

# SITA

## Scottish Interpreters & Translators Association

Secretary: A Malik

President: Melanie V M Beaumont

4/1 St Patrick Square, Edinburgh, EH8 9EZ

Tel/Fax: 0131 662 0856

Mobile: 07779 129 409

E-mail: [messageSITA@gmail.com](mailto:messageSITA@gmail.com)

Website: [www.si-ta.yolasite.com](http://www.si-ta.yolasite.com)

Barry Graham  
Deputy Head  
Scottish Procurement & Commercial Directorate  
Victoria Quay  
EDINBURGH  
EH6 6QQ

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Dear Mr Graham,

Thank you for your letter dated 7 April 2011. Once again, I am grateful to receive a prompt and comprehensive response. Unfortunately, even in light of your assertions, my concerns and fears continue unabated.

Firstly, you claim that monitoring is taking place at a "strategic" level. This seems to take place purely within the context of management meetings. My original point made reference to the fact that the monitoring process at the court level appears to have been abolished. Neither are interpreters being provided with a copy of complaints prior to court assignments as was previously the case. The complaint may well be passed to the contractor, but if this is so, it is not being forwarded to the interpreter, who needs to have access to such information in order to provide the most professional and complete service possible. Monitoring should not be confined to the contractor who is providing the service: it should be carried out at court, interpreter and end-user levels if it is to be more than a mere cosmetic exercise.

Secondly, and at the risk of sounding repetitive: the fact that the contractors have growing numbers of DPSI-qualified linguists on their books does not necessarily mean that these same interpreters are carrying out court assignments. The notion of "interpreters whom the court considered acceptable to undertake such work" is extremely vague. I would be grateful if you could enlighten me as to the criteria used by the courts under such circumstances. Certainly, the figures provided illustrate that under 30% of all assignments were undertaken by interpreters holding a DPSI, which SITA believes should be the absolute minimum qualification permissible for an interpreter carrying out even the simplest court assignment. I can think of no other serious profession in which the lack of qualifications, the absence of an official register and some hazy concept of "equivalence" would be deemed acceptable. SITA does not deem these acceptable. Recent developments in England thankfully reinforce this opinion. And the fact that professional organisations in Scotland are now starting to compile their own databases of qualified interpreters speaks volumes per se.

Finally, I still believe that the disparity between the rates paid to sign language interpreters and the paltry remuneration considered sufficient for foreign language interpreters denotes a degree of social discrimination which should be considered threatening. Naturally, nobody would wish to claim that a deaf person has the right to a higher level of service than a foreign language speaker. Conversely, a foreign language speaker has the same right to a fair trial as any other person. It is truly alarming that the current system fails to reflect this putative equality. Until this wrong is righted, we believe the interests of justice will not be adequately served.

I would appreciate any comments you may have regarding these issues.

Yours sincerely,

Melanie V M Beaumont *MA MSc RPSI AITI MCIL*