

# The PIA Bulletin, May 2012

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## General meeting

PIA members have been saying for some time we need a general meeting. However, many things got in the way including some public demonstrations, media interviews etc.

One aspect of people coming together, aside from the business of the meeting, is the social element. This is so important and often takes up more time than listening or shouting against ALS and the MoJ.

We have all benefitted from seeing colleagues in person, hearing how each of us is coping and raising each other's spirits. Even those working for ALS who came along to the demos could not help being impressed by the solidarity in what once was a profession of private individuals.

So now we are definitely going to have a general meeting! It will take place on **Saturday 19<sup>th</sup> May at 13.45** in **Birmingham's Aston University, Sumpner Lecture Theatre, Main Building**. The Aston Interpreters Network is hosting it. This venue is 10-15 minutes walk from train stations and 5 minutes walk from Car Park 6 or 12 (only £1).

Because we want to meet up with colleagues who are not members of PIA, this meeting will be open-house; any interpreter is welcome.



### MEETING FOR INTERPRETERS

#### ALL WELCOME

**Saturday 19<sup>th</sup> May 13.45-16.30**

**Sumpner Lecture Theatre**

**6<sup>th</sup> Floor, Main Building**

**Aston University, Birmingham**

[Map of Aston University campus](#)

## A third Judicial Review?

Following the 16<sup>th</sup> April 2012 demonstration in London, a large group of interpreters met with Bernard Richmond QC at his invitation. He suggested two possibilities; a challenge under Public Law and/or a Judicial Review.

There was nothing new in what he proposed, as the same possibilities had already been explored by PIA's solicitors. It is clear that a new JR by interpreters will not reverse the MoJ's decision on the FWA.

Mr Richmond's approach to interpreters was only shortly before the expiry date for the pre-action to be registered. The financial cost of a JR and the high cost if it failed is something the interpreter organisations could not agree to pay. Following discussion by the Professional Interpreters for Justice Steering Group, a letter with the joint response was sent to Mr Richmond.

However, PIA has a strategy for a different approach to a Judicial Review. This would start with victims who were denied an interpreter or who were remanded due to interpreter non-attendance bringing their own action using Legal Aid. With enough of these unlawful detention cases, an NGO could take them on to force a new JR on a Public Interest basis and PIA would assist with evidence etc as an intervening party. This would be more cost-effective and more likely to succeed.

PIA and its solicitors are currently approaching NGOs for their support, as well as facilitating unlawful detention claims by non-English speakers. PIA members are providing free interpreting services for this and putting parties in touch with one another.

*Unlawful Detention Campaign posters are at <http://rpsi.name/docs>.*

## Unlawful Detention

People who speak hardly any English have been kept in custody and not released on bail simply because ALS could not provide an interpreter. This has happened on a number of occasions.

These people had their rights violated according to ECHR articles 5 and 6, and they are entitled to claim compensation.

A campaign was started to find these people and to spread awareness in the communities.

There are posters with a contact phone number, picture adverts for websites and a booklet of copy and paste explanations in different languages for lawyers to use. All this is at <http://rpsi.name/docs>.

Please help spread these to shops, advice points, community centres, and put adverts into Facebook groups and fora. For further details contact Anca Ionescu.

## The Legal Fund

Many interpreters and supporters contributed to a fund held in trust by PIA. Money was raised for the (first) NW Judicial Review of which £24,234.40 was paid in legal fees to Collyer Bristow.

These payments should have been returned after this JR was 'won'. Unfortunately, it required the intervention of the Legal Ombudsman to get it back. And as you read this, the money the Legal Ombudsman has directed be returned is on its way back to PIA's Legal Fund. This is excellent news.

The money in the Legal Fund is being kept in a separate bank account for future projects.

The details of PIA's Legal Fund are:

PIA Ltd - Natwest Bank - Sort code: 53-61-11 -  
Account number: 61647411.

## Professional Interpreters for Justice - Joint Campaign



PIA has joined five other interpreter organisations in a joint campaign called Professional Interpreters for Justice.

The campaign's three aims are to:

- Reverse the outsourcing to ALS or other commercial agencies, and the reintroduction of direct employment of freelance interpreters by the courts and police services
- Establish regular dialogue between interpreter organisations and government
- Persuade government to provide statutory regulation of the interpreting profession and protection of the title of Legal Interpreter.

For more information visit the joint [campaign website](#).

## News streams

You can keep up to date with the media using the short link: <http://tinyurl/newsbase> and read the stories at <http://linguistlounge.org>. If you prefer getting news by email, contact Rekha Narula [rekha.narula@gmail.com](mailto:rekha.narula@gmail.com).

There are discussions on Facebook (in various languages), tweets on Twitter and the Action Group is still there.

## Unpaid invoices

If you still have some old unpaid invoices, have another go at getting paid for that work. See this site for help: <http://payontime.co.uk>.

## Boycott of direct bookings

On the 1<sup>st</sup> of February the Courts were booking interpreters not from the National Register but through ALS (now sold to Capita). As the majority of RPSIs had not registered with ALS, it became clear there was a shortage of supply. Minister Crispin Blunt understated this major problem as “teething troubles”. After just 2 weeks he allowed courts to revert to the old system when ALS could not provide someone.

The majority of registered interpreters decided (independently of course) to boycott direct bookings as they did not want to be filling the holes left by ALS, and wanted ALS’ failings to be visible. The boycott continues.

The first quarter-year under the Framework Agreement (FWA) has 2 out of every 5 court cases disrupted because an interpreter did not attend and only 1 in 4 ALS workers turned up as required. The rest were late.

There are stories of long journeys, hundreds of miles, even from Scotland to South England! Reports of many underpayments, one over £1200, enhanced payments to a few privileged workers. Unqualified, inexperienced and even convicted persons are working for ALS. Police, courts, lawyers and judges are getting increasingly impatient.

Many professional interpreters have decided to continue the boycott even after 3 months. Some have found other work, some are retraining, and some found new jobs and even time for holidays. It seems dignity is more important to them than filling in for ALS’s failures in the short term.

## Demonstrations

There was a series of demonstrations started by Bradford Professional Interpreters and North-West Justice for Interpreters at the

Tribunals in Bradford and Tribunals and Crown Court in Manchester.

Supported by PIA as well as other organised and independent interpreters, it moved on to Birmingham on 8<sup>th</sup> March, at the West Midlands Police HQ, Magistrates’ and Crown Courts.

Then the London Demo took place on 15<sup>th</sup> March outside the Ministry of Justice and House of Commons. About 500 came together simply as professional interpreters, putting aside group names. This was the first time so many of us had seen each other face to face. This event received much coverage in the national media.

London Demo 2 took place on 16<sup>th</sup> April, again outside MoJ and Parliament.

## Observing ALS workers

It is clear from over 200 witnessed sightings that ALS are sending unqualified, unvetted, inexperienced workers to the courts and police. Some just sit there and say nothing at all; 1 hour 20 minutes in London is the best seen so far!

It is so important to keep collecting and reporting such defaults because they are traceable evidence for use against the MoJ’s FWA. It goes on to officials, organisations, the media and now to ALS. Even if the MoJ keeps ignoring it, they cannot delete the evidence we have collected. They will never be able to say: “we just didn’t know”.

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>.

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

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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)