Ministry of Justice

Sarah Sackman KC MP
Minister for Courts and Legal Services

Baroness Morris of Yardley
Chair of House of Lords Public Services Committee
Public Services Committee
House of Lords
London
SW1A 0PW

MoJ ref: SUB120941

24 January 2025

Dear Lady Morris,

PUBLIC SERVICES COMMITTEE – INTERPRETING AND TRANSLATION SERVICES IN THE COURTS

Thank you for inviting me to give evidence to the Committee on Wednesday 18 December. During the session, I agreed to provide further information on a number of matters. Please find below the responses to the Committee's additional questions.

Survey results

The Committee requested the results of our interpreter surveys. During the summer of 2023, we conducted two surveys while developing the service specification. The first survey targeted MoJ-registered interpreters, and the second was issued to all interpreters registered with the Chartered Institute of Linguists (CIoL) to include those who may not be covered by the MoJ register. These surveys provided an opportunity for approximately 2,200 MoJ-registered interpreters and around 1,200 CIoL members to respond. The executive summaries of the results are included in **Annex A** and **Annex B.** Additionally, *thebigword* conducts quarterly surveys of MoJ-registered interpreters, asking them to rate their overall experience with interpreting appointments. The results are included in **Annex C**.

Complaints and feedback

The Committee also asked what we consider a 'formal complaint' as distinct from other types of feedback. Complaints about individual interpreters or suppliers, or complaints made by interpreters, are managed through our complaints process. The MoJ complaints process is set out in our complaints guidance, included in **Annex D**. This document consolidates the various complaint routes, links and guidance, and has been shared with external Language Services stakeholders. It is also published on the National Register of Public Service Interpreters (NRPSI) website. Our suppliers also provide guidance on their websites for making a complaint. There is no threshold for recording a complaint: every complaint is documented. If a complaint is upheld, it may result in an interpreter being removed from the MoJ register – accumulation of three complaints in a year results in removal, as does failure of the quality test (in-person assessment).

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Complaints are just one part of the feedback that MoJ gathers regarding the performance of the contracts and interpreters. The overall performance of the service and contracts is assessed through our management information arrangements, rather than through complaints. For instance, low fulfilment rates for a particular language will be addressed through our contract management processes, holding suppliers to account for their performance, rather than being treated as a complaint. Likewise, an ineffective trial will not necessarily result in a complaint unless an individual submits one, but will factor into the overall contract performance and be addressed through our management of the service. Only feedback submitted via the complaints process will be recorded as a complaint.

Most complaints regarding interpreters pertain to their conduct rather than the quality of interpreting. In 2024, only 2% of complaints (17 out of 751) related to the quality of interpreting, compared to 33% concerning interpreter conduct, such as unprofessional behaviour or last-minute cancellations. If an interpreter fails an in-person assessment and is removed from the MoJ register, MoJ will work with the relevant judge and our quality and assurance supplier, *The Language Shop* (TLS), to determine whether the integrity of any hearings could be compromised and if further action is necessary. We do not require TLS to track whether specific languages fail quality assurance more frequently than others.

Funding for the training scheme

The Committee asked about the level of funding available for the trainee scheme. The trainee scheme pays a contribution towards the exam costs of interpreters seeking to increase the level of their qualifications. Currently, MoJ contributes 50% of the exam costs, with the interpreter funding 50%. Under the new contracts, MoJ's contribution will increase to 75% of the cost of the exams. The scheme has so far funded exam costs for interpreters qualifying in the following languages:

- Greek
- Somali
- Albanian
- Portuguese (European and Brazilian)
- Hungarian
- Tamil
- Bengali
- Dari
- Turkish

Information provided to interpreters

The Committee asked whether more information can be provided to interpreters ahead of a hearing. Currently, the information available to the interpreter ahead of a hearing is quite limited. It includes the date and location, the mode of delivery (in person or telephone), and the booking type, e.g. preliminary hearing or trial. We are exploring what further information could be provided to interpreters in advance, within the limitations imposed by data protection laws.

Pay linked to CPI

In response to the Committee's question on pay, CPI will be applied to the new contracts when services start in 2026 and annually thereafter on the anniversary of the commencement date. We will not be able to confirm the detail of how the indexation will flow through the contracts until a bidder has been awarded the contract and the contractual language finalised. The £2 per hour increase for the current contracts was introduced in June 2023.

Cost to the criminal justice system of unfulfilled cases

The Committee asked whether it is possible to calculate a cost to the criminal justice system of unfulfilled cases. The number of ineffective trials due to the lack of an interpreter is less than 1%. We are unable to provide a defined figure for the average cost of an ineffective trial, as the impact of a case not proceeding as planned can be mitigated by courts in various ways, which will vary the costs incurred. While we know the average unit cost for disposing of a Crown Court case was £2,496 in 2023/24, this is an average of the direct judicial and staffing costs and excludes other costs such as estates and technology. Therefore, we cannot provide an overall cost to the criminal justice system of unfulfilled cases.

Qualification requirements and number of interpreters

The Committee requested information about how many interpreters on the MoJ register have the required qualifications, and the number of bookings requiring different qualifications.

Current qualification requirements for bookings

MoJ requires suitably competent interpreters for bookings with varying levels of complexity. The current arrangements are set out in our written evidence provided to the Committee on 30 September 2024, in paragraphs 34 to 40. Bookings are only offered to interpreters who meet the requirements. In summary, assignments are categorised into three tiers of complexity: "standard", "complex", and "complex written", with differing qualification requirements for each. "Standard" is equivalent to level 3, while "complex" and "complex written" are equivalent to level 6. Most court bookings (75% over the last two years) required "complex" or "complex written" level.

