

SITA

Scottish Interpreters & Translators Association

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Office of the First Minister
St Andrew's House
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Dear Mr Salmond

Re: The deterioration in Interpreting Services currently delivered to the Criminal Justice Sector in Scotland.

I write to you as President of the Scottish Interpreters and Translators Association (SITA). We are extremely concerned about the declining standards in our industry and, in turn, about our professional reputations. SITA maintains that, as a result of the terms and conditions imposed on linguists following the award of the Collaborative Tender, there has been a movement away from engaging the service of qualified linguists, the latter being replaced with interpreters with little or no experience and /or qualification, to the serious detriment of the services available to the criminal justice sector.

SITA maintains that the award of the Collaborative Tender (September 2009) was based purely on a cost-cutting exercise without regard to the detrimental effect such cost cutting would have on the CJS.

The award of the tender resulted in an immediate lower pay scale being introduced. The majority of interpreters in Scotland are part-time freelancers with no pension rights, holiday/sick pay, and supplement their income from interpreting via other employment. In addition to the lower pay scale the tender requirements, that there would be no payment for travel time or travel costs within a 70 mile radius of the location of need, have resulted in these cuts having been passed on to linguists.

These new lower pay scales, combined with having to travel to and from the assignment without remuneration and having to pay transport costs, have become the catalyst for many trained, experienced and qualified interpreters to question their future, or lack thereof, in the field of linguistics. The answer to this question - for many - is to leave the sector.

The tender required amongst others things, a demonstrable increase of DPSI holders in Scotland. The collaborative tender does not appear to have achieved this one particular stated aim: i.e. increasing the numbers of *Diploma in Public Service Interpreting* (DPSI) interpreters and thereby achieving a higher delivery through DPSI holders. This is confirmed by the recent figures supplied by Kenny MacAskill, MSP, Parliament, Jan 2010, showing that of those interpreters attending court between August 2009 – Dec 09 inclusive, over half of the court work still appears to be carried out by unqualified 'interpreters'.