon.

## Thanks

A huge amount of information is shared on <http://www.linguistlounge.org> and on the Facebook Group FITUK. Thank you to the LL webmasters and Facebook Group moderators for making this possible: Auris Mas, Yelena McCafferty, Ranjeeta Johnson and Valentina Russo.

Cristina Santos collects all the news articles for PIA's blogspot at <http://tinyurl.com/newsbase>.

Rekha Narula distributes all sorts of information by email well outside of the original Midlands target area.

These colleagues do such a good job that they deserve our thanks.

## JR is not forgotten

Much evidence has been exposed showing the Framework Agreement was ill-conceived and badly organised. This would seem to be a good reason to consider another Judicial Review (JR). With this in mind, PIA asked our lawyers for advice.

The barrister's advice was to wait for all the parliamentary reports to be published. Then if the recommendations are not taken up, challenge them. Even more hooks to hang a Judicial Review on may come out of the published reports.

## Legal Fund and Interim PIA Financial report

The money donated during various collections is being kept in trust by PIA. You can listen to the financial [report](#) on the Legal Fund up to May 2012 that was presented at the Birmingham meeting in May 2012, [\[click here\]](#) (time from 10:35 to 15:50).

Since reporting to members in May 2012, PIA has spent a further £2,812 on legal fees and £744 on running costs and expenses.

PIA's directors are not paid.

Presently, the Legal Fund contains more than £16,000.

To donate to the Legal Fund, make your payment to Natwest 53-61-11 • 61647403, reference = your name and surname.

### NOTE

**PIA's website is off the air because the server closed down and we have to go to another one.**

**PIA emails to [info@profintal.org.uk](mailto:info@profintal.org.uk) are not affected as they go through Gmail.**

# The PIA Bulletin, Issue 5, December 2012

## PIA mandate

Professional Interpreters Alliance Ltd is a company limited by guarantee. As a legal entity, it can bring legal action. The Professional Interpreters' Alliance (without the Ltd) is a representative organisation with people. That is why our list of members is so important; in addition to the Legal Fund donations we look after, it gives PIA a mandate. To show that PIA's legal bite represents so many of us, PIA needs **your name** in the members' list so please renew.

Even if you are a member of another organisation, you can also join PIA. It is **only £10 for 6 months** to cover mainly admin costs. So please complete the form [here](#) or SMS 07985039135 with your postal or email address and we will send a form to you.



### PIA MEMBERSHIP RENEWALS

The Membership Contribution is  
only £10 per six months

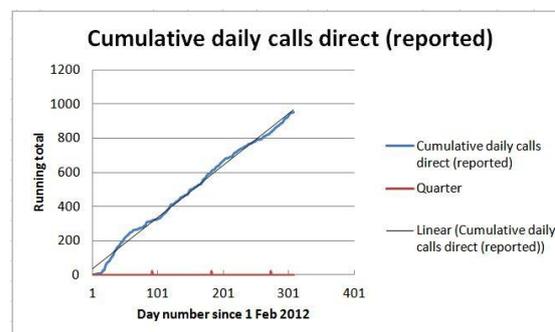
Please update your membership  
details using the form available at  
<http://rpsi.name/PIA>

Direct bank payments only please  
**NO CHEQUES**

Keep your own record of payment;  
PIA does not issue receipts  
[membership@profintal.org.uk](mailto:membership@profintal.org.uk)

To send news to the PIA Bulletin or to contact  
PIA, email [info@profintal.org.uk](mailto:info@profintal.org.uk)  
Membership enquiries should go to  
[membership@profintal.org.uk](mailto:membership@profintal.org.uk)

## Work is still going elsewhere



The trend is constantly rising. If it were to curve to the right, it would mean ALS/Capita-TI were doing more jobs and we were getting fewer direct calls. There is a sign of this close to Day 91 when their first quarter-year report was due and Day 262 before the 3<sup>rd</sup> quarter. Since then, they lost their grip again.

The more reports we get, the better the picture so please continue to record events:

- Log direct calls for courts, tribunals, police: <http://rpsi.name/default/calls.html>
- Report what you saw in a mini-statement at <http://rpsi.name/default>.
- Pass on stories you heard from staff and lawyers to <http://linguistlounge.org>.

Yes, it does matter and it will make a difference, so please do it. Thank you to everyone who has contributed to this data.

## And finally

A meeting of interpreters was considered but not put into action. Now that interpreter organisations are engaging directly with government, together we are moving to a new phase. Once all the reports are published (January?) we as a community will have to discuss what this all means to us. Maybe that is the time to meet?

Meanwhile, enjoy the festive season even if in a simple way. Madeleine and John wish you a better New Year than the last one!