Qualification levels of the current MoJ register population

The number of individuals with an interpreting qualification on the MoJ register is included in the table below. Some individuals may have a qualification for more than one language and therefore may be included more than once in the table. "Complex written" interpreters can also deliver "complex" and "standard" bookings.

Complexity level	**Number of interpreters**	**Number of languages covered**
Standard	1137	101
Complex	1006	106
Complex written	1505	72

An analysis of the bookings completed in 2023 and 2024 provides the following detail:

Complexity level	2023	Jan-Nov 2024
Standard	26%	24%
Complex	71%	73%
Complex Written	3%	3%

Qualification requirements in the new contracts

In 2022, Lord Wolfson commissioned a review of qualifications. Ann Carlisle, an independent expert from the language services sector was asked to lead this review. The recommendations regarding qualifications and experience have been incorporated into the new contract specifications. The next generation of contracts, starting in autumn 2026, clearly identifies the qualifications and experience required for the new standards: “professional standard” (equivalent to level 6), and “community standard” (equivalent to level 3). This is outlined in the table below. Qualifications that do not meet the minimum acceptable community standard will not be included on the register.

Current complexity level	New complexity level	Level rating
Standard	Community	3
Complex	Professional	6
Complex Written	Professional	6

Analysis of bookings in 2023 and 2024 suggests that more MoJ bookings will be assigned the higher-level complexity rating, as shown in the following table:

Complexity level	2023	Jan-Nov 2024
Community	18%	16%
Professional	82%	84%

In terms of quality assurance arrangements for off-contract bookings, there is detailed guidance for staff to follow in such scenarios. This includes the necessary vetting and qualification requirements that must be met. The venue checks the qualifications and identification of the off-contract interpreter to ensure they meet the booking requirements.

I am of course happy to provide any more information to the Committee if that would be helpful.

Yours sincerely,

SARAH SACKMAN KC MP
Minister Of State

Annex A - Review of thebigword Language Services

Executive Summary

Language services are used to provide language interpretation to the Ministry of Justice (MoJ) and its executive agencies, including HM Courts and Tribunals Service (HMCTS). Thebigword is the main service supplier for spoken language interpretation. The current contract is due to expire in May 2025.

As part of the language services re-procurement project, HMCTS researchers developed a survey that was distributed to language professionals working as interpreters for thebigword. The survey aimed to obtain insights into the experiences of interpreters to identify how thebigword's current processes can be improved to ensure they continue to evolve and reflect the needs of their users and language professionals. 509 individuals completed the survey, representing a 25% response rate.

1. Views and Experiences of MoJ Interpreting Assignments

1.1 Motivations

Overall, there were mixed views about what motivated interpreters to undertake MoJ interpreting assignments.

Of the multiple-choice options 38% of interpreters selected pay, 35% of interpreters selected organisation reputation, and 28% selected working conditions as motivating factors.[1] Almost half (47%) selected 'other'.

For those who selected 'other', analysis of the (open text) responses showed that most individuals felt that their motivation stemmed from finding aspects of the role appealing including a passion for their profession of law, a sense of giving back to society and helping others, a general enjoyment for the role, and the level of professional interest and satisfaction they gained from completing MoJ assignments.

Less common (but still frequently mentioned) open text responses here referred to capability. In this theme some individuals were motivated by their capability to complete assignments because of relevant qualifications and skills gained from years of professional experience. Motivation for others came from their desire to gain experience and expand their knowledge, and/or finding the availability, flexibility and professional environment of the job appealing.

Although not specifically a motivation, a number of individuals who selected 'other' felt it important to mention that they did not feel they had a choice in the matter to undertake MoJ assignments. This was for reasons that included limited alternative options for court-based assignments, needing to pay their bills, and having worked on MoJ assignments prior to the involvement of thebigword.

Interestingly, in contrast to the 38% of interpreters who selected pay as a motivating factor, 9% also commented on pay, either specifically stating that it was not a reason that motivated them, or making a general comment that pay was poor and it negatively impacted on their decision to take an assignment with MoJ.

[1] Respondents could select all that options that applied.

1.2 Confidence

Generally, individuals felt confident in undertaking face-to-face, video, and telephone interpreting assignments across different MoJ environments[2]. The proportion of individuals who were confident ('very confident or 'confident') in undertaking face-to-face environments across all MoJ environments ranged from 82-91%, for video assignments 66-79%, and for telephone assignments 60-68%. However, despite feeling confident, there were four main themes identified in the 388 open text responses, that if addressed, were thought to further increase confidence levels.

Training/continuous personal development (CPD) was the most prominent theme whereby some individuals felt that improving and increasing such opportunities for interpreters would increase confidence. Suggestions included workshops, shadowing, learning resources, and improving opportunities to undertake assignments. In addition to interpreter training, responders also felt that training court professionals to better understand the role of an interpreter, to respect them, and to coach them to talk slower and more clearly during hearings would help increase confidence.

The second most referred to factor in the open text responses was pay. Some individuals felt that confidence levels would improve if the base pay and travel expenses were increased and if they were paid for travel time. Additionally, they felt they should be paid for the duration of the booked hours regardless of how long the assignment takes, and that the guaranteed minimum hours paid should be increased from one hour.

A less common but still prevalent theme referred to the need for more information about the hearing and assignment, such as the nature of the case, names of those involved, background information, and names of the professionals working the case. Interestingly, findings showed that, where provided, responders reported finding the information helpful. Therefore, it is possible that the quality of the information when given is helpful, but that more is needed to be provided.

Some responses also highlighted several ways in which MoJ services and facilities could be improved to increase confidence levels including:

- Greater support services.
- Easier to navigate and faster IT systems and apps.
- A court environment that is sufficient for interpreters, with specific mentions of the lack of separate waiting rooms, regular breaks, and poor facilities.
- Improved technology for remote hearings; some individuals felt strongly that remote hearings are not conducive to a court environment and are not appropriate for those who have interpreting needs.

1.3 Deterrents

The three most reported deterrents for accepting face-to-face assignments were travel costs not being paid (67%), the time spent travelling to assignments (57%), and the current level of base pay (55%). 29% of individuals selected 'other'.

For those who selected 'other,' pay was referred to the most. Deterrents included low base pay, a lack of travel expenses, not being paid for the duration of the booking when it is shorter than advertised and having a one-hour minimum payment.

[2] These included Crown Court, Magistrates' Court, Civil Court, Family Court, Tribunal, in a prison, in a hospital, in an office, and in a police station.

Of the 29% who selected 'other' many highlighted practical deterrents of face-to face assignments, albeit less than those who selected pay. These included their ability to travel via public transport, the length of time it takes to get paid, the poor cancellation process, and not having enough information prior to accepting an assignment.

Pay and practical aspects of the assignment were strongly linked; interpreters felt less inclined to accept an assignment that is further away or shorter in length if they know they are at risk of either getting paid the one-hour minimum payment or will have to spend more money on travel expenses, especially if the assignment is cut short.

1.4 Booking Duration Preferences

Four-fifths (81%) felt that increasing the minimum booking duration for face-to-face MoJ assignments would encourage them to accept the assignment, with the top preference for a face-to-face booking being a full day[3], and two hours for a remote booking.

1.5 Information and Support

Overall, most individuals felt that more information and support is required throughout the MoJ interpreting assignment process. When exploring interpreter needs *before* the assignment, almost all responses referred to wanting more information about the case to help them better prepare as well as having access to written materials such as medical reports, a list of charges, and statements as the hearing progresses.

Well-being support in the form of regular breaks and welfare checks were mentioned most often when exploring interpreter's needs *during* the assignment, as well as the improved provision of practical support for interpreters. This included professionals speaking at a slower pace, allowing the interpreter to stand outside of the defendant's box to improve audibility, and generally being more supportive/acknowledging of the interpreter role.

Post assignment, most individuals mentioned the need for accessible support services, such as counselling, support groups, and signposting. Debriefs were also regularly mentioned.

A small number of individuals felt that no support was required before, during and/or after the assignment.

2. Views and Experiences of thebigword Processes

2.1 thebigword processes

Responses tended to be positive regarding the process for notifying them about available bookings and urgent requests, timesheets, and the payment process, with around three-quarters (77%) stating that they would feel comfortable raising a complaint, if necessary. However, just under half (49%) were not aware of how to submit feedback and/or of the timesheet dispute process.

2.2 Improvements to thebigword Processes

Despite most individuals reporting that they would feel comfortable raising a complaint, improving customer service processes, and providing clear and transparent communication pathways to raise a complaint and make a payment dispute were regularly mentioned in the open text responses.[4] Both the payment disputes and complaints processes were described

[3] 5/6 hours minimum

[4] All individuals were asked to 'provide any further information you feel would help us to improve our processes for timesheets, payments, payment disputes, and providing feedback or raising complaints?'

as biased by some individuals, specifically that there was a lack of consideration for the interpreter's concerns, and the process and outcome is often favourable to the client despite available evidence. Few individuals were worried that making a complaint could impact on the amount of work they get offered and suggested the process should be made fairer.

Additionally, there was a general consensus that the pay systems and the WordSynk portal are slow and hard to navigate with many suggesting the use of electronic timesheets.

3. Overall Satisfaction of Undertaking Interpreting Assignments within the MoJ

Overall, findings were mixed, but interpreters tended to feel positive about their experience of undertaking interpreting assignments for the MoJ(53% felt either 'very satisfied or satisfied, 28% were ambivalent, and 18% felt either dissatisfied or satisfied), and satisfaction was linked with awareness and positive views of thebigword processes Half (50%) stated that they wanted to stay on the MoJ register for the next 3 years at least.

Addressing pay was the most common theme identified by most to improve interpreter's satisfaction of undertaking MoJ assignments, specifically, the need to increase baseline pay and travel expenses, and being paid for the duration of the booked hours.

After pay, responses referring to the improvement of certain thebigword processes were mentioned the most frequently. It was felt that improving elements listed below, would increase these interpreter's satisfaction in undertaking interpreting assignments in the MoJ:

- The recruitment process (stop employing underqualified translators)
- The cancellation process (be paid more for cancelled assignments)
- The booking/allocation process (make it fairer)
- The IT and pay processes (slow and hard to navigate)
- The customer service (quicker response times and sufficient knowledge to respond to issues)
- The information given about the case and the assignment (increase the amount).

A less common theme in the open text responses, referred to an improved working environment that allowed for regular breaks, appropriate working equipment, sufficient court facilities, and respect and appreciation from other professionals.

Survey Questions

The Language Professional Survey

Thank you for agreeing to take part in our survey to gain insight of your experiences and views of working as an interpreter for a company that is contracted to provide interpreting services to the Ministry of Justice (MoJ).

Your views are very important to us and by sharing your experiences, you can help the Ministry of Justice to understand how to improve our services.

The survey should take around 10-15 minutes to complete.

The responses you give will be confidential. They will not be used in any way that will enable you to be identified and you will not be asked to provide any personal details. For more information on how your data will be handled, please see the data privacy notice (HM Courts and Tribunals Service privacy policy - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)

If you would like to check that this research is genuine, please email hmcts.evaluation@justice.gov.uk

To start we would like to gain some information about you

Thinking about when you first registered with the supplier.

1. Can you confirm how long have you been registered with the supplier?
   a) Less than a year
   b) 1 year – under 2 years
   c) 2 years – under 3 years
   d) 3 years – under 4 years
   e) 4 years – under 5 years
   f) 5 years and over

Booking process

2. How would you rate the current automated process for notifying you about a standard booking request?

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Easy to use					
Provides all the information required to enable you					

to make a decision to accept or decline a booking					
Request are received in a timely manner					
Easy to accept or decline a booking					

3. How would you rate the process for notifying you via the Helpdesk about an urgent booking request?

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Not Applicable
Easy to use						
Provides all the information required to enable you to make a decision to accept or decline a booking						
Request received in a timely manner						
Easy to accept or decline a booking						

Thinking about Ministry of Justice interpreting assignments

4. What motivated you to undertake Ministry of Justice interpreting assignments?
    a) Pay
    b) Working Conditions
    c) Organisational Reputation
    d) Other – please specify

Please describe

5. Overall, how helpful was the information you were provided about interpreting assignments across the Ministry of Justice (e.g. any specific information about

the different MoJ organisations, what they do, and the different environments in which you would be required to interpret)

a) Very Helpful
b) Helpful
c) Neither helpful nor unhelpful
d) Unhelpful
e) Very Helpful
f) I did not receive any information
g) Can't remember

6. How confident are you undertaking **In Person Face to Face** interpreting assignments within the following Ministry of Justice environments?

	Very confident	Fairly Confident	Neither Confident nor unconfident	Fairly unconfident	Very unconfident	Not Applicable
Crown Court						
Magistrates' Court						
Civil Court						
Family Court						
Tribunal						
In a Prison						
In a Hospital						
In an Office						
In a Police station						

7. How confident are you undertaking interpreting assignments **remotely via Video** within the following Ministry of Justice environments?

	Very confident	Fairly Confident	Neither Confident nor unconfident	Fairly unconfident	Very unconfident	Not Applicable
Crown Court						
Magistrates' Court						
Civil Court						
Family Court						
Tribunal						
In a Prison						
In a Hospital						
In an Office						
In a Police station						

8. How confident are you undertaking interpreting assignments **remotely via Telephone** within the following Ministry of Justice environments?

	Very confident	Fairly Confident	Neither Confident nor unconfident	Fairly unconfident	Very unconfident	Not Applicable
Crown Court						
Magistrates' Court						
Civil Court						
Family Court						
Tribunal						
In a Prison						
In a Hospital						
In an Office						
In a Police station						

9. Please tell us how we could help increase your confidence in undertaking face to face and/or remote (Video or Telephone) interpreting assignments in the different Ministry of Justice environments.

(free text)

10. During the pandemic there was a move towards remote (Video) interpreting assignments to support MoJ activity. Now we are moving back to more face to face bookings, is there anything that would deter you from accepting a face to face booking?

    a) Nothing would deter me from accepting a face-to-face booking
    b) Base pay
    c) Travel costs not being paid
    d) Travel Time
    e) Length of Booking
    f) Other [please provide further information below]

11. Would having an increased minimum booking duration for face to face MoJ assignments encourage you to accept these bookings?

    a) Yes
    b) No
    c) Would not make a difference
    d) Don't know/not sure

12. Please rank the below minimum booking duration options in order of preference (1 – Most likely to 4 – Least likely)

Minimum Booking Duration options			Preference Rank 1 – 4)
	In person Face to Face	Remote (Video and Telephone)	
Option 1	One hour minimum	One hour minimum	
Option 2	Two hours minimum	One hour minimum	
Option 3	Half day (3 hours) minimum	One hour minimum	
Option 4	Full day (5 or 6 hours) minimum	One hour minimum	

13. Are there any other minimum booking duration options you think we should consider?

If Other, please specify

14. We know that some bookings within the Ministry of Justice deal with sensitive and often distressing subject matter. What information/support, if any, would be helpful Before, During or After such bookings?

Before: During: After:

Timesheet process.

15. To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements?

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Timesheets are received before the start of booking					
Timesheets have all the required information					
I find timesheets easy to complete					
I find it easy to get my timesheets completed by Ministry of Justice personnel					
It is easy to upload timesheets to the portal					
Instructions on how to complete the timesheet process are clear					

16. Are you aware of the timesheet dispute process?

    a) Yes
    b) No

17. If you have used the timesheet dispute process how would you rate your experience?

    a) Very satisfied
    b) Satisfied
    c) Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied
    d) Dissatisfied
    e) Very dissatisfied
    f) Not applicable

Payment process

18. Was the payment and accounting process explained?
    a) Yes

b) No
c) Unsure/cannot remember

19. How would you rate your experience of the payment process?

a) Very satisfied
b) Satisfied
c) Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied
d) Dissatisfied
e) Very dissatisfied

Providing feedback or raising concerns

20. Are you aware of how to submit feedback or raise concerns?

a) Yes
b) No

21. If you have used the feedback and complaint process how would you rate your experience?

a) Very satisfied
b) Satisfied
c) Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied
d) Dissatisfied
e) Very dissatisfied
f) Not applicable

22. Do you feel comfortable raising a complaint or a concern?

a) Yes
b) No

Further information

23. Please provide any further information you feel would help us to improve our processes for timesheets, payment, payment disputes, and providing feedback or raising complaints?

(free text)

Overall views

24. Overall, how satisfied are you with your experience of undertaking interpreting assignments within the Ministry of Justice?

a) Very satisfied

b) Fairly satisfied
c) Neither satisfied not dissatisfied
d) Fairly dissatisfied
e) Very dissatisfied

25. What could be done to improve your satisfaction of undertaking interpreting assignments within the Ministry of Justice?

(free text)

26. Which of the following statements most reflects your current thoughts about being on the Ministry of Justice register?

a) I want to leave as soon as possible.
b) I want to leave within the next 12 months.
c) I want to stay on the register for at least the next year.
d) I want to stay on the register for at the least the next three years.

Finally, we will ask you some basic characteristic questions

27. Where are you based?

a. London
b. Midlands
c. North East
d. North West
e. Scotland
f. South East
g. South West
h. Wales

28. When during the week do you undertake Ministry of Justice interpreting assignments?
a. Weekdays only
b. Weekends only
c. Weekdays and weekends

29. During what hours do you undertake Ministry of Justice interpreting assignments?
a. Normal working hours (8am – 6pm)
b. Unsociable hours (6.01pm – 7.59am, weekend and Bank Holiday)
c. Both of the above

30. In what medium do you undertake Ministry of Justice interpreting assignments?
a. Remote only (Telephone and video interpreting)
b. Face to face only
c. Hybrid (Remote and face to face interpreting)

31. Do you have any other working patterns related to Ministry of Justice assignments? *E.g. term time only*

32. What is your age

18-24	1	
25-34	2	
35-44	3	
45-54	4	
55-64	5	
65-74	6	
75+	7	
Prefer not to say	8	

33. What sex were you registered at birth?

Male	1	
Female	2	
Prefer not to say	3	

34. Is your gender the same as the sex you were registered at birth?

Yes	1	
No (Please write in gender)	2	
Prefer not to say	4	

35. What is your ethnic group?

English / Welsh / Scottish / Northern Irish / British	1	White
Irish	2	

Gypsy or Irish Traveller	3	
Any other White background (please specify)	4	
White and Black Caribbean	5	Mixed / Multiple ethnic groups
White and Black African	6	
White and Asian	7	
Any other Mixed / Multiple ethnic background (please specify)	8	
African	9	Black / African / Caribbean / Black British:
Caribbean	10	
Any other Black / African / Caribbean background (please specify)	11	
Indian	12	Asian / Asian British:
Pakistani	13	
Bangladeshi	14	
Chinese	15	
Any other Asian background (please specify)	16	
Arab	17	Other ethnic group:
Any other ethnic group (please specify)	18	
Prefer not to say	19	

Thank you for taking the time to complete this survey.

Annex B- Chartered Institute of Linguists Survey Findings

Executive Summary

The Chartered Institute of Linguists (CIOL) is a UK based professional association for language professionals that seeks to enhance and promote languages and language skills worldwide.

Previous HM Court and Tribunals Service (HMCTS) research has focussed on the experiences, views and requirements of language professionals who complete MoJ interpreting assignments because they are directly registered with thebigword and/or Clarion[1] (the two main language service agencies used by the MoJ). This summary, instead, focuses on the findings from survey research on the experiences of language professionals registered with other interpreting agencies. 179 individuals completed the survey, representing a 15% response rate.[2]

1. Views and experiences of interpreting services

1.1 Motivations

Individuals who were registered with other interpreting agencies (not thebigword or Clarion) gave mixed views about their motivations. Of the multiple-choice options, over half (53%) of individuals selected 'other' as a motivation to join their interpreting agency. 51% selected pay, 44% travel costs being paid, 37% the minimum booking durations, 22% the length of the bookings, and 9% did not know.[3]

For those who selected 'other,' open text responses referred to a lack of choice and company specific reasons as motivational factors for joining their interpreter agencies, with a lack of choice being more frequently mentioned. Specifically, individuals felt that they did not have a choice in the matter of joining other interpreting agencies as it is a requirement for taking on assignments. Further to this, interpreters felt that they had joined other interpreting agencies because of the need to work; because there are more opportunities for jobs via other agencies; and the requirement to work in a desired setting.

With regards to agency specific reasons, agency attributes was the most mentioned, with respondents stating that the reliability, trust, reputation, professionalism, respect for the interpreter, and regular work opportunities motivated them to join the other interpreting agencies. This was followed by the pay being better and fairer, and better processes including more transparent and professional communication pathways, and the ease and fairness of agency processes.

2. Views and experiences of interpreting for the MoJ

[1] Thebigword is an organisation that provides spoken language interpretation and Clarion is an organisation that provides Visual and Tactile communication (e.g. British Sign Language).
[2] An additional thirty-four responses were returned however, two individuals were not happy to proceed with the survey and thirty-two individuals when asked, reported to have already completed either thebigword or Clarion surveys for the MoJ in the last month. These individuals did not complete the rest of the survey.
[3] Respondents could select all options that applied.

2.1 Motivations

Of those who had completed interpreting assignments for the MoJ, the reasons for doing so were mixed. Of the multiple-choice options, over half of individuals (54%) selected 'other', 46% selected pay, 36% organisational reputation, 30% working conditions, and 5% did not know.[4]

For those who selected 'other,' analysis of the (open text) responses showed that most individuals felt that their motivation stemmed from their interest and passion for the Criminal Justice System or their relevant skills and expertise to work within an MoJ environment.

Few were motivated by pay, stating that the MoJ pays better than some other organisations that require language services (e.g., the NHS), whilst less mentioned the volume and diversity of work, but did not specify what this was in comparison to.

Just under one fifth of respondents did not report a specific motivation for undertaking MoJ assignments. Rather, they completed MoJ assignments because they need to work, they were requested to provide the service for MoJ (e.g., they were at the court and an interpreter was required), and/or they must undertake such assignments to remain an active interpreter.

One-in-ten (11%) respondents had not considered providing interpreting services for the MoJ and gave reasons such as poor rates of pay, poor working conditions, and a lack of confidence/experience (e.g., not trained or qualified in the area and the perception that the work is too challenging) for why they had not.

A small number of respondents mentioned that they used to interpret for MoJ prior to the introduction of agencies. For these interpreters, they now either only provide language services off contract/when they are contacted directly, or they no longer provide services to MoJ due to the involvement of agencies.

2.2 Encouragement

The three most reported factors that, if addressed, would encourage individuals to complete interpreting assignments for the MoJ were a higher hourly rate (83%), being paid for travel costs (77%), and an increased minimum booking duration (74%). This was followed by longer bookings (50%), 'other' (32%) and 'don't know' (4%). One percent said that nothing would encourage them to accept interpreting assignments with the MoJ.

Analysis of the 'other' responses highlighted five main themes that would encourage interpreters to undertake MoJ assignments; the removal of agencies/enable direct booking, being treated with more respect, better policies, and processes, better pay, and more training opportunities. Other than more training opportunities and more respect from other professionals (both of which had less responses), responses were fairly evenly split across the themes.

The responses about the removal of agencies and being able to book an assignment directly were closely related to perceived issues with language professional agencies. Issues included a lack of respect, worsening terms and conditions over time, being unable to be employed directly by both HMCTS and agencies, and low pay.

Some individuals stated that addressing the recruitment process and the cancellation policy would encourage them to undertake MoJ assignments. It was felt that better vetting should take place to ensure interpreters are suitably qualified and experienced for the role, and payment should be higher when assignments are cancelled. Additionally, the need for

[4] Respondents could select all options that applied.

improved working conditions for interpreters was frequently mentioned such as allowing regular breaks, being given more information ahead of the hearing, having the appropriate equipment to work with, and access to mental health support.

Others would be encouraged by an increase in baseline pay, having travel costs paid, and being paid for the duration of the booked hours. A few mentioned the need for interpreters to be treated with more respect by other court professionals and that the value of interpreters needing to be acknowledged more.

A couple of individuals felt that more training opportunities such as continuous personal development and affordable training in legal interpretation, would encourage them to undertake MoJ interpreting assignments.

2.3 Booking Duration Preferences

The most preferred minimum booking duration for face-to-face assignments was half a day[5] and for remote bookings was one hour. However, in the open-text responses, some interpreters felt that remote hearings should have a two-hour minimum booking duration.

3. Views and experiences of interpreting for other Government Departments

3. Motivations

At the time of the survey, around three-quarters (73%) of respondents reported to provide interpreting services for other Government departments/organisations including the Police, Councils and Local Governments, the NHS, the Home Office, and Social Services. Motivation to do so was mixed. Just over half cited pay (57%), followed by minimum booking durations (51%), and travel costs being paid (47%) as motivators, with fewer reporting the length of bookings (37%) and organisational reputation (37%) as reasons for completing these assignments.[6] 30% of individuals selected ‘other’.

For those who selected ‘other’ the most reported motivating factor for interpreting for other Government departments/organisations was the subject matter. Interpreters having an interest and expertise in the specific department, the work being diverse, and feeling like they are making a difference in their area of work were all mentioned as part of this theme.

Pay, direct bookings, a better working environment, and a lack of choice were other themes identified as motivating factors for interpreting for other Government departments/organisations. All these themes had a similar number of responses. Pay was regularly mentioned as a motivating factor with specific reference to other Government departments/organisations having a minimum booking duration of 3 hours, as well as paying for travel expenses.

Some respondents were motivated by the fact that they could book directly with the department/organisation rather than having to book via an agency, and some felt that they were treated with more respect, were treated fairly, and were provided with the relevant training by other Government departments/organisations.

Others did not report a specific motivation for undertaking MoJ assignments, rather they complete them because of the need to work.

[5] 3 hours.
[6] Respondents could select all options that applied.

Survey Questions

Language Professional Survey – Wider

Thank you for agreeing to take part in our survey to gain insight of your experiences and views of working as an interpreter.

Your views are very important to us and by sharing your experiences, you can help the Ministry of Justice to understand how to improve our services.

The survey should take around 10-15 minutes to complete.

The responses you give will be confidential. They will not be used in any way that will enable you to be identified and you will not be asked to provide any personal details. For more information on how your data will be handled, please see the data privacy notice (HM Courts and Tribunals Service privacy policy - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)

If you would like to check that this research is genuine, please email hmcts.evaluation@justice.gov.uk

To start we would like to gain some information about you

1. Can you confirm how long you have been providing interpreting services?

    a. Less than a year
    b. 1 year – under 2 years
    c. 2 years – under 3 years
    d. 3 years – under 4 years
    e. 4 years – under 5 years
    f. 5 years and over

2. What interpreting services do you provide?

    a. Foreign language services
    b. British Sign Language
    c. Foreign Sign Language
    d. Lip Speaking
    e. Deaf relay
    f. Speech to text reporting
    g. Other, please specify

If other, please specify

3. *[If they select a) Foreign Language for Q 2 then ask this Q]* In what language(s) do you provide interpretation services?

List all languages [Free Text]

4. Are you registered with either of the suppliers that currently provide interpreting services to the Ministry of Justice?
    a. Yes
    b. No

5. Are you registered with any other interpreting agencies?
    a. Yes
    b. No

    If yes, what motivated you to register with these agencies?

    [Free Text response or we can provide options]

6. Have you accepted any interpreting assignments for the Ministry of Justice? *[Linked to Q4 to identify those that are off contract?]*
    a. Yes
    b. No

7. Are most of the interpreting assignments you undertake for the Ministry of Justice?

    a. Yes
    b. No

8. Have you considered providing interpreting services for the Ministry of Justice? *[Routed here if answer no to question 6.]*
    a. Yes
    b. No

9. What would encourage you to accept interpreting assignments with the Ministry of Justice?

    a. Nothing would encourage me to accept interpreting assignments with the Ministry of Justice.
    b. Increased hourly rate
    c. Minimum Booking duration
    d. Organisational Reputation
    e. Other – please specify

    If other, please specify

10. Do you provide interpreting services for any other government departments?
    a. Yes
    b. No

If yes, which Department?

11. What motivates you to provide interpreting services to this department? [Linked to Q10 and routed here if answer yes]

    a. Increased hourly rate
    b. Minimum Booking duration
    c. Travel costs are paid
    d. Length of Booking
    e. Organisational Reputation
    f. Other [please provide further information below]

12. Would having an increased minimum booking duration for face to face Ministry of Justice assignments encourage you to accept these bookings?

    a) Yes
    b) No
    c) Would not make a difference
    d) Don't know/not sure

13. Please rank the below minimum booking duration options in order of preference (1 – Most likely to 4 – Least likely)

Minimum Booking Duration options			Preference Rank 1 – 4)
	In person Face to Face	Remote (Video and Telephone)	
Option 1	One hour minimum	One hour minimum	
Option 2	Two hours minimum	One hour minimum	
Option 3	Half day (3 hours) minimum	One hour minimum	
Option 4	Full day (5 or 6 hours) minimum	One hour minimum	

14. Are there any other minimum booking duration options you think we should consider?

If Other, please specify

Working Patterns

15. When during the week do you undertake interpreting assignments?

a) Weekdays only
b) Weekends only
c) Weekdays and weekends

16. During what hours do you undertake interpreting assignments?

a) Normal working hours (8am – 6pm)
b) Unsociable hours (6.01pm – 7.59am, weekend and Bank Holiday)
c) Both of the above

17. Do you have any other working patterns related to Ministry of Justice assignments? *E.g., term time only*

Finally, we will ask you some basic characteristic questions

18. Where are you based?

a. London
b. Midlands
c. North East
d. North West
e. Scotland
f. South East
g. South West
h. Wales

19. What is your age

18-24	1	
25-34	2	

35-44	3	
45-54	4	
55-64	5	
65-74	6	
75+	7	
Prefer not to say	8	

20. What sex were you registered at birth?

Male	1	
Female	2	
Prefer not to say	3	

21. Is your gender the same as the sex you were registered at birth?

Yes	1	
No (Please write in gender)	2	
Prefer not to say	4	

22. What is your ethnic group?

English / Welsh / Scottish / Northern Irish / British	1	White
Irish	2	
Gypsy or Irish Traveller	3	
Any other White background (please specify)	4	
White and Black Caribbean	5	Mixed / Multiple ethnic groups
White and Black African	6	
White and Asian	7	
Any other Mixed / Multiple ethnic background (please specify)	8	
African	9	

Caribbean	10	Black / African / Caribbean / Black British:
Any other Black / African / Caribbean background (please specify)	11	
Indian	12	Asian / Asian British:
Pakistani	13	
Bangladeshi	14	
Chinese	15	
Any other Asian background (please specify)	16	
Arab	17	Other ethnic group:
Any other ethnic group (please specify)	18	
Prefer not to say	19	

Thank you for taking the time to complete this survey.

Annex C

ISAT Results May 2024

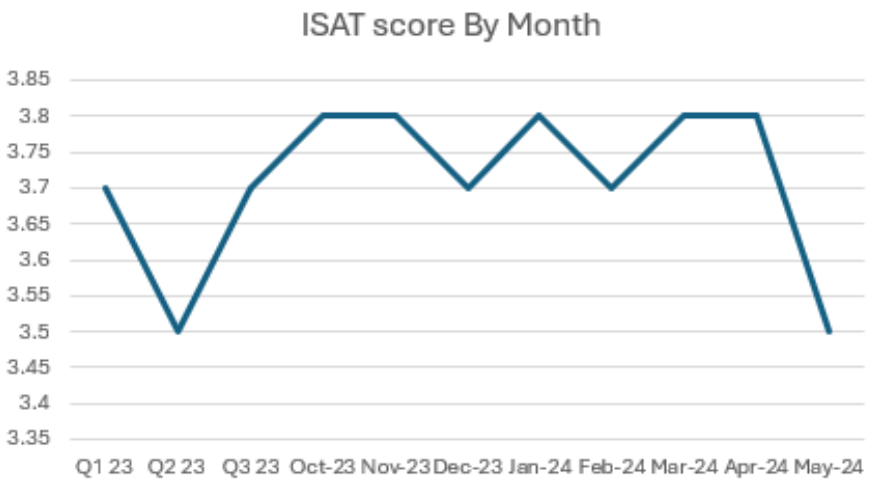
- The Interpreter Satisfaction Survey was sent to 2200 Interpreters on average per month since January 2024.
- We received on average 375 responses per month.
- In May 2024, the survey was sent to 2155 contacts, and we had a response rate of 19% (403 responses)

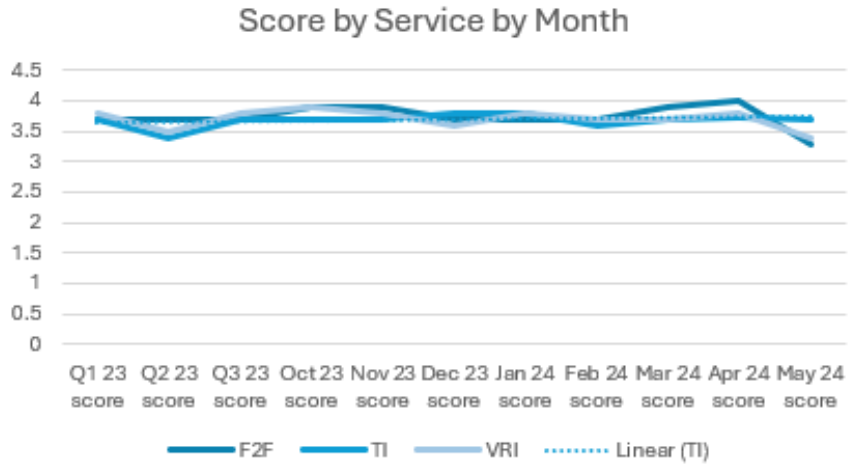
May 2024

- Score for F2F: 3.3/5 vs 3.7 average January score.
  Score for VRI: 3.4/5 vs 3.8 average January score.
- Score for TI: 3.7/5 vs 3.8 average January score.

To deliver a satisfaction rate of 4/5 or over for our interpreters, we need to address the following pain points:

- Solve issues highlighted within the mobile application (bookings disappearing, timesheets upload, and invoicing.)





Annex D – MoJ procedure for complaints by Interpreters

Complaints Procedure

Set out below is the process to be followed by Language Professionals (LPs) if they have a concern or complaint regarding services provided to the MoJ. There is also a quick guide for different complaint routes, should LPs have other concerns or complaints regarding HMCTS.

First Instance

1. If the issue relates directly to the complainant, this should be taken up directly with the provider. TBW has confirmed it has a process for LPs to raise concerns, queries or complaints, which is set out below (including the link):

- The complaint is raised on the “Linguist Complaint” form (Linguist Complaints).
- Complaints will be resolved within 30 days, with all but the most complex usually resolved within 14 days.
- Complaints and queries are tracked, monitored and reviewed formally on a monthly basis.

All complaints from LPs are now monitored and reviewed by MoJ as part of the agenda of its regular operational performance boards. Where trends or serious concerns are identified, the board will commission appropriate follow up action.

2. If the complaint/concern relates to the conduct and/or quality standard of another LP, this can either be raised directly with the provider using the process set out above, or it can be raised with TLS, who are contracted with us to provide an independent and objective quality assurance of the language services provided to the MoJ. The process is set out below:

- Complaints should be registered at https://moj.languageshop.org/feedback leaving as many relevant details as possible.
- TLS will acknowledge complaints within 2 working days and aim to resolve all complaints within 10 working days.
- Please note that the incident that the complaint relates must have been observed first hand by the complainant to enable an investigation to be undertaken.

All complaints/concerns raised with TLS are monitored and reviewed as part of the agenda of the regular MoJ operational performance boards. Where trends or serious concerns are identified, the board will commission appropriate follow up action.

Escalation to MoJ/HMCTS

3. Should the matter not be resolved following the above processes, LPs can escalate the complaint to the Contracted Services Division, HMCTS.

- The escalated complaint should be sent by email to Contracts_and_Perf@Justice.gov.uk.
- The Subject header should read ‘Escalated Complaint – for the attention of the Language Services Contract Team’.
- The email must explain why the complaint has been escalated and what resolution the complainant is seeking. The complainant should include details of the attempts to resolve the complaint directly with the service provider and attach relevant documentation.
- A response will be provided within 10 working days, but please note complex complaints may take longer.

All escalated complaints are monitored and reviewed as part of the MoJ/HMCTS governance of contracted services. Where trends or serious concerns are identified, appropriate follow up action will be undertaken.